

Making school travel plans work

Experience from English case studies

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This guide is based on case study research carried out for the Department for Transport in 2003/4. Throughout the guide we suggest sources of further advice and information, and these were updated in 2010.

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Making school travel plans work: experience from English case studies

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INTRODUCTION

How can we bring about a ‘step change in home to school travel’? This is what the national Travelling to School Initiative¹ called for at its launch in 2003. With the support of school travel advisers, grants for schools and local transport funding for safer routes, all schools were asked to develop and sustain school travel plans.

At around the same time, research was commissioned to learn from the experience of schools already engaged in successful school travel work. This guide is based on that research. It explains how schools and their local authorities can work together to enable more children to travel safely to school by walking, cycling or taking a bus.

There are compelling reasons for focusing on the school journey. Nearly a third of children travel to school by car, and car use for travel to school has roughly doubled since the mid-eighties. Drivers joining the school run add significantly to peak traffic. In urban areas in term time, more than one in ten cars on the road in the morning rush hour is on the school trip, rising to nearly one in five before school starts². Many schools struggle with traffic congestion at their gates.

Children arriving by car miss out on a valuable opportunity to be physically active, a particular concern in the light of rising childhood obesity. In 2007, around three in ten children were either overweight or obese³. Making it easier for children to walk or cycle to school helps families to build physical activity into everyday life.

At the heart of many school travel projects is a commitment to creating streets that are safer for children, enabling them to move more freely in their own communities. Despite improvements in casualty rates, child pedestrians are more at risk on UK roads than in many other European countries, including the Netherlands, France and Germany. Collisions involving children on foot peak at the end of the school day⁴.

In the last decade local authorities across the country have worked with schools to make journeys safer and encourage healthier travel, through the development of school travel plans. A plan itself of course is just the beginning. What follows next is crucial. This guidance will help schools and local authorities as they continue to translate their written school travel plans into live initiatives.

¹ *Travelling to school: an action plan*, Department for Education and Skills and Department for Transport, September 2003

² *National Travel Survey*, Department for Transport, 2008 and *Travel to School personal travel factsheet 2* Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, March 2001

³ *Statistics on obesity, physical activity and diet: England, February 2009*, The Health and Social Care Information Centre, NHS, 2009

⁴ *Improving road safety for pedestrians and cyclists in Great Britain*, National Audit Office and Department for Transport, May 2009

In the present economic climate, many local school travel programmes are under threat from public spending cuts. But the need to reduce carbon emissions has never been more pressing, and, as the study indicates, school travel plans can contribute by changing travel behaviour. Importantly, legislative changes in 2006 gave local authorities a series of duties in relation to school travel. These include promoting sustainable travel to school; auditing transport infrastructure used on school journeys; and formulating a strategy to develop sustainable travel and transport infrastructure so that the needs of children and young people are better catered for⁵. School travel planning is integral to meeting these obligations.

The guide draws on interviews with 30 case study schools and their local authority advisers. All the schools in the study had either reduced car use for the school journey, or else sustained relatively high levels of walking or cycling. They included primary and secondary schools, schools from rural and urban areas and schools from both the state and private sectors. These schools were already engaged in school travel work at the start of the Travelling to School Initiative, and were chosen for their experience in pioneering effective programmes. Besides looking at what worked for them, we also looked at the wider experience of their local authorities in promoting and supporting school travel plans across their areas. By sharing both their successes and failures they provided many valuable insights and useful ideas on good practice for school travel strategies and plans. We are immensely grateful to all the parents, governors, teaching staff, local authority school travel advisers and others who took part.

Making school travel plans work has four sections.

Section 1 looks at the effectiveness and benefits of school travel planning and the key messages to emerge from the research⁶.

Section 2 looks at the school travel plan toolkit – what initiatives schools put in place and how local authorities can support these.

Section 3 looks at the school travel plan process – how schools develop and sustain travel plans and initiatives.

Section 4 looks at the role local authorities play in encouraging and facilitating school travel work – in making school travel plans happen.

⁵ Details of local authority duties related to school travel are explained in *Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance* (Department for Education and Skills, 2007), available at <http://publications.education.gov.uk/>

⁶ This research was carried out for the Department for Transport in 2003/4.

Case study schools and authorities

The following schools and local authorities participated in the research:

- Bath & North East Somerset Council - The Royal High School, Bath
- Bedfordshire County Council - Holmemead Middle School, Biggleswade
- Bradford Metropolitan District Council (West Yorkshire) - All Saints CE Primary School, Ilkley
- Buckinghamshire County Council - Burford School (primary), Marlow Bottom and Holmer Green First School, High Wycombe
- Cambridgeshire County Council - Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge and The Perse School, Cambridge
- Cornwall County Council - Penryn Junior School, Penryn
- Derby City Council - Walter Evans Primary School, Derby
- Devon County Council - Knowles Hill School, Newton Abbot
- Hertfordshire County Council - Sandringham School, St Albans
- London Borough of Camden - The Royal School, Hampstead
- London Borough of Enfield - Hadley Wood Primary School, Hadley Wood
- Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (Merseyside) - Park Brow Community Primary School, Kirkby
- Merseyside TravelWise - Billinge Chapel End Community Primary School, Billinge, St John Stone Catholic Primary School, Ainsdale and St Sebastian's Catholic Primary School, Liverpool
- Norfolk County Council - Hillside Avenue Primary School, Norwich
- Nottingham City Council - The Nottingham Emmanuel School, Nottingham
- Oxfordshire County Council - Watchfield Primary School, Watchfield
- Reigate & Banstead Borough Council (Surrey) - Holmesdale Infant School, Reigate, and Reigate Priory Junior School, Reigate
- Runnymede Borough Council (Surrey) – The Magna Carta School, Runnymede

- Shropshire County Council – The Priory School, Shrewsbury
- South Gloucestershire Council - St Michael's CEVC Primary School, Stoke Gifford
- Suffolk County Council - Broke Hall Community Primary School, Ipswich and Kesgrave High School, Ipswich
- Surrey County Council (Tandridge District) - Lingfield Community Primary School, Lingfield
- York City Council - All Saints RC Secondary School, York and Lakeside Primary School, York.

SECTION 1

MAKING SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS WORK

Effects, benefits and key messages

School travel work can successfully cut car use and improve safety on the school journey. Teaching staff report an impressive range of other benefits – greater fitness, fewer weight problems, better attendance and children arriving at school calm and ready to learn. This section summarises the key findings and good practice recommendations to emerge from the study.

1.1 Key messages from the case studies

Effects and benefits

- School travel work can be highly effective in reducing levels of car use. For the case study schools in our sample, the average reduction in total car use was 23%, with some high performing schools cutting car use by more than half.
- Schools achieved levels of walking, bus use or cycling that were dramatically above the national average. For example, there were two where more than 70% of pupils walked, two where more than 60% came by bus or train, and two where more than 35% came by bike.
- Major improvements in safety had been achieved. At most of our case study schools, interviewees thought parents perceived travelling conditions had become safer since starting travel work. Some local authorities had evidence that, on average, there were now fewer casualties on all school journeys within the area. These reductions were likely to be due, in part, to their school travel programmes.
- Other benefits reported from school travel work include improvements in children's attendance and punctuality, health and fitness and readiness to learn.

Key success factors

- The most successful school travel plans typically focus on a variety of initiatives, include significant levels of awareness raising, and have mechanisms to ensure that they are sustained over time. Almost all our good practice case studies had benefited from:
 - A positive relationship with the local authority
 - A head teacher that was supportive or very supportive of the travel work
 - Sustained travel work over two years or more
 - A significant level of awareness raising work
 - Leadership from a champion and/or working group.
- Children's involvement in decision-making appears to lead to more successful travel plans. Primary schools achieving greater change in car use had typically involved the school council in travel planning, a possible indicator that these were schools where pupils had a sense of ownership of the travel work and felt empowered within the school. Secondary schools achieving greater change in car use had typically involved their students in developing travel work and included travel work on the curriculum. The involvement of students was particularly common in schools that had been successful in increasing walking.

- The inclusion of school travel policy statements in the school prospectus or induction materials was particularly common in schools that achieved greater changes in travel behaviour. This could be because travel work had become part of the ethos of the school, or because such policies helped to sustain the work in the long term. Most of the schools in the study, and particularly primary schools with more successful plans, had received media coverage for their work, suggesting that this kind of recognition is helpful.
- Over half the case study schools, including the majority of secondary schools, had extensive safety measures and safety improvements in the surrounding area. The role of safety measures in increasing active travel and supporting relatively high levels of walking and cycling appears to be particularly important at secondary level where more children are travelling independently. This may also be because consulting secondary school students about the school route is an effective way of engaging this age group in school travel planning. At primary level, safety measures appear to provide important underpinning for other initiatives.
- The presence of off-road cycle lanes and cycle parking at the schools appeared critical in achieving high levels of cycling. All seven of the top schools for cycling had cycle parking and were served by off-road cycle paths, in some cases complemented by traffic calming, lower speeds and, at secondary level, on-road provision for cycling. At primary level, most schools achieving higher levels of cycling also offered on-road cycle training.
- Even without highways safety measures, some primary schools had achieved major increases in walking by focusing on specific walking initiatives, including walking buses, walking incentive schemes and park and walk arrangements. This probably reflects the fact that these schools were generally encouraging accompanied walking, so that parents were negotiating local traffic hazards with their children.
- At schools that had lower levels of driving to school there were usually parking restrictions in place, indicating that a school that continues to let parents or students use its car park, or park on the road outside the school, is likely to find it is harder to reduce car use. Among the case studies, schools had introduced new or upgraded parking restrictions; undertaken awareness raising about parking problems; encouraged greater police enforcement of restrictions; or put in place strategies for limiting sixth form parking.
- Improving school facilities and arrangements for sustainable travel was particularly common at the case study secondary schools, which had, for example, introduced new entrances for pedestrians and cyclists; upgraded on-site footpaths or lighting; and provided staff supervision for students arriving or leaving or waiting for buses.
- Schools with high levels of bus use generally had new or improved services in place, and either relatively low fares or fare reduction schemes. The three primary schools with the highest levels of bus use (and some of the secondary schools) had

also put various arrangements in place, at the school and on the buses, to make the services more child-friendly. Both dedicated and public services were successful in attracting pupils. Some schools had also boosted bus use by providing dedicated minibuses that connected to the local train station or an after-school club, or ran door-to-door. It was important to have appropriate access arrangements for buses serving the school.

- At the five secondary schools with the highest levels of children coming by bus or train, a proportion of journeys were made by rail. This suggests that, where travelling to school by train is a possibility, it may well be worth improving the links – by bus, bike or foot, between the rail station and the school, and working with train operators to promote and improve services.
- The degree of *change* in car use that was achieved by schools did not appear to be related to the age of the children, the affluence of the parents or the initial level of car use. But, as might be expected, school travel work generally led to lower end levels of car use where children were older, parents were poorer and car use was initially low.
- Although successful school travel initiatives have many similarities, at a detailed level the solutions involved can be very different, because they respond to the individual needs and concerns of the school and build on the interests and capacities of those involved. It is important to keep an open mind about what each school needs, and think creatively and flexibly about what will work there.

Costs

- The amount spent on measures related to the travel plan for an individual school varied greatly from zero to over £400,000 though the average was about £35,000 for a primary school and £67,000 for a secondary school. On the whole, schools had contributed relatively little of this funding, with typical school spending being about £5,000⁷.
- The most substantial costs in a travel plan tended to be the provision of safer infrastructure, cycle parking and/or bus measures. On average, our case study schools had spent about £20,000 on cycle parking, (often putting in high-quality, covered facilities).
- Average spending on safer infrastructure was £36,000 at primary schools and £74,000 at secondary schools, although more than £100,000 had been spent on this at four of the secondary schools, as part of schemes also likely to benefit other schools and the wider community. Linking school travel plans with other local safety schemes can often help in identifying funding.

⁷ Figures collected in 2003/4, and not adjusted for inflation.

Key issues for the school travel plan process

- Many successful travel plans rely on the energy and leadership of one or two people within the school and it is recommended that authorities encourage schools to nominate someone within the school community who can take on this role.
- Among case study schools, travel plan ‘champions’ included head teachers, teachers, parents and governors. Different players brought different strengths to the role, for example, parents could be good at motivating other parents while teachers were well placed to involve children in decision-making through class work. At 24 of the case study schools, travel planning was led by someone on the school staff - including head teachers, teachers and campus managers. This was the case for all of the secondary schools, suggesting that the scale and complexity of the task at secondary level makes it preferable to allocate these responsibilities to a staff member. Where parents *are* leading plans, the involvement of teaching staff may nevertheless be critical in gaining involvement from children. Plans led by the head teacher did not appear to be more successful than other plans, but it did appear to be vital that the head teacher was supportive or very supportive of the work.
- Setting up a school working group to develop and implement the school travel plan was widely recommended as a means of sharing the workload, involving different sectors of the school community and providing continuity over time when individuals leave the school. Many authorities saw this as critical, and made it an explicit expectation of schools they worked with.
- Before starting travel plan work, it is important to assess the situation, and to gain feedback from children and parents about their perception of the issues (rather than making assumptions about the problems). The consultation itself is an important means of raising awareness and encouraging sustainable travel. Secondary schools that consulted extensively were especially successful in changing travel patterns.
- Creating a travel plan document can help to gain commitment to a plan of action and to make it clear who will do what and when (and is also a condition for receiving school travel capital grant funding for site measures). Case study local authorities were concerned to avoid ‘lip service’ plans that existed only on paper, and to focus instead on ‘living documents’ that reflected the school’s activity and changed over time.
- School travel plans have to contend with rising traffic, growing car ownership and some natural variation in travel habits. It is important not to become disheartened if initial results don’t meet expectations, and to remember that those already using sustainable transport will have benefited immediately from any improvements.
- As with any voluntary initiative, finding ways to sustain the impetus of travel work over time is very important. This means, for example, taking trouble to look after volunteers and involve them in ways that are sociable and enjoyable, ‘embedding’

school travel work or arrangements within the school's normal day to day activity, discussing travel with each new intake of children and their parents when they first join the school, and developing strategies to involve new school travel champions and other volunteers over time. It also suggests that professional recognition for the role of school travel co-ordinator within the school would be helpful in sustaining travel work and behaviour change.

