

Making Smarter Choices Work

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The Challenge

The Government published its Transport Strategy ‘The Future of Transport’ in July 2004, to ensure that we have a transport network that can meet the challenges of a growing economy and increasing demand for travel over the coming years.

As people have become better off, they travel further and the demand for travel is only likely to increase in the future.

The increased demand for travel has so far been met predominantly by the car. Cars accounted for 79 per cent of the total distance we travelled back in 1980, but by 2002 it was up to 85 per cent.

People choose the car for many journeys because it allows them to travel direct from one place to another in comfort. But increasing car use comes at a cost, to the environment and to our health.

Increasing congestion can also harm local competitiveness, make travel more difficult and fuel demand for more road space.

“Many of the changes in people’s travel choices are for journeys that were previously made by car and which switch to being made on foot or by bicycle”

**“targeted information,
incentives and marketing
activity can help to
promote walking, cycling,
bus use, car sharing and
so on”**

Smarter Choices

Persuading people to break the habit of simply getting in the car for almost every journey, is not easy

But local authorities can use a wide range of tried and tested techniques for influencing people towards more sustainable travel options, such as walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing.

Sometimes referred to as soft measures or sustainable travel initiatives, they are increasingly known as 'smarter choices'.

Local authorities that use them intensively are already delivering big changes in how people travel.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has published a new guide 'Making Smarter Choices Work', which explains what we know about them, based on the latest research and how local authorities can use them to tackle their traffic problems.

Why are they the smart thing to do?

Recent research for DfT found that an intensive smarter choices programme over 10 years could cut car traffic significantly.

- + Urban peak-hour traffic could be cut by 21 per cent and off-peak traffic by 13 per cent.
- + Non-urban peak hour traffic could be cut by 14 per cent, and off-peak traffic by 7 per cent.
- + Nationally, traffic volumes could be cut by 11 per cent.

The next few months will see the development of the second round of the local transport plans. The Government would like to see every local authority

take full account of the potential delivered by smarter choices in putting together their transport strategies and delivery plans.

What would a local smarter choices programme look like?

A balanced, local smarter choices programme for the next decade might include the following.

- + Dedicated people working with businesses - to set up workplace travel plans, promote tele-conferencing and encourage more flexible working patterns - aiming to cover half the workforce over a period of about 10 years.
- + A rolling programme of personalised travel planning, targeting at least 5,000 to 10,000 people each year, probably neighbourhood by neighbourhood, increasing the number of walking, cycling and bus trips.
- + A partnership with local bus and rail operators to market public transport improvements to local people.

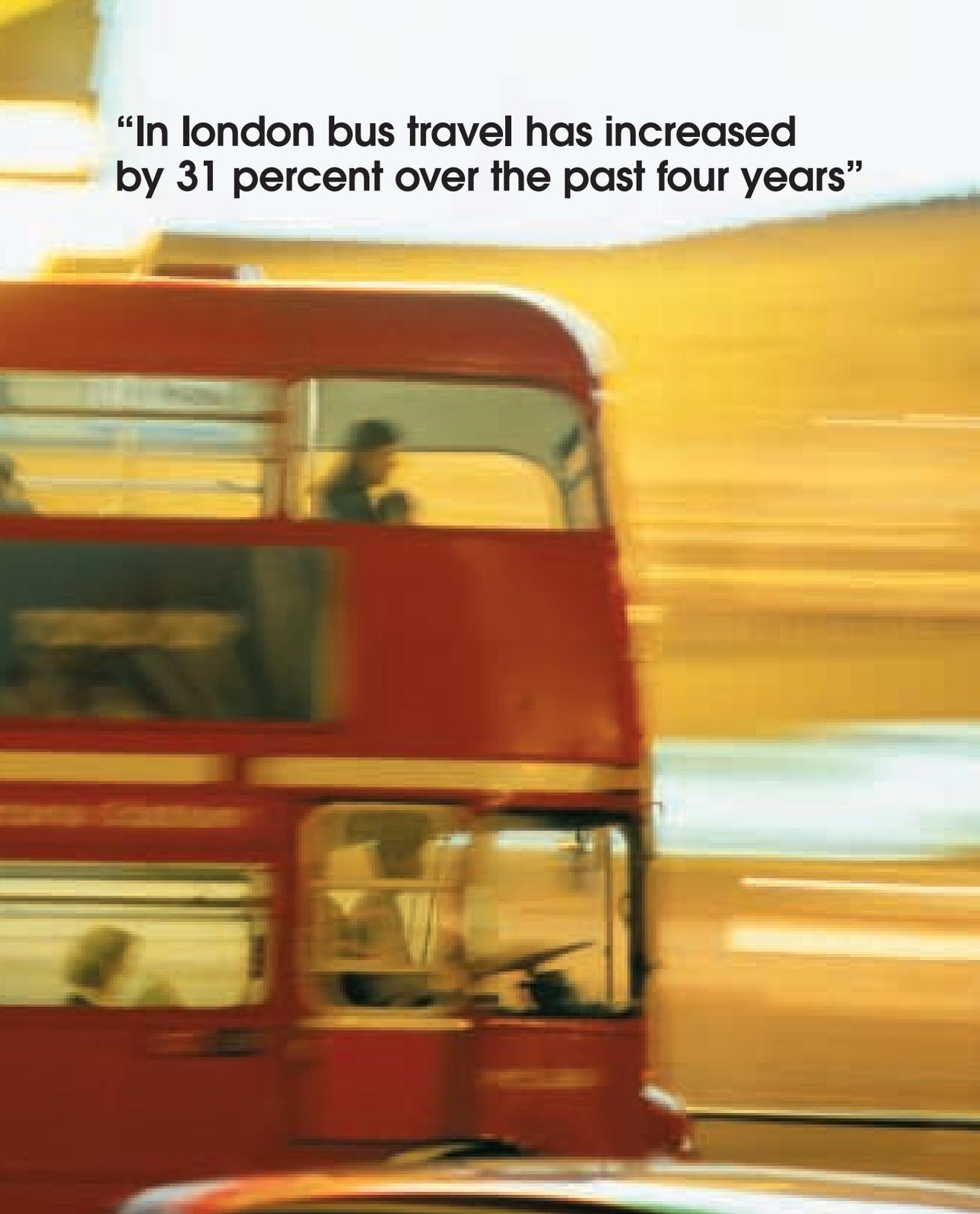
+ A rolling programme to develop school travel plans, including 'safe routes' infrastructure such as cycle tracks, zebra crossings and speed management measures, covering every school in the area over 10 years.

