

Practice essay · Everyday practice

Choose the journeys that matter

Sofia Mendes · 5 August 2026

Fictional author and institute · Editorial demonstration, not peer reviewed

ABSTRACT

The avoid, shift, and improve sequence is applied to the purpose of a journey rather than to a competition between transport identities. Drawing on the cited IPCC demand-side assessment, this practice essay considers when remote participation, combined errands, rail, public transport, walking, cycling, or shared vehicles can genuinely meet a need. Its comparison keeps disability, care, safety, price, equipment, and timetable constraints visible. Planning lead time and workplace policy emerge as conditions that shape several travellers' choices, not merely individual booking preferences. Where travel remains necessary, the essay favours reducing avoidable legs and poor coordination without claiming that offsets cancel consequences. It closes with a route-specific decision process and a request to record institutional barriers that could be changed before the next trip.

Keywords: travel planning · avoid shift improve · accessibility · workplace policy · transport infrastructure

Adapted from the Still North field journal. Original article. A source-based editorial text, not a report of original Still North research. Examples and imagery are illustrative.

Travel advice is often presented as a contest between modes. A more useful sequence is avoid, shift, and improve. First ask whether the journey is needed in its planned form. Then consider a lower-impact mode that meets the purpose. Finally improve the option that remains. Infrastructure, cost, time, disability, care, and safety determine what is available.

Avoid a trip without avoiding the purpose
Some meetings, check-ins, and repeated errands can be combined, moved online, or handled nearer home. The test is whether the purpose still works. A remote conversation may save travel but fail where trust, equipment, care, field access, or interpretation require presence. Avoid is a question, not an instruction to withdraw from people or places.

Planning earlier creates options. A meeting fixed around the last available flight has already narrowed the decision. Asking for a hybrid format, a clustered schedule, or enough notice for rail can shift the system around several travelers rather than placing the burden on one person to improvise.

Shift where a real alternative exists
Rail can replace some flights, especially where routes are direct and time on board can be used. Public transport, walking, and cycling can replace some car journeys when routes, frequency, access, luggage, weather, and safety

permit. Car sharing can reduce vehicles for a particular trip without solving dependence on a car network. Each choice belongs to a route and person.

A comparison that keeps constraints visible

Improve the journey that remains
When a flight or car journey remains necessary, improve means reducing avoidable legs, choosing a practical direct route, maintaining equipment, sharing where appropriate, and avoiding a second trip caused by poor planning. It does not mean buying an offset and treating every consequence as canceled. Claims require evidence about what is funded and what would otherwise have happened.

Workplaces control many travel defaults. Ask for a rail-first window on suitable routes and enough booking lead time. Include accessible options, useful remote participation, and a travel policy that counts total time rather than only ticket price. Procurement can make the lower-impact option normal instead of an exception requiring personal negotiation.

What the evidence supports
The IPCC AR6 Working Group III Chapter 5 examines demand, services, social context, and infrastructure. It supports looking at mobility needs and the systems that meet them, not shaming people who lack an alternative. The Summary for Policymakers places demand-side measures within a wider mitigation portfolio.

Option	Useful question	Common limit
Remote	Can the purpose be met without presence?	Equipment, care, trust, access, or poor connectivity
Rail	Is the route direct enough to use the travel time?	Price, timetable, border changes, or no service
Public transport	Does it run when and where the journey occurs?	Frequency, step-free access, or last-mile gaps
Walking or cycling	Is the distance, route, weather, and load practical?	Safety, disability, secure storage, or care duties
Car sharing	Can one vehicle serve several necessary journeys?	Coordination, route mismatch, or accessibility

Try one upcoming route

- Write down the purpose, timing, people, equipment, and care needs.
- Ask whether one leg, meeting, or errand can be combined or avoided.
- Compare available modes for the actual route, not an ideal network.
- Choose early enough that price and timetable are not predetermined.
- Tell the institution which policy or service blocked the better option.

The best choice for one trip is not a permanent identity. Conditions change, and the wider task is to make good options more available. Record what worked, what failed, and who can change the constraint before the next journey.

Accessibility is not an exception

A lower-impact option that cannot be used safely or independently is not an available option. Step-free routes, toilets, seating, assistance, sensory information, luggage, and connection time belong in planning. Institutions should publish and fund accessible choices rather than expecting a traveler to disclose and negotiate every need repeatedly.

The same applies to care work and unpredictable schedules. A longer route may be impossible around school, medical, or dependent-care times. Recording that constraint helps move the conversation from personal failure to timetable, service, and workplace design.

A fair travel policy makes those constraints visible before booking begins. The useful comparison is the whole journey, not one especially visible leg. Distance alone never settles that question.

References

1. IPCC AR6 Working Group III Chapter 5 ([ipcc.ch](https://www.ipcc.ch))
2. Summary for Policymakers ([ipcc.ch](https://www.ipcc.ch))