- Modal shift targets that focus on desired 'end levels' for different means of travel, rather than a desired percentage change, are recommended, as a means of nurturing high levels of walking and cycling, as well as tackling high levels of car use. Adopting specific targets for walking and cycling can help to relate modal shift to health benefits.

Key considerations for the local authority school travel strategy

Selecting and engaging with schools

- School travel advisers emphasised the need to be sensitive to the context of the individual school and to respond to the interests and motivations of the groups they worked with. Each school needs an appropriate allocation of time. Advisers in case study local authorities typically engaged intensively with five to 10 schools a year and less intensively with a further five.
- The most common motivation for schools to become involved in travel work was school gate problems, followed by concerns about pupils' safety and school run traffic. But links to other initiatives such as Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools were also mentioned as being important.
- Although local authorities naturally prioritised work with enthusiastic schools, they also identified a range of other strategic factors that need to be considered in deciding which schools to engage with first.
- The success of the case study secondary schools, which were some of the highest performers in the study, shows that it is important that local authorities engage with schools at secondary level, even though the work may be more complex and time-consuming, and the strategies required are likely to be different from those needed at primary schools.
- Many case study authorities found it was efficient to work with clusters of schools and that this approach led to many benefits. However, they also found it important to remain sensitive to the needs of individual schools and to encourage equal partnership.
- There was some indication that schools in poorer areas were under-represented in school travel work. This is particularly concerning given the much greater risk to child pedestrians in lower socio-economic groups. When choosing which schools to work with, it is important to make sure that schools with relatively deprived

catchments are well represented in the programme, and that safety problems at schools with low levels of car use, and high levels of walking and cycling, are given full consideration. Individual case studies showed that travel work could be successful in schools serving poorer areas.

Facilitating school travel work

- Local authorities can help to facilitate school travel work by providing an ongoing support network for school volunteers, including training, information and the chance to share experience with other schools. Some authorities generate interest and excitement through area-wide campaigns and award schemes. Providing this general framework of advice and promotion can help to engage and support schools that, for the time being, the authority is not able to work with on a more intensive basis.
- Schools need clear guidance from their local authorities about what is involved in a travel plan, what kind of support the authority can offer and what the authority expects of the school. Authorities were increasingly setting specific requirements for the involvement of the school in the safe routes programme, as a way of securing commitment from the outset. It is nevertheless important that the school receives the support it needs to get started on travel initiatives. Insisting that schools meet very demanding requirements before the school travel team engages with them may deter some schools from ever becoming involved in travel work.
- All case study authorities offered a diverse range of support to schools engaged in travel planning, and the more experienced authorities were regularly involved in 35 – 40 different types of support initiative. Schools especially valued having access to a supportive school travel adviser at the end of the phone, who would engage with the school's travel problems as they arose.
- Long waiting lists for safety measures, a lack of clarity about what might be available and when, and a failure to take specific school safety concerns into account can all undermine confidence in the travel plan process. Authorities need to consider what support they can offer to those schools that they cannot work with intensively immediately. In order to respond more quickly and flexibly to school requests, some authorities had started a programme of smaller-scale highways measures for schools, alongside more comprehensive safe routes schemes.
- Several authorities had found ways to secure teacher involvement, overcoming some of the constraints on teacher time, by providing additional support, including funding for supply cover.
- Some authorities had successfully employed dedicated school travel officers to deliver particular initiatives such as walking buses and walking incentive schemes, and found this an effective way of supporting these activities and rolling them out to large numbers of schools.

- Even where schools had fully-fledged travel plans, school travel advisers found there was a need to revisit and revitalise these plans on a periodic basis. The kind of support networks mentioned earlier can also help schools to maintain the momentum of their school travel work when the local authority school travel adviser is no longer working closely with them.
- Travel work triggered by the planning system can be just as effective as work that is triggered by other factors (and sometimes more so). Many authorities had successfully used the planning system to require new schools or schools involved in redevelopment to produce school travel plans. To make use of these opportunities, travel advisers need to liaise with colleagues in education, planning and transport (development control), and to establish a clear protocol for securing the travel plan. Ideally the need for the travel plan should be broached at an early stage (i.e. in pre-application discussions). Applicants also need clear guidance about what is involved.
- Many authorities found it useful to distinguish between different stages of travel plan development. This enabled them to provide appropriate support and give feedback to schools about how far they had progressed towards achieving a 'fully-fledged travel plan'. It also helped in monitoring the success of the authority's school travel strategy.

Managing the strategy

- School travel advisers liaised with many different players that were involved in the implementation of school travel plans. This meant they needed to build good working relationships with a formidable range of partners, both inside and outside the authority. Several case study authorities emphasised the need to actively promote the school travel programme to other parts of the local authority. Internal organisation varied from one authority to another, and newly appointed advisers were likely to require an orientation from a senior member of staff at an early stage.
- Where school travel advisers were not located within education or road safety departments, these colleagues were likely to be their most important partners. This was particularly relevant in relation to the distribution of capital grants for school travel by Local Education Authorities.
- Effective co-ordination mechanisms were also important. Many authorities achieved this through school travel steering groups that had representation from different departments and were led by a relatively senior member of staff. This could also make it easier to resolve any policy conflicts with other departments and agencies.

1.2 Effectiveness of school travel work

The experience of the case study schools shows travel plans can achieve their main aims and objectives – to reduce car use and school gate problems, support sustainable travel and improve safety on the school journey.

Cutting car use and reducing conflict at the school gate

Twenty-six of our 30 case study schools had reduced car use – two of them by more than half. On average, these 26 had cut car use by almost a quarter.

Of the others, two had seen car use increase but had nevertheless sustained unusually high levels of walking or cycling. A further two had successfully encouraged exceptional levels of cycling, but had not yet monitored car use over time.

Both primary and secondary schools were effective in achieving change.

Around two-thirds of schools said their school travel work had cut congestion at the school gate – one of the main reasons why schools become involved in travel planning.

Our case study schools were all nominated to the study for their good practice in travel work, so could be expected to be ‘high achievers’. But some local authorities also reported encouraging reductions across sizable groups of schools they had worked with:

- ▶ In Buckinghamshire, schools judged by the authority to have fully-fledged travel plans cut car use by around a fifth.
- ▶ In Cambridgeshire, a group of eight, mainly private schools, working on travel initiatives through a sustainable travel partnership, reduced car use by an average of 22%.
- ▶ In Devon, nine schools held up by the authority as examples of good travel plan work, had achieved an average car use reduction of 28%

Taken overall, the results suggest that when local authorities engage with schools that are happy to be involved in school travel work, there will inevitably be some schools that do not achieve a reduction in car use. But a high proportion – between 60 and 90% – can be expected to achieve some positive modal shift. What’s more, a significant percentage – between 15 and 40% of schools engaged in school travel work – can be expected to reduce car use by over a fifth.

Improving safety

The majority of schools in our study said conditions in the surrounding area had become safer, though several wanted to see further improvements. Some schools said their travel work had contributed to maintaining their zero accident record. Some commented that children were now better equipped to cross roads.

Authorities have difficulty in measuring the impact of road safety measures at individual schools, but some had evidence that there were now fewer casualties on school journeys.

- ▶ In York, the level of self-reported accidents by Year 5 and 6 children at schools with school safety zones was almost half of that reported by the same year groups across all primary schools.
- ▶ Hertfordshire monitored all child casualties that occurred on the school journey and had seen a 25% reduction – likely to be partly due to the authority’s school travel programme. In the area around one school, there had been seven injury accidents for all age groups in the three years before school travel work, but there had been none in the three subsequent years.

1.3 Wider benefits

Besides their potential to improve safety and cut car use, school travel plans can lead to a range of other benefits for schools. Though the evidence is inevitably anecdotal, case study schools reported:

- **Better health and fitness from walking and cycling**

Several teachers commented on improvements in pupils' fitness and on a lack of overweight or obese children. One school linked cycling to sporting success.

► In Hertfordshire, research with 10 – 13 year olds shows that, on average, children use more calories travelling to and from school each week than in two hours of PE. A typical one-way trip to school by car offers less than half the physical activity of travelling by bus or on foot⁸.

- **Improved attendance and punctuality**

Two primary schools had tackled serious problems in attendance and punctuality through their walking bus schemes. Others attributed low absentee rates to their travel work.

- **Helping children to learn**

School travel work offers many educational benefits. Several schools said walking to school helped children to be alert and ready to learn in the mornings. Whether because they had woken up, burnt off energy or had a chance to talk to friends, they apparently arrived more settled. One interviewee said the school's walking bus had helped calm and settle children whose behaviour was "extremely challenging".

Travel work on the curriculum can help students understand environmental and citizenship issues, and give them a chance to take part in 'real life' decisions.

- **Growing self-esteem, independence and social skills**

Several schools said how much children enjoyed travelling independently and meeting up with others. In Devon, staff considered that a project to engage vulnerable children in school travel work had helped them to feel part of the school community and raised self-esteem.

- **Improvements for the whole community**

Schools said their travel plans helped to forge positive links with the wider community. Local residents often appreciated local road improvements. And travel plans also attracted strong volunteer commitment – sometimes from parents not usually involved in community initiatives.

- **Greater travel awareness both now and tomorrow**

School travel work gives children a greater awareness of alternatives to the car and the benefits of active travel, which may stay with them later in life. It has a 'feel good' factor that can make it a flagship for other travel awareness initiatives in the wider area. It also

⁸ Mackett RL, Lucas L, Paskins J and Turbin J (2003) The health benefits of walking to school. Paper for Sustrans national conference, Leicester.

enables local authorities to see highways engineering and traffic from a fresh perspective, taking a child's eye view on the road environment.

CASE STUDY: ST SEBASTIAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Tackling lateness and street safety

Type of school: RC primary

309 pupils, age 3 – 11

Free school meals: 37%

At St Sebastian's, an inner-city primary school in Liverpool, walking buses had helped to tackle lateness problems and to secure funding for new street lighting, with benefits for the whole community.

Around 60 children joined three walking buses daily and the proportion of children travelling by car had fallen by almost a third – from 40% to 27%. A team of 30 volunteers ran the buses and held regular meetings to share ideas. Staff were proud of the way the walking buses had made links with the local community. Valerie Wright, a welfare assistant who co-ordinated the school travel work said everyone was involved: "It's made the grandmas fitter as well as the children."

Increasing awareness among parents and residents was felt to have reduced congestion at the gate – one of the main concerns that had prompted the school to start travel work.

The walking bus helped to prepare children for travelling alone by fostering road safety skills. Older children were encouraged to walk with younger ones, to give them a sense of responsibility. Stan Ryan, Chair of the PTA, said the initiative was "really nice for the children", who sometimes sang on the way. A few children, who had previously been late so often that the school offered to buy them alarm clocks, now joined the bus and arrived on time. One pupil commented that the walking bus "wakes your brain up".

New lighting in surrounding streets had made winter journeys safer and the school more accessible to the community for evening events and classes. Local authority plans for a new zebra crossing and a 20mph zone were also eagerly welcomed by local residents.

Several further initiatives had helped to support walking. Parents and staff were encouraged to park at a distance from the school on regular 'park away' days, publicised as 'Walking Wednesdays' and 'Fresh Air Fridays'. The school took part in Walk to School events and the local authority school travel adviser had delivered an assembly at the school. Year 1 children received on-road pedestrian training with trained volunteers.

Support from Merseyside TravelWise

Merseyside TravelWise (a partnership of the passenger transport executive and five local authorities) had worked closely with St Sebastian's to develop the plan. School travel adviser, Dave Wells, had held around 20 meetings with the school over one and a half years, and at one stage took part in the walking bus two or three times a week. He was generally available to deal with problems as they arose, and had assisted by writing funding bids, running a consultation event at the school and liaising with the city council.

SECTION 2

LEVERS FOR CHANGE

The school travel plan toolkit

A school travel plan is a package of initiatives designed to improve safety, reduce car use and support sustainable travel for the school journey. This section looks at the range of initiatives available. While some are led by the school, others – such as changes to the highway – can only be implemented by the local authority. But all may need support and facilitation from the local authority school travel adviser.

2.1 Encouraging walking

Despite its steep decline, walking is still the most common means of travel to school. Nationally, 48% of 5 – 10 year olds and 40% of 11 – 16 year olds make the journey this way, with shorter trips much more likely to be made on foot⁹.

Seven of the case study schools had increased walking by around half or more. The secondary school with the most walkers was Sandringham School in St Albans, where the proportion of children arriving on foot had risen from 35% to 54%. Meanwhile, at Lakeside Primary School in York and Holmemead Middle School in Biggleswade, over 70% of children were walking (or scooting) to school – the highest levels in the study. All three schools had benefited from relatively extensive engineering measures. The evidence suggests that safe walking routes provide a favourable context for successfully promoting walking through other initiatives, although some schools had increased journeys on foot despite local safety problems.

The promotional strategies adopted by schools were age-related. In primary schools, walking incentives schemes, Walk to School week and walking buses were popular choices. They often ran alongside each other and could work well in combination. Different factors were involved in encouraging secondary school students to walk, and these are discussed later in this chapter.

