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## P R E S S      R E L E A S E

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### **Cambridge Transport Campaigners visit Downing Street**

Local sustainable transport campaigners Jim Chisholm of Cambridge Cycling Campaign, and Stephen Lawrence of the Pedestrian's Association were in a group who went to Downing St on Tuesday (21 December) for a presentation of letters to Prime Minister Tony Blair, at the launch of the Safe Streets coalition.

Jim Chisholm said:

'The freedom of a few motor vehicles to speed is restricting the freedom of the many to move around their local environment on foot or by bike. Speed kills the equivalent of a Paddington Rail crash every 10 days, or around 1200 people a year. Tough action is required. Speeding must eventually be seen just as much an anti-social crime as drink driving.

'Children are especially at risk from speeding vehicles, and Britain has a poor record on child safety. The solution is not to restrict the freedom of this vulnerable group, but to calm the menace of motor vehicles.'

The coalition is an alliance of 21 Charities as diverse as the Children's Society, Age Concern, and the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Children and residents from communities blighted by speeding traffic delivered a plea to the Prime Minister to cut traffic speeds and make our streets safe. Five people representing the groups spent some 30 minutes inside Number 10 talking to the Prime Minister.

The action was organised by Transport 2000, the National Environmental Transport Campaign

(The Daily Mail was the syndicate press photographer)

The Safe Streets Coalition's Launch Statement follows.

E N D S

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# SAFE STREETS COALITION

## Launch statement

Every year, nearly 1200 people die in crashes in which speed is a major contributory factor. Nearly 14,000 are seriously injured. This is the equivalent of a Paddington train crash every ten days.

Speeding traffic on residential streets and country lanes also takes away the freedom to walk or cycle for children, older and disabled people. It blights many town and city centres and local high streets.

The organisations listed below are concerned at the impact of speeding traffic on communities and quality of life. We want better enforcement, and more investment measures to make roads safe. We are concerned both about the problem of excess speed (drivers who break the speed limit), and inappropriate speeds (driving too fast for the conditions). We call on the Government to take action in its Speed Policy Review to tackle the problems of road death and injury, and loss of freedom.

Together, our organisations represent the concerns of many millions of people. We note that:

- One in 15 children will be injured in a road crash before their sixteenth birthday. Children from low-income families suffer greater exposure to traffic, which makes them four times more likely to die than children from higher income families. Children from some ethnic groups are also at greater risk.
- Many of the older and disabled people represented by our organisations are unable to drive a car and are dependent on a safe pedestrian environment for their independent mobility. Every day, our members feel intimidated by speeding traffic that makes it dangerous to walk along rural roads or cross the street. We know of many cases like that of a blind person who was recently killed at a pedestrian crossing in Stamford, by a motorist who was driving too fast to stop.
- Speeding traffic makes people feel it is too dangerous to walk or cycle. As a result, children are kept indoors or ferried everywhere by car, and older people may be isolated in their homes. This loss of independent mobility leads to loss of fitness and poor health. Many of the children ferried around by car today will consequently suffer from heart disease, obesity and osteoporosis when they are older. 60% of older blind people do not get out alone and nearly half find loneliness a particular worry.
- One of our organisations represents women who live in rural communities. In a recent survey, many of them told us they wanted to see lower speed limits in their villages. We know from experience in Suffolk that village speed limits of 30 mph can cut crashes by a fifth. Yet in many villages elsewhere, speed limits of 40 mph, 50 mph, or 60 mph are the norm.

- Another of us represents the families of people who have been killed in a road crash. They are families which have been torn apart by the loss of a loved one.

All of us are united in believing that the Government should act firmly to cut the number of casualties on our roads, and by a belief that action to cut speed is essential to achieve this. It has been suggested that motorists will object en bloc to efforts to reduce traffic speeds. Yet motorists are also parents, residents, pedestrians. It would be a tragedy if the perceived concerns of a minority of motorists influenced government policy in such a way as to allow over a thousand deaths from speed-related crashes every year. We call on the government not to allow this to happen.

**Age Concern**

**Child Accident Prevention Trust**

**Children's Play Council**

**Children's Society**

**Civic Trust**

**Council for the Protection of Rural England**

**Cyclists' Touring Club**

**Help the Aged**

**Institute of Child Health**

**Joint Committee on the Mobility of Blind and Partially Sighted People**

**National Federation of Women's Institutes**

**National Heart Forum**

**Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety**

**Pedestrians' Association**

**Roadpeace**

**Royal National Institute for the Blind, Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, and Joint Mobility Unit**

**Royal National Institute for Deaf People**

**Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents**

**SCOPE**

**Sustrans**

**Transport 2000**