+ A broader travel awareness campaign, underpinning the more targeted initiatives.

+ A series of smaller projects, such as establishing an authority-wide car share scheme and a local car club.

How can local authorities 'lock in' the benefits of smarter choices?

For greatest effect, a smarter choices programme should be combined with 'hard' traffic restraint measures. Without these, the road space freed up by the smarter choices programme could simply attract more cars, so the net effect would be much less.



“In London bus travel has increased by 31 percent over the past four years”

Hard measures to ‘lock in’ the benefits include:

- + re-allocating road capacity - for example, installing high quality bus priority measures, increasing space for pedestrians and cyclists;
- + re-phasing traffic lights to give pedestrians and buses more time;
- + replacing pedestrian subways with surface crossings;
- + parking control, including low parking standards for new developments, charging, use of workplace parking levies, and re-development of parking space for more productive uses;
- + effective anti-congestion measures such as congestion charging; and
- + traffic calming, pedestrianisation, and stronger speed regulation and enforcement.

Similarly, traffic restraint measures are likely to be more effective, and potentially meet less opposition, if they are complemented by an intensive smarter choices programme that gives people wider and better travel options.

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How is the Government helping local authorities?

The Government is directly supporting local authorities in the following ways.

- + Providing £50 million for travel to school initiatives between 2004 and 2006. This is paying for 250 school travel advisers in local authorities and regional co-ordinators, together with capital funding for schools to spend on measures identified in their travel plans - typically £5,000 to £10,000 per school.
- + Investing £10 million over five years in developing three sustainable travel demonstration towns, sharing best practice with other towns that want to develop similar initiatives.
- + Funding/supporting the healthy schools scheme, which encourages schools to promote more physical activity, such as walking and cycling.
- + Taking forward a 42 point action plan to encourage more walking and cycling.
- + Strengthened planning policy guidance, so that planning applications that are likely to have significant transport implications should include a travel plan.

Other help and resources

The Government is also supporting Smarter Choice programmes by:

- + researching and disseminating best practice guides;
- + funding a programme offering up to five days free site-specific consultancy advice to help organisations develop travel plans;
- + offering tax incentives to support travel plan measures;
- + providing guidance and national endorsement of 'In town without my car!' day; and
- + financially supporting the work of a number of non-governmental organisations such as the Association of Commuter Transport, Sustrans, Transport 2000, National TravelWise Association and Carplus.

Where to find out more

You can get the full document 'Smarter Choices: Changing the Way We Travel 2004' from DfT Publication, PO Box 236, Wetherby, LS23 7NB,

E-mail dft@twoten.press.net

Website www.publications.dft.gov.uk

or visit the DfT web site at www.dft.gov.uk