Walking incentive schemes

In the study, more than half the primary schools were running schemes to reward children for walking to school with stickers, badges, certificates and prizes. This can be very effective in encouraging journeys on foot, and was the main factor in achieving the study's most impressive increase (see case study on page 22). Many authorities are now supporting such initiatives, though the details vary. In some schemes, points are allocated to each child, and build towards stickers, which in turn build towards prizes such as fluffy bugs, pencils or vouchers for sports activity sessions. In other schemes, the whole class earns points and the class with the highest level of walking receives a trophy – such as a “Golden Boot” (a shoe spray-painted gold). Some schemes combine incentives for both individuals and classes.

Incentives can be extended to cover other forms of travel, with points for children arriving by bicycle, bus or car sharing. They have also been adapted to ‘park and walk’ strategies, so that points are awarded for walking a minimum distance (see section 2.4). Schemes may operate every day or once a week, for example, on ‘Fresh Air Fridays’ or ‘Walking Wednesdays’, and some schemes are confined to the summer term. Parents are made aware of the scheme through a letter home, and are sometimes asked to give written permission for children to participate.

The choice of scheme needs careful consideration.

- Schemes that award points to individual children have proved effective in motivating children over long periods, providing there is a clear structure in which they know

⁹ *National Travel Survey*, Department for Transport, 2008

what they are aiming for. The downside is that these schemes need extensive record keeping and involve considerable support from parent volunteers who are on duty at school to stamp children's cards every morning. The use of material rewards also makes accuracy more critical. Some schools are now moving away from small prizes to other rewards such as house points.

- Schemes that award points to the whole class may be easier for teachers to administer. One problem is that older year groups can end up winning the trophy every time, so it may be necessary to introduce prizes for different age bands, or award points to school houses instead. The use of specially designed 'carousels' may also simplify monitoring.

► School journey monitoring carousels were introduced into Surrey schools, as part of the county's Golden Boot Challenge. Pupils drop a ping-pong ball into a tube corresponding to the means of travel used to school that day. The tubes had a calibrated scale, and daily totals were read and transferred to a wall chart. Over the weeks, pupils could see the pattern of their travel emerge.

Local authorities can support schemes by supplying all the materials to run them – including scorecards, carousels, stickers, certificates and prizes.

CASE STUDY: HOLMER GREEN FIRST SCHOOL

Walking rises as children Go for Gold

Type of school: Infant
179 pupils, age 4 – 7
Free school meals: 0%

Stickers, badges and prizes helped to nearly double walking and to halve car use at Holmer Green First School, on the edge of High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. The Go for Gold incentive scheme introduced by the school was subsequently rolled out across the county.

Children joining the scheme had a card stamped each time they arrived on foot, by bike or by scooter. Stamps built towards stickers in a sequence that moved from bronze to silver to gold. Each gold sticker earned a small prize, such as a badge or pencil, and on the 12th, a gold ticket, exchangeable for an activity such as swimming or football training with the Wycombe Wanderers. Children on their 4th, 8th or 12th stickers were also awarded certificates in assembly. Regular assemblies on walking also helped to promote travel work.

Two parents ran Go for Gold, one kept a database record of children's progress on the scheme, while the other co-ordinated a team of 20 parent volunteers who took it in turn to stamp the cards.

Other initiatives to support walking included a walking bus for 14 children, participation in Walk to School events and on-road pedestrian training through the Footsteps scheme. 'Park and walk' sites had been arranged, providing off-road parking at local facilities such as a pub and a parish hall. Children who were driven part of the way, but walked from outside a school 'exclusion zone' could still earn stamps in the Go for Gold scheme.

The plan had benefited from strong staff support, but was led by a group of eight parents who went into classes to work directly with children on school travel work. Head teacher Sue Huntley said school travel work was encouraging healthy lifestyles: "We have children that are fitter because they walk more. Children are observing the world in which they live and talking to people about what they see. They are making friends more because they are palling up to walk to school."

The local authority had supported the scheme with funding of £12,000 towards a new conservatory where children could hang wet clothing and leave bikes and scooters. The county also provided Go for Gold materials, including record cards, stickers and certificates. They had helped to set up the walking bus and offered ongoing support and training to the parent governor who co-ordinated the travel plan. The school was hoping that the local authority would also be able to provide safer infrastructure in the surrounding area, which they felt would help to cement and sustain their travel work.

Walking buses

Nine case study schools had successful walking buses in place. The concept has been widely publicised and is often the first school travel initiative to be attempted by primary schools. Schemes involve a group of children walking to school escorted by two or more adult volunteers. Adults usually take part according to a rota, though some also join the bus at times when they are not 'on duty'. Walking buses follow a set route, stopping at agreed pick-up points in the neighbourhood. Both children and adults usually wear safety tabards and a trolley is sometimes used to carry bags. Children are often rewarded with small incentives. The main benefit of schemes is that children can be accompanied on foot before they are ready to make independent journeys, even if their parents cannot walk with them every day.

A number of safety checks are used: a road safety officer assesses the walking bus route and provides road safety training to volunteers. Volunteers undergo appropriate background checks (see section 3.3) and are covered by public liability insurance, often under the authority's own scheme. Parents sign a consent form and are expected to wait with their child until the walking bus arrives. Schemes follow a recommended ratio of adults to children – in Hertfordshire, for example, this was one adult to eight juniors or one adult to four infants. More detailed advice on setting up walking buses is available¹⁰.

¹⁰ *The Walking Bus: a step-by-step guide* produced by Hertfordshire County Council School Travel Team can be downloaded at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/schooltravel/howtsetupawalkingbus>

Local authorities typically support schemes by overseeing the initial training and safety checks. They may also provide tabards, banners and small prizes for children taking part, and funding for celebrations.

Several case study schemes had been remarkably successful – with one attracting as many as 60 children (see page 19). Yellow tabards and banners make walking buses a visible community presence that can act as a flagship for both the school and its travel plan. Children may even sing as they walk attracting waves and smiles from local residents. Yet while some schemes flourish, many fold from lack of interest and parental support.

Successful schemes appear to be those that are fun for children and sociable for parents. The effectiveness of walking buses in tackling serious punctuality problems (see pages 19 & 76) makes them especially suitable for schools struggling with this issue.

The following factors may help in sustaining the initiative and overcoming problems:

- Streamlining the local authority's arrangements for volunteer training, insurance and appropriate background checks (see section 3.3), so that there are no long delays at the start.
- Deciding the walking bus route in consultation with volunteers once they have been recruited, rather than trying to find escorts for a specific route.
- Deciding from the outset whether all parents whose children use the walking bus are expected to take part on a regular basis. Parents who are working fulltime may not be able to act as escorts. If you are trying to include these families the issue needs to be discussed at an early stage.
- Promoting and publicising the scheme with an initial launch, and recruitment drive for children and volunteers at the start of the autumn term, when families may be making new travel arrangements.
- Marking the calendar with frequent celebrations, and offering treats and incentives for children, while involving parent volunteers through meetings and social events.

► At Hadley Wood Primary School in Enfield, 37 children regularly used the school's two walking buses. The birthday of the first 'bus' was celebrated with balloons and a cake, and there were also guest visits from Father Christmas and the Easter Bunny. Children taking part were given stickers and prizes once or twice a term in school assembly. Volunteers met monthly and, once a year, the school's parent champion invited all the parents involved to get together for a drink and discuss any issues. Car use had fallen from 76% to 63% in two years.

The collapse of a walking bus should not always be seen as a failure. In some cases children continue to walk, independently or with others. The reflective clothing and

regimentation make walking buses generally less appealing for children in the last year or two of primary school.

Walk to School events

Walk to School weeks and days were widely promoted by case study schools, and used to reinforce other initiatives. As part of the national campaign, school travel can become a focus in classroom work, school displays and special assemblies. Children are encouraged to meet walking distance challenges, with rewards and festivities for all those walking to school. Some schools extend the campaign with a weekly Walk to School day.

- ▶ At Billinge Chapel End Primary School in Merseyside, a campaign for Walking Wednesdays was promoted with fliers produced by pupils. To prepare the material, they found out about the benefits of walking and discovered how many children walked already.
- ▶ At Burford School, in Buckinghamshire, primary age children met the challenge to collectively walk the distance from Lands End to John O’Groats in Walk to School week.
- ▶ At Hadley Wood Primary School in Enfield, Walk to School week was celebrated with “walk the dog” and “push the pram” days – with a prize for the best dressed animal or pram – and a no-uniform-for-walkers day.

Organisers need to ensure that there is good scope for all children to be involved in some way, including those who are unable to walk to school, for example, because of mobility difficulties. This could mean developing activities around a broader sustainable transport theme, or gearing specific challenges to children’s abilities and circumstances.

Pedestrian training

Pedestrian training is usually provided by parent volunteers, who have, themselves, received training from road safety officers. Effective sessions include training at the roadside rather than being entirely classroom based. Training should ideally be a long-term process with sessions at different ages.

- ▶ Knowsley Council in Merseyside offered some form of road safety education for every year group in primary schools. Parents of children in reception received a road safety book and tape. Each Year 1 child had a pedestrian assessment with a trained volunteer. Parents received a letter explaining what stage their child was at, with a copy of the ‘Tornado Way’ – a local version of the green cross code – to work on with the child. For Year 2 pupils there was a workbook called ‘Keep Myself Safe’. Years 3 and 4 saw a road safety play once a year. Older pupils were offered a ‘Fast Lane’ session, which involved using a speed gun to measure vehicle speeds near the school, and monitoring seatbelt wearing. Children were taught about stopping distances, and did a mapping exercise plotting real accidents around the school.

Promoting walking in secondary schools

Several secondary schools in the study had managed impressive increases in walking and most appeared to have some potential for encouraging more journeys on foot. Those that

were most successful usually combined safe routes measures with active involvement from students in developing the project through their curriculum work.

This is not altogether surprising. The perceived safety of the road environment is likely to be particularly important once children are making independent journeys, and the development of a safe routes scheme is a remarkable opportunity to raise awareness about travel choices. The experience of these schools suggests that student involvement in the travel plan may make it more effective.

Some of the walking initiatives described above could potentially be adapted to suit older children. One case study secondary school had successfully encouraged its younger pupils to compete for a walking trophy. Secondary schools had also participated in Walk to School week. In addition, site design and other arrangements, discussed below, are likely to be important in supporting walking at secondary schools.

Pedestrian friendly sites and arrangements

The built environment conveys many messages about the way we are expected to travel. Meagre footways and generous driveways place the car at the head of the transport hierarchy. Schools need to think carefully about how their sites can be designed to welcome those on foot (and on bicycle).

Many schools have made use of the Government's school travel capital grants scheme to fund changes to their sites. New schools and schools undergoing redevelopment have a key opportunity to ensure their sites are pedestrian and cycle friendly. The planning process can help local authorities to secure design changes (see section 4.4).

Opening an additional site entrance or providing a key footpath along a pedestrian desire line can make walking quicker and more convenient, and may enable some children to make simpler journeys on quieter roads. A separate pedestrian entrance prevents children from having to mingle with traffic. A wide path that connects straight to the main doors helps emphasise that pedestrians have priority. Improving lighting and cutting back excessive vegetation can help to address safety. Better surfacing for informal footpaths may make them a more attractive option when it rains.

Some authorities have funded wet weather shelters at primary schools. These provide somewhere for parents to wait when collecting children on foot and are also used by volunteers stamping children's scorecards for walking incentive schemes. At some primary schools, shelters have been incorporated into the school building to provide additional space to hang coats and store scooters.

In secondary schools, providing adequate locker storage can allow students to manage their books and equipment more easily and avoid an overload on the school journey. Careful scheduling of the school day, especially homework timetables, can also help. School uniform policies that conflict with healthy travel and road safety should be reviewed – for example, to include backpacks, trainers and visible outdoor wear.

Supervision is also important. At some case study schools, teachers were on duty outside school at the start and finish of the day, to encourage responsible behaviour as children

arrived and left. Breakfast clubs had also proved helpful in supporting school travel arrangements (see pages 38 & 75).

► The Priory School in Shrewsbury cut four minutes off the school journey for students travelling from the nearest residential area, by improving a path from a side entrance to the grounds. A new pedestrian entrance was created directly in front of the school, providing car-free access along a tree-lined path.

CASE STUDY: SANDRINGHAM SCHOOL

Site changes help welcome those on foot

Type of school: Secondary

1,160 students, age 11 - 18

Free school meals: 4.7%

Pedestrian-friendly grounds, safer routes in the surrounding area, and travel awareness work with students, had all helped to support journeys on foot to Sandringham School in St Albans, Hertfordshire.

A series of changes had improved safety within the school grounds, including zebra markings and speed restrictions in the school car park and the creation of a separate entrance for pedestrians next to the main gate. At the start and finish of the day the main gate was closed to traffic for ten minutes, to allow students on foot or bicycle to arrive or leave in safety. Wooden fencing had been replaced by metal railings so that children could see traffic more easily when leaving school.

Safe routes measures introduced outside the school included a puffin crossing - designed to detect the presence of pedestrians and control the lights accordingly. Resurfacing and lighting improvements had turned a mud track into an attractive footpath. 'Gateway' signs alerted motorists as they entered the school surroundings. Changes were not without some problems: concerns that the design of the puffin crossing encouraged children to look in the wrong direction for oncoming traffic, had led teachers to routinely supervise children using it. The scheme, which also brought benefits to a feeder primary school, cost around £120,000 including new bike sheds. Traffic calming in the wider area, while not directly related to school travel work, added further to the safety of school journeys.

The school's most intensive travel work took place between 1996-8, when initial consultations included exhibitions and displays put up by Hertfordshire County Council. A competition invited children to design the gateway road signs. Class work on school travel took place in English and geography and the design technology teacher developed a module on school travel for Year 9 pupils, with nine one-hour sessions covering public attitudes, health and road safety issues and the work of the school's safer routes to school working group. Until the teacher left, around 45 students took the module each year. School travel featured

in assemblies at least once a term and was also a focus for visiting theatre groups as well as remaining on the geography syllabus. Sustainable travel to school was further encouraged through the home-school agreement, signed by parents. In addition, a slight reduction in the school's catchment area, encouraged by a deliberate change in local admissions policy, helped to make walking more feasible.

Other measures at Sandringham were introduced to support cycling and bus use. Besides having secure cycle parking, there was a 'tidal flow' arrangement for the cycle lane on the road running past the school. Signs encouraged drivers to park on one side of the road in the morning and the other in the afternoon, so that student cyclists were not obstructed (though restrictions are not always observed by local residents). The school was served by several buses, including public buses and free school transport. Timetables were available in reception and sent to parents at the beginning of the school year and bus operators made presentations in assembly about behaviour issues.

Surveys indicated that in the seven years after the school first started its travel work, the proportion of children walking grew by more than half, from 35% to 54%, while the proportion cycling trebled – from 2% to 6%. Bus use slightly dropped. Meanwhile car use more than halved, falling from 40% to 18%.

School crossing patrols

Schools often identify key places where a school crossing patrol would assist children making independent journeys. Recruitment can be a problem. Road Safety GB has guidelines on the management and operation of the service, including recruitment policies¹¹. Where authorities have actively pursued recruitment and failed, they can look at alternatives such as more controlled crossings. Sometimes small-scale infrastructure, such as a traffic island, can help to make the job easier and more attractive.

¹¹ School Crossing Patrol Guidelines, updated in June 2008, are available on the Road Safety GB website to member local authorities.

2.2 Encouraging cycling

In 2008, only 2% of children cycled to school. Our study shows that dramatic change is possible, but also underlines the need for radical improvements in the cycle network.

The school in the study with the highest level of cycling was Kesgrave High, a Suffolk secondary school, where more than half the students arrived by bike, with support from extensive off-road cycle routes. Meanwhile the best-performing primary school was Watchfield in Oxfordshire, where more than a third of children were cycling to school, helped by low speeds and a shared-use pedestrian and cycling network on the adjacent housing estate. In all, seven case study schools had achieved cycling levels of around 10% or more. The most impressive rise in cycling was at Hillside Avenue Primary School in Norfolk where the proportion of children arriving by bike had climbed from 1% to 12% in just over two years, following a full range of initiatives to promote cycling. Success factors for building a cycle culture, identified through the study, are outlined below.

Safe cycle routes

Safe cycling infrastructure, especially off-road provision, is critical in supporting cycle use, making it a key consideration for school travel plans. All seven of the top schools for cycling were served by off-road cycle paths, in some cases complemented by traffic calming, lower speeds and, at secondary level, on-road provision for cycling. In the case of the two top performing schools, extensive off-road cycle networks were in place in the immediate residential area. At schools with lower cycling rates, several interviewees saw traffic danger and a lack of safe routes as the key barrier to promoting cycling.

Importantly though, not all schools that were successful in encouraging cycling had started out with this advantage.

- ▶ In Nottingham, where the authority worked with the Nottingham Emmanuel School, to provide comprehensive improvements to the cycle network serving this new secondary, 17% of students had begun travelling by bike.
- ▶ At Hillside Avenue Primary School in Norwich, a new path to the rear of the school improved the amenity of an important pedestrian and cycling route, contributing to cycling levels of 12% in summer.

Some authorities routinely secured developer contributions to fund cycle ways in and around new estates.

Cycle parking

Provision of cycle parking is a second critical factor in encouraging cycling. Covered facilities with Sheffield stands are recommended, with smaller stands for primary schools. Security is a major issue: and many schools deliberately choose locations that are overlooked from classrooms or the head teacher's office, with some secondary schools investing in CCTV. Some schools lock shelters at the beginning and end of the day as well as locking bikes individually. See-through shelters without gaps at the bottom and individual cycle lockers can both help to combat vandalism. Placing cycle shelters close to the building's main entrance adds to convenience while also raising the profile of cycling.

Modern and attractively designed facilities help to give cycling a progressive image. Some schools have found opportunities to involve students in designing shelters, choosing between designs or naming cycle sheds.

Cycle training and promotion

Among case study schools, cycle training was the initiative most widely used to encourage cycling. While many road safety departments train parent volunteers to provide this, some have opted to carry out training themselves, or to employ a specialist team to do so. Training can be specifically geared to the needs of the school journey.

► In York all schools were offered cycle training. Advanced sessions available to secondary schools involved one-to-one tuition with a professional instructor along the route used each day – provision that had been especially well received by parents and pupils.

Some schools experience difficulty in offering training to children who live too far away to cycle in – a problem overcome at one primary by purchasing extra bikes and helmets. Alongside cycle training, some schools had run other cycling activities, such as security postcoding by police or training in cycle maintenance.

Since this research was carried out, Cycling England has introduced Bikeability – a cycle training scheme supported by the National Standard for Cycle Training, which spans three different levels, with awards at each stage of development. Another initiative now transforming cycling in schools is Sustrans' Bike It project. Bike It officers work to support cycling champions in schools in creating a cycling culture. More information on the Bike It scheme can be found on the Sustrans websites.

School arrangements

Schools with large cycling populations adopted a variety of arrangements to cater for cyclists. As discussed in the last chapter on walking, provision of locker space, careful scheduling of the school day to reduce the equipment students have to carry, and supervision of children arriving and leaving, could all be helpful. In Cambridgeshire, the local education authority had decided to cut the distance for which students could claim assistance with travel costs from five to three miles. The change meant more post-16 students could claim for cycling journeys, and encouraged more sixth formers to travel by bike.

Cycle rules and permits

Schools are often more prepared to encourage cycling if they attach key conditions to pupil cycle use through rules, policies or permit schemes. This can involve a form signed by parents, accepting responsibility for the safety of the child and the security of the bike. Some schools will not allow children to cycle until they have completed cycle training. Others ask parents to vouch for the cycle's roadworthiness and the student's cycling behaviour, and specify the use of safety gear and secure locks. It is important that requirements are not so onerous that they are impractical to administer or become a barrier to cycling. Schools with high cycling levels often prohibit cycling within school grounds.

Escorted cycling

Several schools had taken steps to encourage parents to escort children by bicycle. In Surrey, some junior schools benefited from family cycling sessions run at weekends by trained volunteers. Involvement from the whole family may help to encourage leisure cycling, which then carries over to the school journey. Some case study schools had bought cycle trailers to loan to parents.

► An award of £1,700 from the Department of Health's 'Safe and Sound Challenge' enabled Holmesdale Infant School in Surrey to buy 10 trailer bikes. These could be attached to an adult bicycle allowing a young child to ride behind. The trailers were loaned to parents without charge in term time, and hired out over the holidays at £5 a week, to cover maintenance costs. The scheme proved popular and there was a waiting list for use.

A 'cycle train' or 'cycle bus' – the cycling equivalent of a walking bus – can also enable younger children to cycle in a group escorted by adult cyclists. Guidance on *Starting a cycling bus*, including standard letters, risk assessment and group riding techniques, is available from Surrey County Council, contact David Sharpington, on 020 8541 9977.

CASE STUDY: WATCHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Safe routes and low speeds support cycle train

Type of school: Primary
312 pupils, age 3 – 11
Free school meals: 2%

The experience of Watchfield Primary School in rural Oxfordshire shows how cycle-friendly infrastructure and low speeds can support a cycling culture, which enables even young children to cycle to school. More than a third of Watchfield's pupils made the school journey by bike, around 20 joining a 'cycle train' – a group of children and parents cycling together. Road conditions were critical: there was traffic calming close to the school and on the adjacent housing estate, which had speeds of 20 or 15mph and an extensive shared-use pedestrian and cycling network. Many roads were Ministry of Defence owned, and MoD police enforced parking restrictions outside the school, morning and afternoon, two or three times a week. A toucan crossing provided by Oxfordshire County Council had filled a 'missing link' in the cycle network, creating a safe route across a busy road.

The cycle train was co-ordinated by the school administrator, who drew up a fortnightly roster for around six parent escorts. Each did five out of ten shifts a week. Children from five to 11 years old rode with the train, which followed a 2km route, picking up cyclists along the way. Extra trips in the afternoon were scheduled for children staying late to take part in after-school activities.

For children to join the cycle train, parents signed a consent form and were given a list of requirements related to helmets, jackets, bicycle roadworthiness and behaviour. Cyclists were equipped with backpacks and wet weather clothing.

Parents met once every half term to discuss any issues and new parents were invited to take part. The county council provided those involved with insurance cover.

The school's cycle storage, funded by the county council and the Countryside Agency, provided facilities for 120 bicycles, weather-protected in a Hostaglass shelter. Theft had not been a problem, since the shelter was in full view of classrooms, but could not be seen from the road.

The head teacher, who had personally championed the school's travel plan, believed cycling had cut absenteeism and improved fitness.

Children in years 4, 5 and 6 received cycle training from trained instructors with sessions that began on the playground and progressed to the road. Parents were continually reminded to consider sustainable travel options in the school newsletter and the travel plan was part of the school development plan. Besides funding the toucan crossing and cycle parking, the council's main role had been in providing advice and publicising the success of the cycle train.

CASE STUDY: KESGRAVE HIGH SCHOOL

Embedding cycling in the school culture

Type of school: Secondary

1450 students, age 11 – 18 years

Free school meals: 5%

At Kesgrave High School in Ipswich, more than half of students arrived by bike and the school had made many changes to meet the needs of a large cycling population. The school's cycling culture was supported by a network of good cycle routes appropriate to younger and inexperienced riders: Kesgrave Estate – where around half the students lived – was well served by shared-use off-road paths, with grade-separated underpasses at key junctions and main road crossings. The network had been introduced gradually, phased in with new housing developments and largely funded by developer contributions.

With cycling as the main means of transport, the school had become actively engaged in managing student travel. Kesgrave staff supervised students when they arrived and left, ensuring they acted safely and used a pedestrian underpass to cross the busy A-road outside the site.

School arrangements make it easier for students to cut down on the amount they carried. Every student had a locker and the day was run as three 90-minute sessions, punctuated by lunch and break time. Besides reducing the amount of books and kit required, the timetable enabled students to return to their lockers between sessions.

The school said cycling had contributed to success in sport: travelling independently allowed students to access high quality sports facilities and fixtures – and to get fitter in the process of getting there. Few students were overweight. Deputy head teacher Brian Hawkins said cycling had become embedded in the school culture and new students often bought a bike alongside their school uniform.

The school had spent £60,000 on provision related to cycling, including cycle parking with CCTV coverage, pupil lockers and improved access for cyclists entering the school grounds. Grants from the Department for Transport Cycling Project Fund, Suffolk Waste Management and Sustrans had together contributed £14,500 towards these costs, and new cycle parking had been required as a condition of planning permission as the school expanded.

Surveys indicated that, between 1995 and 1998, the percentage of children cycling climbed from 45% to 61%, a figure sustained for at least two years, though it had since dropped back, with a rise in car use following the addition of a sixth form. By October 2003, around 55% of students arrived by bike. Promoting bike use to sixth formers was seen as an important challenge for the future.

2.3 Encouraging bus and rail use

Many children that live too close to school to qualify for free school transport¹² might travel by bus if the right service were available. Our study included a variety of initiatives, where local authorities, schools and public transport operators had worked together to improve services and adapt them to the needs of schoolchildren. At two case study schools, more than 60% of pupils were travelling by bus or rail, and one school had persuaded nearly a third of its pupils to start travelling this way.

Initiatives to promote bus and rail are particularly important for secondary schools, rural schools and private schools, all of which draw children from greater distances. Bus travel can also offer a good solution where primary age children are travelling from further afield. In the last decade the length of school journeys made by 5 – 10 year olds has increased by over a fifth so that the average journey to primary school is now over a mile and a half¹³

Detailed government guidance on local authority duties and powers related to the provision of school transport is available¹⁴.

Meeting school needs through public services

Nationally, over a fifth of 11 – 16 year olds travel to school on local buses¹⁵. Many schools in the study were benefiting from public services, in some cases specially introduced to serve school routes. Services can be commercially provided, or supported by the local authority as socially necessary. Several case study schools were actively promoting public transport – providing bus information at reception and in the school newsletter, sending timetables home to parents at the start of the year, and producing specially designed leaflets to appeal to students.

¹² Children aged between five and 16 are automatically entitled to free school transport if they attend the nearest school and the school is further away than the statutory walking distance, which is two miles for pupils aged under eight, and three miles for those aged eight and over. Since September 2007, the right to free school transport has been extended to eight to 11-year-olds from low-income families attending their nearest suitable school more than two miles away. Since September 2008, students aged 11 – 16 from low-income families have been entitled to free school transport if they attend one of their nearest three suitable schools between two and six miles away from home, or if they attend the nearest school preferred by their parents on the grounds of religion and belief and it is between two and 15 miles away from home.

¹³ *National Travel Survey*, Department for Transport, 2008

¹⁴ See *Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance* (Department for Education and Skills, 2007), available at <http://publications.education.gov.uk/>

¹⁵ *National Travel Survey*, Department for Transport, 2008

- ▶ Long Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge held public transport surgeries in the autumn term, offering advice on routes and discounts. The college travel co-ordinator commented that each new student intake brought with it a different set of travel issues, and 1,000 new people to familiarise with travel arrangements.
- ▶ At Knowles Hill School in Devon, students on a GNVQ course ran a travel shop within the school, offering local journey planning information.
- ▶ In York, the local bus operator ran sessions for junior schools on a specially run 'duplicate service', so that children could learn how to buy a ticket, request a destination and ride safely. York's 'YoZone card' enabled under-16s to prove their age and claim a half fare on the bus.

Securing bus improvements

In negotiation with bus operators, some schools had arranged small adjustments to existing routes, stopping places and schedules, so that services met their needs more closely. Employing adult escorts to supervise younger children on a public service can make bus travel more child-friendly. Special discounts and promotion to parents also help to encourage use.

- ▶ At Reigate Priory Junior School in Surrey, a series of small changes to the route and timetable of a local service encouraged 20 – 25 children to travel by bus. Around 30% of children lived 1 – 2 miles from the school and the area had high car ownership levels. Changes negotiated with the operator included a discount on tickets, which were bought each half term through the school. The service had been promoted through letters to families close to the bus route. Two pupils had been appointed to ride the bus as 'prefects', equipped with mobile phones to report any problems.

School children, like anyone else, are more likely to be attracted to reliable services provided by newer and better quality vehicles. At some case study schools, general improvements to public transport, made independently of the school travel plan, had made a substantial impact on student travel. Where authorities are introducing new or upgraded services there may be scope to market these to schools.

Dedicated services

Two case study schools had successfully increased bus use with the help of dedicated bus services, using American-style yellow school buses. The main advantage of a dedicated service is that it can be specially designed to meet the needs of the school journey. Features of good practice include drivers trained to work with children and the same driver every day, easy telephone contact between parents, school and bus company, CCTV, seat belts and a guaranteed seat for every child. Routes can be structured around home addresses, picking up from the streets where children live, and services tailored to the extended school day.

- ▶ At the Magna Carta School, a Runnymede secondary, two yellow buses served the school journey, and provided an additional 4.30 run for children taking part in after school

activities. Buses had the same drivers each day, who were both parents of pupils at the school. While a further 100 students at Magna Carta used local services, the yellow buses were introduced for those that had previously travelled by car. The fare was £1 a day, and the buses were subsidised by Runnymede Borough Council and a local business partnership. Overall, the percentage of children travelling to school by bus had grown from 13% to 19% in two years.

The child-friendly aspects of these schemes can be especially appropriate for younger children, and appear to be important to the success of buses serving primary schools. An evaluation of yellow bus services showed secondary children also appreciated schemes for their convenience and quality. Distinctive vehicles have the added advantage of being self-promoting, but may have an “embarrassment factor” for some secondary students.

A key consideration for the introduction of any new service is its potential to extract passengers from existing public transport (an issue that had been of concern in Runnymede) or from walking and cycling. To avoid this, school travel teams need to consult closely with local authority officers responsible for public transport planning and establish that there is reasonable demand for the proposed service from families living more than a mile away. They also need to monitor and review the actual use of the service to determine whether it is reducing car trips. If children are giving up walking and cycling to use the bus, this may reflect a lack of safe and pleasant cycle routes.

School arrangements

Some schools had been prepared to make changes in their schedules to facilitate bus use. This can mean staggering start times so that several schools can share a service, introducing special arrangements to supervise children arriving early and, in some cases, providing breakfast (see case study on page 38.)

► In Ilkley, West Yorkshire, a yellow school bus was used by 70 children at four primary schools, thanks to a staggered start to the school day, and extra staff supervision for children arriving early or leaving late. The bus, operated by First, received £25,000 subsidy from the passenger transport executive.

It is important to have appropriate access arrangements so that buses serving the school are not seen as causing obstruction – for example, a marked bus lay-by on the road or the school site.

Fare reductions

Travel by bus is known to be highly price-sensitive and this may be particularly the case for children’s travel. In 2003 evaluations of the yellow bus scheme, parents were resistant to paying more than £1 a day for each child. Area-wide concessionary fares for children are common in urban areas. Many of the case study schools had benefited from arrangements to cut the cost of bus or rail. One school provided a substantial discount for students travelling by public transport (see case study below). Local authorities had cut fares by:

- Running saver card schemes to allow older school students to qualify for half fares
- Giving discounts for additional children in the same family using school buses (since mounting cost might otherwise encourage car use)

- Offering spare seats on free school buses to children living closer to school than the statutory minimum distance.

CASE STUDY: THE ROYAL SCHOOL

Low fares and door-to-door minibuses cut car use

Type of school: Private, C of E
255 students, age 3 – 18
Free school meals 0%

Meeting half the cost of student travel by bus and underground had helped cut levels of car use by over a third, at the Royal School in Camden, a private girls school in the centre of London. Levels of public transport use had risen almost four-fold since the mid-90s, when an expansion of the school led Camden Council to impose a planning condition, prompting a school travel plan. The fares offer, which was up to £100 a term, was introduced in 2001. The school provided leaflets and maps to help with public transport. London Transport staff visited the school, and students were invited to attend familiarisation sessions at underground stations. Around 15 children also travelled to school in two privately hired minibuses, which picked up from their homes at a weekly cost of £50 for five return journeys. Families paid the operator directly.

In addition, a car-sharing scheme had encouraged around 28% of those arriving by car to share the journey.

School run mini-buses

School run mini-buses had been successful for the three private schools in the study. Although relatively expensive to parents, these services had proved popular. While some picked children up from home, others collected from the station or an agreed pick-up point.

▶ The Royal High School in Bath ran two mini-buses, which picked up children from a drop-off point by a pub close to a motorway junction. Parents paid £2.20 a trip (though less for additional children in the same family) and both vehicles were full.

▶ At the Perse School in Cambridge, where a school minibus picked up from the railway station, the percentage of children travelling by train rose by half, from 12% to 18%.

Promoting rail

At the five secondary schools with the highest levels of children coming by bus or train, a significant proportion of journeys were made by rail, suggesting that, where travelling to school by train is a possibility, it may well be worth working with train operators to promote this, and improving the links (by bus, bike or on foot) between the rail station and the school.

Behaviour issues

Several case study schools had taken a pro-active approach to behaviour problems on public transport, discussing these issues in assembly, introducing a code of conduct, inviting bus operators to talk to students, and generally taking incidents seriously. Some provided teacher supervision for children waiting for public transport. Bus seating plans – arranged in consultation with students – had also been introduced to encourage good behaviour.

CASE STUDY: LINGFIELD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Reviving bus use at a rural primary

Type of school: Primary
461 students, age 3 – 11
Free school meals 6%

At Lingfield Primary, a rural school in Surrey, two key changes had encouraged parents to send their children to school by bus again, reviving use of a once popular public service.

Following its original launch in the mid '90s, families lost confidence as the service deteriorated. Parent escorts no longer accompanied children; there were problems of bullying; and a circuitous route meant a five-minute journey by car took 45 minutes by bus.

With the help of the county council, which subsidised the service, new arrangements were put in place. An adult escort was employed to ride with the children. In contact with parents by mobile phone, she ensured no child was left stranded or dropped off alone.

In addition, a school breakfast club, enabled the bus to collect children in two short morning runs instead of one long one. When the first group arrived they ate breakfast, while the second group was being picked up. The breakfast club was self-financing and popular.

Parents paid half-termly for their children to use the bus, with discounted fares for more than one child in a family. Around 30 children travelled daily. The afternoon trip was still made as one longer journey.

2.4 Managing car use

Many school travel plans are initiated in response to traffic chaos at the school gate. Besides encouraging sustainable travel, schools are often keen to tackle these problems directly with strategies to manage or discourage car use. Nationally, 43% of 5 – 10 year olds, and 21% of 11 – 16 year olds, make the journey to school by car¹⁶. It is important to recognise that not everyone will be able to travel by other means. Encouraging families that do drive to park responsibly, share the journey and walk some of the way can help in reducing the impact of traffic on the school and the wider community.

Restricting parking

The study found that where schools achieved lower levels of driving to school there were often parking restrictions in place. A school that continues to let parents or students use its car park, or park on the road outside the school, is likely to find it is harder to reduce car use. Enforcing restrictions is often a problem, and some schools had mounted awareness campaigns to promote compliance and encourage responsible driving behaviour, usually in liaison with police. In some cases police made regular visits as a deterrent to inconsiderate parking. In others, parents and residents collected the registration numbers of infringing drivers to pass to police, who then issued a warning letter. Issuing a warning letter ahead of a possible fine could be seen as a diplomatic step. Nevertheless, encouraging parents to report on each other in this way can cause resentment, and not everyone is comfortable with this approach. Less contentiously, schools may draw up a Code of Practice for drivers, which can be publicised to parents, and incorporated into the home-school agreement (see case study on page 43).

► St Michael's CEVC Primary School in South Gloucestershire, held a zigzag awareness week. Pupils were invited to enter a poster competition and given fluffy bugs with the message, "Don't stop on the zigzags". There were displays in school and laminated information placed outside at the school entrance.

Prohibiting parking on school grounds

Many case study schools had taken steps to prevent parents from parking on school grounds, restricting their use of staff and visitor car parks or (more dangerous!) the school playground. Exceptions are naturally made for special circumstances such as parents picking up sick children. One primary school locked its gates at home time to deter parents from driving in. Some schools allowed cars to enter but held traffic back at the end of the day until children on foot or bicycle had left in safety.

¹⁶ *National Travel Survey*, Department for Transport, 2008

► At the Priory School in Shrewsbury, parents had been used to driving on to the school playground to collect their children with obvious risks for students' safety. Peter Neale, the school's business manager said, "At 3 o'clock there were a huge number of children coming out and cars coming in the opposite direction. The speed was shocking." Following consultation with the local education authority and the school travel adviser, the school wrote to parents explaining the situation and installed a barrier to stop cars coming into the area. An initial increase in congestion on the road outside eased off following a change to the start and finish of the school day, making it different from another nearby school.

Restricting sixth form parking

The provision of freely available all-day parking is an incentive to drive, and schools and colleges that cater for sixth formers need to think carefully about how far they should accommodate student cars on their grounds. One option is to minimise sixth form parking with a needs-based permit scheme (see case study on page 44) that takes into account the requirements of disabled students and the availability of alternative means of transport. Assistance with post-16 travel costs (for non-car travel) and good transport provision for students travelling between sites to pursue their studies, are both helpful in reducing car reliance. To avoid students simply parking off site, the local authority may need to restrict parking in the surrounding streets, for example through a residents' parking scheme.

Encouraging 'park and walk'

Park and walk schemes have become a popular means of reducing congestion and safety problems at the school gate, while also encouraging children arriving by car to at least stretch their legs on the way to school. Nearly half of case study schools had park and walk policies, which could work in different ways:

- At its most informal, parents were asked to park a little way from the school – and walk with their children if necessary – rather than trying to drop them close to the gates.
- Some schools had arranged for parents to use local car parks at premises a short distance away from the school, such as pubs, churches and restaurants.
- Some secondary schools had arranged designated 'drop and go' points a short distance from the school, which might be supported by engineering measures such as a lay-by. The student usually walked into school independently, and might benefit from teaching staff being on duty close to the site to supervise children's arrival.

Park and walk schemes can be combined with other initiatives, for example:

- Walking incentive schemes (see section 2.1) may also reward children who park and walk, providing they come from a reasonable distance away. At some schools, they must walk from outside a designated school 'exclusion zone'.
- Children may be met and escorted for the 'walk' part of the journey on a walking bus.

- ‘Park away’ days can be promoted in much the same way as Walk to School days.

In setting up a park and walk scheme, it is important to avoid certain pitfalls:

- Parents may end up driving further to reach the designated parking area than they would originally have driven to school. This means that you may need park and walk sites to serve parents coming from different directions.
- A park and walk site that is actually very close to school is likely to encourage car trips, without much increase in walking or reduction in distance driven. Aim for a distance that will give children experience of walking and encourage those coming less than a mile to think about leaving the car behind.
- Park and walk can be difficult to take into account in travel surveys. Children may say they have walked when they have made most of the journey by car. Where this option has been introduced, it needs to be made clear to children who park and walk (but are driven for the larger distance of the journey) that they should count this as coming by car. (Though you may also choose to record the number of children that park and walk and note this in your survey results.)

Encouraging car sharing

Many families car share informally on the school run. Promoting car sharing can be useful where children are making longer journeys that cannot easily be made by public transport.

In the study, most schools encouraging car sharing were responding to individual circumstances – for instance, a rural school with a dispersed catchment, independent schools drawing children from relatively long distances and a new school that was awaiting introduction of a bus service to a specific area.

Experience from workplace travel plans shows that launch events and promotion play an important role in encouraging participation. School schemes may benefit from fresh promotion in the autumn term. The response can be difficult to gauge, since many families make their own arrangements with no outside assistance. Nevertheless, some case study schools had been effective in encouraging more families to share the journey.

► At The Royal School in Camden, postcodes were checked at the start of each year, with a view to facilitating car sharing. Parents living in clusters were contacted by the school and invited to exchange phone numbers with others living nearby. More than a quarter of students who were driven to school shared the journey.

► Cambridgeshire County Council had set up a web-based car-sharing scheme, which served a partnership of independent schools. With legal advice, the council devised safety guidelines to address parents’ concerns. Although the numbers registering were fairly low, the initiative appeared to have prompted many families to make informal sharing arrangements of their own. Travel surveys for eight schools in the partnership showed that, on average, the percentage of all pupils car sharing rose from 8% to 14% in two years.

Schemes at individual schools have worked as follows:

- The school identifies clusters of parents that might be able to share the journey.
- They then invite families to put themselves forward for car sharing. Schools are obliged to comply with Data Protection Principles and should ensure that the individuals concerned are made aware and are content that their personal details will be disclosed to others. It is advisable to keep a record of such consent, and objections should obviously be respected.
- Interested parents who live reasonably close to one another are sent each other's contact details. The school explains that it is up to families to get in touch with each other and decide whether they are happy to share the run. Parents are advised that they will need to satisfy themselves about the suitability of the driver and the vehicle being used. At the time of writing, it is the advice of the Independent Safeguarding Authority's Vetting and Barring scheme that where parents arrange to car share between themselves, and not through the school or a club, then this is classed as a private arrangement, meaning that it is not a regulated activity requiring a formal vetting process for those driving each other's children. Vetting arrangements generally are currently under review – see section 3.3. Parents should be reminded that children under 12 years old and less than 150 cm (about 5 foot) tall are not big enough to use an adult seat belt, and should use a child seat or booster seat/booster cushion. Insurance policies may also restrict the number of children that may be carried.
- The school will need to check that their notification under the Data Protection Act covers them for holding and disclosing information for the purpose of matching car sharers. For further advice, contact the Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF, 01625 545740 or fax any amendments to the register entry on 01625 545748.

For the purposes of monitoring, the Department for Transport defines car sharing for the school journey as travelling with another child or other children also going to school but not living in the same house.

CASE STUDY: BURFORD SCHOOL

Pub parking and a drivers' code of practice

Type of school: Primary
412 students, age 4 – 11
Free school meals 0%

Just under a quarter of children were 'parking and walking' to Burford School, a Buckinghamshire primary in the village of Marlow Bottom. Participation had been encouraged through the school's walking incentive scheme. Children who walked from the edge of an agreed 'exclusion zone' around the school could take part in the scheme, winning a point for making the last part of the journey on foot.

A local landlord had given permission for parents to park in a pub car park, around a third of a mile from the school and at the edge of the 'zone'. The arrangement was promoted through a school travel newsletter, which included a slip to be displayed when parking. This listed 'conditions of use', which the parent accepted by placing the slip in the windscreen.

Burford had also introduced a Drivers' Code of Practice, which was promoted in a leaflet to new parents and included in the home-school agreement. Parents were asked to remember:

- Not to stop, even to drop off, on the zigzag yellow lines
- Not to obscure the view of the school crossing patrol
- Not to park on pavements or verges or across driveways
- Not to park within 15 metres of a junction
- Not to drive on the pavement or use driveways to turn
- Not to park on a bend
- Not to use certain junctions as a turning circle
- To try parking further from the school, e.g. at the pub car park.

In agreement with the police, the school had collected number plate details of those parking irresponsibly. The police would then write a letter to the offending driver pointing out their infringement of the Highway Code.

Surveys indicated that, taking into account the reduction in driving by families that used park and walk¹⁷, the percentage of travel to school made by car had reduced by just over 14% in three years, from 48% to 41%.

¹⁷ i.e. deducting the proportion of the journey that was no longer driven.

CASE STUDY: LONG ROAD SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Cash for car-free travel helps keep a lid on student parking

Type of school: Sixth form college
1,800 students, age 16 - 19

Car park restrictions had been complemented by extensive promotion for bus and rail, at Long Road Sixth Form College in Cambridge. A parking permit scheme allocated 80 spaces to students on the basis of need through a points system, which took account of disability, distance from college and the availability of alternative means of travel.

Another significant change had come from the local education authority, which had reduced the distance for which post-16 students could claim assistance for travel costs, from five to three miles. While students could claim for bike and bus, there was no reimbursement for driving. Eighty-five per cent of Long Road students lived three miles or more from the college, with some travelling from other counties such as Suffolk.

Induction materials for new students spelt out college policy: 'to encourage the use of public transport or other methods of environmentally friendly transport where possible', and provided information about travel options and funding assistance. Public transport 'surgeries' were organised in October, giving students an opportunity to find out what services and discounts were available.

In addition, bus times had been changed to fit better with student start and finish times and a new bus service introduced, with subsidy from the county council, for students travelling from several villages. The college was also working to encourage students to make more use of the city's extensive cycle network, with the provision of parking for 200 bikes on the site.

The college's assistant principal, Heather Chambers, coordinated the travel work, working closely with the site manager, the admissions co-ordinator and a member of the student union. In addition, the equivalent of a day a week in administrative time was spent in dealing with stolen bicycles, car park management and other travel-related queries.

The local authority school travel adviser had helped to support the plan, developing and analysing student travel surveys, providing advice on sustainable travel at open evenings and induction events, and running an email forum that relayed student complaints about public transport to local operators.

Between 2001 and 2003, the number of cars arriving per 100 students had fallen from 22 to 15, while cycling, bus and rail use all increased.

2.5 Building travel awareness

Building travel awareness is an essential part of any travel plan. Our case study schools had taken many opportunities to communicate their travel policies to children and parents, and to promote the benefits of walking, cycling and bus use for the school journey. In general they used the school's normal communication channels to get these messages across – conveying the school's ownership of the plan. Schools can also increase awareness by participating in the local authority's own initiatives to promote the school travel programme more widely (which are covered in section 4.2).

Assemblies

Assemblies are a focal point for communication within schools, and were used by more than two thirds of case study schools to raise awareness of travel issues. This could mean inviting visiting speakers (such as community police or the local authority's school travel adviser), asking children to make presentations themselves about their work on the travel plan or simply highlighting health benefits and road safety issues related to the school journey. Schools participating in walking incentive schemes usually presented prizes, certificates and trophies in assemblies. Assembly is also an opportunity to announce events and other initiatives related to travel.

► At Holmer Green First School in Buckinghamshire, walking to school was a focus at about 16 assemblies a year and a theme throughout Walk to School week. This could involve learning about historical figures that had made long walking journeys, looking at the reasons for walking to school and discussing what there was to see on the way.

Assembly plans, covering a range of road safety and safe travel issues for children aged four to 15 plus, are available from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), on their website, at www.rosipa.com

School policies, plans and statements

Case study schools with high performing travel plans had usually integrated their travel policies into other documents that officially set out the school's policies and aspirations, for example, the school development plan, the school's prospectus and other induction materials issued to new parents and children. Some schools asked parents to encourage children to walk or cycle as part of the home-school agreement. Information about the travel plan was also posted on school websites.

► At Sandringham School in St Albans, the school invited parents and students to enter into a voluntary home-school partnership. One of the ten commitments that parents were asked to sign up to was to: "encourage my child, wherever possible, to walk, cycle, or use public transport to travel to and from school."

Several schools made time to talk about travel at induction events for new parents or students, and one primary school had also focused on travel to secondary school in a special leavers' pack for its Year 6 children.

The decision on whether a child is ready to make the journey to school unaccompanied, on foot, by bicycle, by bus or rail, must rest with parents and children themselves. The role of the school travel plan is to make alternatives to driving easier and safer and to raise awareness about the reasons for reducing car use and the benefits of healthy travel. Policies obviously have to recognise different needs and circumstances. Some staff and pupils have no alternative to the car. Children with reduced mobility may need to be driven door to door.

Local publicity

Most of the case study schools had attracted positive publicity in the local media, sometimes through the efforts of the school travel adviser. A picture in the paper can be helpful in recognising the efforts of volunteers as well as raising the profile of the travel plan. Local media can be invited to cover new initiatives, such as the opening of a wet weather shelter or the launch of a walking bus. Detailed guidance on writing press releases, giving radio and TV interviews and gaining local media coverage is available¹⁸.

Newsletters, notices and leaflets

Schools newsletters, fliers and letters home are all used to communicate with parents. At some schools children had designed leaflets about school travel. Schools also used displays at parents' evenings, posters and school travel notice boards to keep parents and children informed of developments. One school provided a map of the local area showing recommended walking and cycling routes. Some schools had a banner at the main entrance to promote Walk to School and other events. Adopting a school travel logo can help to provide a clear identity for different initiatives within the school travel package. Some local authorities have helped with this by making their own school travel logo available to participating schools. Many authorities produce travel awareness campaign materials for schools to distribute to children or parents. Persuasive information – for example, about the health benefits of walking to school – can be provided in a form that makes it easy for schools to customise for their own use.

► At St Michael's CEVC Primary School in Gloucestershire the school travel group produced a regular newsletter for parents. Promotional materials about walking to school were displayed on the school fence while a notice board in the school foyer was used to show pictures of recent and forthcoming events, including proposals for traffic calming. Displays about school travel were arranged for new parents' evenings, and booklets on teaching road safety had been given to each family.

Events, competitions and focus weeks

Some case study schools had launched the travel plan with a special event. This can be an opportunity to invite and thank local partners. Competitions and cycling events are a good way of involving children. Some schools had hosted drama productions with a travel related theme, often commissioned by the local authority. Special 'focus weeks' can help to raise awareness of specific travel issues such as road safety or active travel.

¹⁸ *The School Travel Communications Toolkit* can be downloaded at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/STAtoolkit/resources/>

Key messages and stages of change

When families are moving towards a change in their travel habits, different types of information are likely to be helpful at different stages:

- At the outset, persuasive information is needed to encourage ‘unconverted’ families to consider changing their means of travel. Most people respond most positively to messages that emphasise personal benefits to themselves or their children. There is some evidence that more affluent school communities value benefits for pupils’ health and fitness more highly, while less affluent school communities are more concerned about improvements to personal and road safety.
- At the point when families are preparing to change, they will need to have more practical information about the travel options and support available – for example about buses, walking buses or safe walking and cycling routes. This information may also be useful for families new to the school that are deciding how to travel.
- Those who have made a change need ongoing support and encouragement, for example, through recognition in assemblies and celebratory events and opportunities to give feedback about any problems with travel arrangements.

This means it is helpful to provide different types of information to meet these different needs. In addition, of course, different materials will be needed for different groups within the school community; for example, leaflets for children will be different from those for parents.

2.6 Expanding the curriculum

School travel work offers a rare opportunity for children to be involved in decision making about ‘something real’ where their views can make a difference. Through participation in school travel initiatives, children have made presentations to councillors, engaged with outside agencies and seen their own project work result in changes that benefit both the school and the wider community. Lessons may also focus on the health benefits of physical activity, environmental awareness and road safety training. The majority of the case study schools had included travel to school in their class work, and this can be an important factor in successfully encouraging sustainable journeys.

Relevant subject areas and support materials

A range of opportunities exists to integrate travel issues into the National Curriculum, and some primary schools have made this a cross-curricular scheme. Among case study schools, teachers were most likely to introduce travel plan work in either geography or personal, social and health education (PSHE¹⁹), though some had touched on the topic in other subjects such as maths, English, design technology and science. There is also scope to include school travel in Information Communication Technology (ICT) and citizenship. The Sustrans Safe Routes to School project has free resources to help support school travel on the curriculum, see www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk.

Gaining participation from teachers

Pressure on classroom time can make it difficult for teachers to realise the potential of school travel work. Gaining the participation of teaching staff is likely to be easier where they are represented on the school travel plan working group (see section 3.1). Some local authorities have helped to free up teacher time to develop curriculum work on school travel by offering grants for supply cover, or by paying for an external project worker to give additional support. In some cases, school travel advisers provide this type of support themselves. One authority in the study had employed a teacher to offer in-service training to school staff, linking road safety and wider school travel issues to the curriculum. It is worthwhile for school travel advisers to build links with advisers for specific subject areas, within the local education authority.

Healthy Schools

The National Healthy School Standard (NHSS) can be closely linked with school travel work, and provides a key motivation for some schools. This is a national initiative which aims to reduce health inequalities, promote social inclusion and raise educational standards. Schools participate in NHSS programmes that are managed locally by their education authority in partnership with the primary care trust. To attain standards set out in national guidance for the scheme, each school is encouraged to take a whole-school approach to promoting the health and well being of everyone involved in the school community, addressing these issues under a number of key themes. Several of these can be related directly to school travel work, for example:

- Citizenship
- Physical activity
- Safety

¹⁹ Renamed Personal, Social, Health and Economic education in 2008

- Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. .

Participation in the scheme can give added impetus to school travel work, and can help schools to gain recognition for their efforts in developing a travel plan. More information about the scheme including regional contact details can be found at the Healthy Schools website: www.healthyschools.gov.uk

Eco-Schools

Schools may also develop travel plans as a result of participation in Eco-Schools. Led by Keep Britain Tidy the Eco-Schools programme supports schools in tackling sustainability issues. Schools registered with the programme follow a seven-step process to help them in addressing a variety of environmental themes. These include Transport, Healthy Living and School Grounds.

The Eco-Schools process is strikingly similar to the school travel plan process: participating schools are expected to set up a committee, which has representatives from all areas of the school community, especially children. Pupils are included in decision making at every stage. An environmental review is carried out and the committee devises an action plan to tackle key issues. Part of the Eco-Schools scheme involves working towards awards in three stages: Bronze, Silver and Green Flag. More information is available at www.eco-schools.org.uk

Sustainable Schools

The National Framework for Sustainable Schools provides practical guidance to help schools operate more sustainably. It includes a selection of doorways or sustainability themes which offer entry points for schools to develop their sustainability practices. One of these is ‘travel and traffic’. Schools are offered ten tips for encouraging sustainable school travel, including “Make sure your school travel plan is an up-to-date, living document”. Further information is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk

Personal safety

Concerns about children’s safety when travelling unaccompanied have grown over time. Alongside anxiety about risks from rising traffic, fears about strangers are also prominent in parents’ minds. Schools can help with positive strategies to raise children’s safety awareness without making them unduly fearful. In reality, the risk of a child being abducted by a stranger is low (though parents would understandably like it to be nil). At the same time, children may face other significant problems on the school journey, from missing the bus to bullying. Talking through sensible ways of coping in different situations can help both children and their parents to feel more confident. Several resources have been produced to help teachers in discussing these issues.²⁰

Children are likely to be better prepared for independent travel if they have already made lots of accompanied journeys on foot. School travel plans normally encourage parents to

²⁰ The Suzy Lamplugh Trust has developed a number of resources that look at personal safety for young people travelling independently, including interactive games. See www.suzylamplugh.org

accompany younger children on foot, by bicycle or by bus, while some initiatives, such as the walking bus, make it easier for children to be escorted without their parents. Children often arrange to walk to school in pairs or small groups rather than on their own, especially when they first make the journey without an adult. Where lots of families are walking to school, their presence on the streets creates greater 'informal surveillance' so that the streets feel generally safer for everyone, including children.

CASE STUDY: LAKESIDE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Walking and cycling flourish at 'Healthy School'

Type of school: Primary
348 pupils, age 5 – 11
Free school meals 11%

Class work on school travel helped Lakeside Primary School in York to win 'Healthy School' status, while cutting car use by nearly a fifth. Children learned about the health benefits of active travel by plotting distances walked to school, and linking 'miles walked' with 'calories burned'. The school also ran a 'travel to school' activity day, with visits from a cycling paramedic, a cycling courier and a cycle maintenance expert. In addition, children took part in bus training sessions, run by the bus operator First York. The work tied in with several areas of the curriculum, including personal, social and health education, geography and maths.

A highpoint of the travel work was a trip to Rome, where pupils presented their work at an EU-funded conference on school travel, an event they earlier rehearsed for local councillors.

Head teacher Ros Latham recommended, "Start with the children if you want to reach adults. Involve the older pupils and the school council, and let discussion grow from there." She added that it was important to find someone within the school with the "energy, drive and commitment" to run the project, who could take other staff with them.

Pupil surveys revealed a marked interest in cycling to school. The school had the advantage of several traffic-free cycle routes and traffic calming on a nearby housing development, and cycling became a key focus of the travel work. Purpose-built, covered cycle storage was installed in front of the school providing parking for 50 bikes. All children were offered cycle training at the end of Year 5, and under school rules, had to complete this before cycling unaccompanied. Parents sign a disclaimer accepting responsibility for their child's safety and the security of the cycle. Besides funding cycle storage, the local authority also created a 20mph school safety zone, with signs, speed cushions and crossing places, bringing the capital cost of the travel plan to £30,000.

The local authority school travel adviser spent around a day a month working with the school in the first year of its travel work, attending parents' meetings,

classroom sessions and school council meetings, preparing materials and planning for the Rome conference. Other officer time was spent on pedestrian and cycle training and the design of cycle storage and highways facilities.

The travel plan's greatest impact had been in encouraging cycling. Surveys indicated that the percentage of children travelling this way had risen from 1% to 6% in three years, with around 50 pupils regularly arriving by bike in summer months. Walking was also up, from 63% to 71% (including scooters), while car use had dropped from 36% to 23%.

CASE STUDY: THE PRIORY SCHOOL

Classes find solutions to travel problems

Type of school: Secondary
810 students, age 11 - 16
Free school meals 4%

At the Priory School in Shrewsbury, plans for a new off-road cycle route in the immediate area prompted classroom-based consultation with students. With help from the local authority, children mapped their school journeys and identified danger points. Deputy head Paul Kitchener, who led the work, said the process was effective, if lengthy: "The kids enjoyed it, the staff enjoyed it. We got something out of it. And because it was good, we did it three years running." He added that they all valued the fact that this was 'something real', rather than a paper exercise: "Being able to stand there in front of the kids and say 'look, something is going to come out of this and you're going to have your say,' is very important."

Children in Year 7,8 and 9 took part in the modules, which were run as part of personal, social and health education and, from 1997 – 99, engaged more than half the school's students. The local authority school travel officer provided maps and other materials, and analysed the school's questionnaire. In the second year of work, two off-road cycle routes were put in place.

Through their project work, the school won an award of £6,000 from the Department of Health, a sum which helped pay for a new cycle storage area, a new cycle-friendly side entrance, and a connecting path across the school grounds, providing much more convenient access from the neighbouring estate.

In the following years, several changes shaped travel arrangements at the school. In 2001, the practice of allowing parents to park on the school playground was ended, for safety reasons. Around a year later, the school's traditional cycle sheds were replaced by another new cycle parking facility – situated close to the main entrance. At about the same time, the school opened a new pedestrian entrance, giving students on foot separate and more direct access to the school. A new

footway was also created on a nearby road. The school and the local authority have together planned further safe routes work – including a pavement widening and a puffin crossing outside the school.

Surveys indicated that in the five years since the original curriculum work began, the percentage of children walking had risen from 24% to 40% (though partly helped by a more compact intake as the school became more popular). Cycling had been consistently high, with around 100 bikes typically parked at school.

2.7 Reducing road danger

A high proportion of case study schools had received extensive measures to reduce road danger in the surrounding area – such as traffic calming, 20mph zones, safe crossings and traffic-free pedestrian and cycle routes. These improvements seemed to be particularly important in encouraging high levels of walking and cycling at secondary level when more children make independent journeys. At primary level, safety measures often seemed to provide important underpinning for the success of other initiatives, such as walking incentive schemes.

Securing new highways measures is a landmark in the life of the school travel plan. Besides creating safer conditions, it can give the school confidence in both the local authority and their own travel initiatives. Moreover, safe routes measures are unlikely to be a once-and-for-all solution. As schools become more aware of the possibilities, they may go on to identify further issues they would like to see resolved.

Since 2007, local authorities have had duties related to school travel that include auditing infrastructure used on the school journey and drawing up a strategy for the development of this infrastructure so that the travel needs of children and young people are better catered for. These obligations are explained in detail in *Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance* (Department for Education and Skills, 2007), available at <http://publications.education.gov.uk/>

Responding to concerns

The school travel plan process is designed to map perceived road danger, alongside near misses and actual casualties (see section 3.2). Children, parents and others are effectively asked to say, on the basis of their experience of the journey, where accidents are likely to happen even if they have not happened yet. Responding to these concerns is important. While tackling accident black spots will always be a priority, achieving a step change in home to school travel demands a holistic approach, with the long-term purpose of creating high quality pedestrian and cycling routes throughout school catchments. European research²¹ emphasises the need for adopting such measures on a widespread basis, in order to combat the UK's comparatively high levels of child pedestrian casualties. An authority that dismisses the safety concerns of parents and children, without looking at ways to address these – whether through engineering or other solutions – risks demoralising everyone involved in the plan.

The case study research found that long waiting lists for safe routes measures, identified through school travel plans, were a serious problem in some areas. Combining school travel work with other highways safety schemes may help to speed up progress, but some authorities will need to review the resources allocated to safe routes schemes in order to meet their school travel commitments. The need to manage expectations (on both sides) is discussed in section 4.3.

²¹ *Children's Traffic Safety: International Lessons for the UK*, Christie N, Cairns S, Ward H and Towner E, Department for Transport, 2004

► Head teacher David King said the role of the local authority in securing engineering measures had been crucial to the successful development of travel work at the Nottingham Emmanuel School: “A school on its own can achieve very little, because we can influence attitudes of people inside the school but can’t change the infrastructure outside. The real issue is that parents are worried...Schools often don’t realise how local councils really are in a position to bring about change.”

Safer routes measures

Measures implemented by local authorities to create safer conditions on routes serving case study schools included:

- Zebra crossings
- Signal controlled crossings, such as pelican crossings, puffin crossings (which detect the presence of pedestrians and control the red light signal accordingly) and toucan crossings, which can be used by bicycles as well as pedestrians
- Other crossing aids, such as dropped kerbs, tactile paving and traffic islands or other refuges
- Traffic calming measures such as road humps, speed cushions, speed tables and pavement build outs
- 20mph zones
- Footpath improvements and widened pavements
- Traffic-free cycling and walking routes (both dedicated and shared-use) and on-road cycle lanes
- Bus lay-by markings and bus stops
- Street lighting improvements
- Wooden bollards at school entrances, for example, to prevent parking on verges
- Parking restrictions (including time limited restrictions relating to the start and end of the school day)
- New signing or marking, for example, to denote a school safety zone or cycle route
- Provision of school crossing patrols
- Subway refurbishment
- Pavement clearance and measures to tackle dog fouling
- Contra flow systems in the morning and afternoon so that traffic flows are on the opposite side of the road to those cycling (though some schools said people found these schemes hard to understand).

Many case study schools had benefited from measures put in place independently of the travel plan, such as traffic calming on nearby estates. All highways safety schemes are likely to affect school travel, and schools may welcome the opportunity to feed into their development. Interestingly, schools in the study were not always aware which changes had been implemented for them and which were part of wider schemes.

At the case study schools, 20mph speed limits had always been enforced with traffic calming. Enforcing parking restrictions could be a problem, often requiring police co-operation (see section 2.4).

Costs

There were three secondary schools in the study where more than £100,000 had been spent, although many of the measures put in place also benefited other schools or the wider community. Typical spending on infrastructure at case study schools was lower, with an average of £36,000 for a primary school and £74,000 for a secondary school. At some schools, much less had been spent - for example, £10,000 for an improved crossing. It should be noted that the costs quoted for case study schools date from 2003/4 and earlier. Some local authorities specifically allocated funds for small-scale highway measures identified through school travel plans, rather than concentrating all their expenditure on full schemes.

More information

The Government's Traffic Advisory Leaflets provide detailed guidance from research and other studies on a wide range of traffic management measures, and can be downloaded from the Department for Transport website, www.dft.gov.uk

SECTION 3

DIALOGUE AND DELIVERY

The school travel plan process

This section looks at the school travel plan process – the steps schools can take to identify travel issues, develop solutions, assess the results and move forward. The process itself is designed to raise awareness throughout the school community, engaging all key groups, and particularly involving children.

3.1 Managing and co-ordinating the plan

The majority of the case study schools saw themselves as leading their travel plans, but in close co-operation with the local authority. From the outset, school travel advisers play a key role in explaining what is involved and mapping out the travel plan process. Schools need to have a clear idea of the options available to them, including the different kinds of support that the local authority can offer and the efforts they are expected to contribute themselves.

Taking the lead

Most school travel plans rely on the efforts of a school ‘champion’ – someone prepared to lead in co-ordinating the plan and taking it forward. Often the hard work and enthusiasm of one or two people is seen as the key success factor in making the plan happen.

This means it is important for the local authority to identify likely champions and find ways of supporting them. The kind of support that can be provided is discussed in section 4. Some authorities specifically ask schools to nominate a champion, or co-ordinator, that the authority can work with.

In our study, most school travel plan champions were members of school staff, among them head teachers, deputy heads, teachers, teaching assistants and staff with site management responsibilities. In contrast, five travel plans, which were all for primary age children, were led by parents or parent governors.

Different types of champion bring different strengths to the role.

- Parent champions can be particularly effective in involving lots of other parents, and in making sure activities are fun and sociable for volunteers.
- Teachers leading travel plans are often successful in gaining student participation, and in realising the educational potential of travel initiatives, as well as motivating other teachers.
- Head teachers usually have lots of opportunities to raise the profile of school travel through assemblies and meetings, and are closely involved in decisions about site management – though they are likely to need to delegate day-to-day travel work to someone else.
- Staff responsible for site management are often good at assessing the strengths and weaknesses of site access, finding funds for on-site improvements and liaising with the local authority – but may be less likely to engage the wider school community.

► At the Nottingham Emmanuel School, the head teacher had taken a personal lead in the development of the travel plan. His role had included explaining the benefits of walking and cycling to new parents, and encouraging staff to use sustainable transport too. While the head and chair of governors had together ‘championed’ the travel work, the deputy head and finance manager had been closely involved in implementing the scheme, with support from the head’s PA.

The role of the school travel champion can be problematic. Those leading the initiative can feel overburdened and the travel plan may founder when a champion moves on with no successor. For this reason, some local authority advisers seek to involve parent volunteers with children in younger classes, who are less likely to move on quickly. It is also helpful to spread the load by setting up a school travel working group (see below). The involvement of volunteers and staff from outside agencies may necessitate a formal vetting process (see section 3.3).

Support from the head

Whether or not the head sees themselves as leading the plan, their support is likely to be critical to its success, so it is important to secure their commitment to the process, and to keep them informed at every stage. Among our case studies, the majority of travel plans were strongly supported by the head teacher, though many heads were not closely involved in taking initiatives forward. Some authorities said they would not become actively involved in a plan without clear commitment from the head teacher.

Setting up a working group

More than half the case study schools had some kind of working group in place to develop and implement the travel plan (while some wished they had!). Setting up a working group helps both to share the work and to involve different parts of the school community. Many authorities in our study saw this as critical, and made it an expectation of schools they work with.

► In Hertfordshire, schools participating in safer routes to school work are asked to set up a ‘school travel forum’, including either the head teacher or a senior member of staff and a parent. The forum is committed to a series of meetings whose scope is set out at meeting one. The first meeting provides an introduction, the second an analysis of the current travel situation, the third sets objectives and targets, the fourth develops an action plan and the fifth sets out strategies for publicity and monitoring.

A school travel plan working group will typically include representation from teachers, students, parents, governors and, in many authorities, the school travel adviser. Approaches vary, and some working groups are mainly made up of parents or students. It is helpful to involve a senior member of staff and a teacher with relevant curriculum responsibilities, such as a co-ordinators for geography, sports or personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. Where schools are participating in related initiatives such as the National Healthy School Standard (see section 2.6) the group should include the teacher who is co-ordinating this within the school. On large secondary sites especially, it makes sense to involve staff responsible for site management. Other participants that have been invited onto school travel working groups are:

- Police – who can advise and assist in the enforcement of parking restrictions and speed limits
- Local residents – who share an interest in improvements to local streets
- Local councillors – who also have an interest in local traffic conditions, and can help to gain support for proposals
- Representatives from other schools – particularly if there is scope to tackle problems by working together
- A health professional from the local primary care trust – who has an interest in promoting healthy travel
- External consultants – who may be commissioned by the local authority to provide support (for example, Global Action Plan or Sustrans)
- Additional local authority officers involved in different aspects of travel planning – for example from highways engineering, road safety education, public transport or statutory school transport
- Local bus operators – who can help in delivering service improvements.

Smaller groups are often more effective, and people can be invited to come on board as the need arises. Many organisations assist in school travel plans without being part of the working group. A key role for the school travel adviser is to liaise with other local authority officers and external agencies, and to help the school engage their support as required.

It is important to consider how the working group will link with other decision making processes within the school, for example, how it reports to the head teacher (if the head is not directly involved), the governing body, the home school (or parent teacher) association and the school council.

► At Holmer Green First School in Buckinghamshire, eight parents each took responsibility for different initiatives in the school travel plan. This group was chaired by a parent governor, who liaised with the head teacher and reported back about the plan to the governing body. The head talked to staff about travel initiatives, while a parent who coordinated the school's walking incentive scheme was on the parent teacher association, and provided this link.

Involving children

Of the case study schools, those that had involved children in the decision making process tended to be more successful in reducing car use. A good travel plan will engage children in an ongoing dialogue about their travel, ensuring that they gain ownership of the process and that initiatives address their concerns. Some interviewees emphasised that convincing children can be the first step to persuading adults.

At several case study schools, children had been actively involved in developing the plan, for example, designing logos and posters, analysing surveys and making presentations. At some schools, students effectively led the travel plan, with facilitation from a teacher (see case study below). Other schools had passed key decisions and tasks – such as the choice or design of cycle facilities – to pupil groups.

School travel work offers a unique opportunity for student participation, so schools should be encouraged to explore this. This is also an effective means of raising awareness, particularly among older children, who are less likely to be motivated by initiatives such as walking incentive schemes. Curriculum work is a good opportunity for pupil involvement (as discussed in section 2.6).

School councils also offer an important forum for consulting and involving pupils. The study found that, at primary level, the most successful plans had typically involved the school council. One case study authority had started a scheme in which secondary school councils were invited to nominate student school travel co-ordinators, who could distribute information to their peers and feed back students' views to the local authority.

CASE STUDY: KNOWLES HILL SCHOOL

A travel plan led by students

Type of school: Secondary
1156 students, age 11 - 18
Free school meals 12%

Fifteen students worked with their geography teacher to develop the travel plan for Knowles Hill, a secondary school in Newton Abbot, Devon. The group launched the plan with music from a student band. They co-ordinated a travel survey – which was filled in by children in PSHE lessons – and went on to hold a consultation day, with a big display in one of the classrooms. The school drama department took up the theme, with a play about sustainable travel, performed by GCSE students in assembly. Following training from the transport operator Stagecoach, students on a GNVQ course ran a travel shop within the school, offering local journey planning information.

After initial consultation, four school travel sub-groups were established to look separately at cycling, walking, public transport and 'encouraging cars off the road'. Students identified problems and put forward solutions in each case. Issues included a lack of cycle paths, insufficient cycle lockers, speeding traffic, unreliable buses, a lack of information about public transport and cars parking in front of the school.

The group has gradually secured improvements for different forms of travel. Outside the school, speed tables, wider pavements, dropped kerbs and subway-refurbishment have all made conditions better for pedestrians, while double yellow lines restrict parking. Following discussion, a local bus now drops pupils closer to school, while a fortuitous alteration in train timetables has made rail travel more convenient. New cycle lockers have been provided, funded largely through an RAC award. Other cycling improvements, planned by the county council, include a new toucan crossing and a shared-use path.

The school received considerable help from outside agencies: the educational charity Global Action Plan ran sessions with students to introduce the travel plan idea. Devon County Council paid for an hour a week of supply cover for a year, to free up staff time for the project. A county road safety officer, school travel adviser and traffic engineers were all involved. The school's cycling sub-group also collaborated with a local cycling organisation.

Louise Rowe, the teacher who worked with the group, said for students to see that their opinions mattered was 'complete empowerment'. The whole initiative raised awareness across the school. Surveys indicated that, over three years, walking and train use both increased, while the percentage of children travelling by car almost halved, falling from 26% to 14%.

County school travel adviser, Alison McGregor saw the key success factors as a committed teacher, an enthusiastic team of students and senior management support. Branding the project with a curriculum base allowed staff to justify the time, while funding supply teacher cover and identifying plenty of outside support was also important.

Working in partnership

Schools in the same area, or a secondary and its feeder primaries, should consider working together on school travel issues. Whether they develop a joint plan or individual plans, there are advantages in the local authority engaging with clusters of schools, to address their needs strategically (see section 4.1).

Agreeing aims

Working groups will need to agree the broad purpose of their work at an early stage, before going on to develop formal objectives and targets to be included in the school travel plan document (see section 3.4). Some authorities encourage school travel working groups to develop terms of reference. This may be very helpful for some groups, and inappropriate for others. Bear in mind that the energy, enthusiasm and effectiveness of the school's travel initiatives can't be measured in paperwork! Obviously it is important that the general aims of the school's travel work are not in conflict with those of the local authority's school travel strategy.

3.2 Assessing the issues

Consultation and information gathering is the starting point for a school travel plan. It may be tempting for those co-ordinating the plan to think they already know all the issues, but it can be a mistake to second guess the concerns of different groups. Staff often focus on problems in the immediate area, such as school gate congestion, without being aware of other dangers on the journey. Families living on one side of the school may have no idea about the difficulties facing those travelling from another. Besides providing the information to shape proposals, consultation also plays a critical role in raising awareness of travel issues throughout the school community and in gaining wider ownership for the plan.

Key information

To gain a good picture of the school's travel needs and issues, it is useful to have various kinds of information:

- First, it is important to know where children are coming from, how they usually travel to and from school for the main part of the journey²² and whether an adult normally accompanies them. If pupils travel by car it is also helpful to know whether they 'park and walk' (see section 2.4). Knowing how children travel at the outset will enable you to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives later, and can also help in focusing the travel work. For example, even at a school with a wide catchment area, there may be a surprisingly large number of children who walk and who might benefit from safety measures. The working group also needs to consider what travel needs the school has in addition to normal school journeys – for instance, to allow for after-school activities or travel to other sites.
- Secondly, it is important to know about any problems that children are having on the journey, and particularly what places are considered to be dangerous or difficult for walking and cycling, and why. This includes any concerns about the school site and school arrangements and any difficulties related to using bus and rail.
- Thirdly, it is useful to know how children would like to travel, and what specific suggestions parents and children have about changes that would make sustainable travel easier. This might, for example, include an off-road cycle route, cheaper bus travel or cycle training. If you are considering initiatives that involve volunteers, such as a walking bus or a walking incentive scheme, then you will need to find out whether there are parents who are prepared to help.
- The travel plan will need to take account of the school site and the traffic environment surrounding the school. It is best to assess this when children are arriving or leaving. Note the entrances used, any available cycle parking, car parking arrangements and

²² Categories of travel collected for the national School Census are: walk, cycle, car/van, car share (with a child or children from a different household), public service bus, dedicated school bus, bus (type not known), taxi, train, London underground, Metro/Tram/Light rail, Boarder – not applicable, and Other. Information on the School Census is available at www.teachernet.gov.uk

restrictions and where the bus stops are. In some cases, you may also want to collect data, such as the speed of traffic on certain roads.

Schools and local authorities obtain the information they need by a variety of means, and these are outlined below. They often undertake more than one activity, but it is not usually necessary to do them all. It can also be appropriate to carry out different activities at different times, gathering initial information and ideas, and consulting on solutions in a second phase.

Hands-up surveys

“Hands-up” surveys are widely used to gain a picture of current travel patterns and to monitor changes over time. Children are asked “How do you usually travel to school?” or “How did you travel to school today?” Teachers use a paper form – usually supplied by the local authority – to collect information from classes through a show of hands, and this is collated across the school. Although asking children how they travelled today, rather than how they usually travel, can give an accurate picture of actual journeys, this method is vulnerable to the peculiarities of the day, such as weather and school events. For this reason the Department for Transport prefers ‘usual travel’ as an indicator of change and generally asks for data that is reported in this way.

Another option is to ask both questions and to monitor actual travel over several days, rather than once. In general, travel surveys should be carried out in periods when weather can be expected to be relatively neutral and predictable, ideally avoiding the height of summer or the depths of winter. The autumn term is recommended. Some survey forms ask teachers to record the weather too. It is also important to avoid other factors likely to affect results, such as older children being away on exam leave. Many schools conduct hands-up surveys of actual travel in Walk to School week, but these results should not be taken to represent a normal day!

Make sure children understand which category their journey should be in. For example, that children who travel by foot scooter or who jog still fall into the ‘walk’ category, while children who ‘park and walk’, but drive for the main part of the journey, fall into the ‘car’ category.

To provide a meaningful comparison with baseline data, follow-up surveys should use the same question, and be carried out under similar conditions at the same time of year. Other robust indicators – such as the number of cycles parked on site, or the number of school bus tickets sold – are useful in corroborating results.

The majority of local authorities in the study asked all schools to conduct hands-up surveys on an annual basis and used this data to monitor travel patterns. Since 2007, maintained schools with travel plans have been required to collect information about children’s travel for the annual School Census. This might be collected through a hands-up survey during registration or on data checking sheets sent home to parents.

Postcode mapping

Postcode mapping makes it possible to see at a glance where families live in relation to the school. It can be very useful in establishing the distances students travel, key walking and cycling routes and the potential for walking buses, school bus services, car sharing and park and walk sites. There are often personnel in local authorities who can produce these maps using GIS software. Schools provide a list of pupil postcodes, which, for reasons of confidentiality should not be linked with names (or with other information that might enable a third party to identify individuals). Having these maps for more than one school allows local authorities to take a strategic overview in developing safe routes and bus services.

More detailed surveys

At the beginning of school travel work, a paper survey is often used to gain more detailed information about problems on the school journey. It is important to have some input from both children and parents. While children will know the details of their journeys, parents are closely involved in decisions about how children travel. One option is to ask children to complete the form with their parents at home and then collate the results on to a larger map in class. Alternatively students can be asked to fill in their own survey in school, while a separate survey is sent home to parents (evidently with some overlap in the results).

Analysing surveys is time consuming, so you and the school need to plan in advance how this will be done. This is an area where school champions can feel daunted and appreciate local authority support. In some case study schools, outside agencies such as universities or health units had taken on the task. Another option is for older students to be involved in designing the survey and carrying out the analysis as a curriculum-based project.

Surveying a large secondary school is a major undertaking, but it is possible to gain a meaningful picture of school journey needs without surveying the whole school, for example, by focusing on Years 5 and 6 at primary level or Years 7 to 9 in secondary school. For these year groups, travelling independently is more likely to be an issue, and students are also less pre-occupied with exam commitments. Obviously, sampling restricted year groups will not provide a fully representative picture of modal split across the school, but a separate hands-up survey can be used for this. The survey may also miss out aspects of the school's travel needs – such as sixth formers travelling to pursue courses at different sites or parental interest in a walking bus for younger children – so this information will need to be sought out separately. If you do limit the survey sample, it is important to make sure that your consultation also provides opportunities for others to comment.

Surveys are best kept short to reduce the burden on those completing them. This also makes for a good response rate and easier analysis. Avoid collecting information that you won't be able to use meaningfully and keep the focus on what it is that you need to know. Including a map of the catchment area allows you to find out exactly where problems are taking place and gain an idea of the routes that children usually take to school. Keep in mind that closed questions – with a choice of answers to pick from – are easier to analyse, though to gain an adequate picture you also need questions that give people the opportunity to describe specific problems on the school journey and make individual

comments. Take care to word questions in an unbiased way that doesn't suggest what the response *should* be, especially when asking about attitudes and opinions.

Many local authorities have produced sample surveys, and there are also survey templates available from www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk.

► At Holmemead Middle School in Bedfordshire, self-completion questionnaires were filled in by pupils during lesson times, while those for parents were sent home. The survey identified that the main deterrents to walking and cycling for school journeys were:

- Traffic travelling at inappropriate speeds on roads near the school
- Lack of direct access to the school grounds from certain directions, leading to circuitous detours for some
- Lack of safe crossing facilities on a number of busy roads
- Lack of secure cycle parking within the school grounds
- Lack of cycle training for pupils and a shortage of cycle routes.

Measures were introduced to address these problems. The school continued to consult on how effective these were, and what other measures might be needed. Holmemead made good use of 'pupil researchers' for this task, through a scheme co-ordinated by the local education authority, which trained pupils to investigate a whole range of issues among their peers and to report back to the school management.

Attended displays and maps

An attended display about school travel – with a large map of the area and post-its or stickers to flag up issues – can provide a good focus for discussion with pupils, parents and staff. It is also an effective way of engaging anyone who is reluctant to fill in forms. In primary schools, an exhibition of this kind in the main entrance area can help you to canvas opinion face to face from parents arriving to pick up children at home time. Reaching secondary school parents is more difficult, since they are less often in school, but the same idea can be used on other occasions such as sports days or parents' evenings.

Planning for Real

Where highways schemes are proposed to address safety issues, it can be useful to have exhibitions to show people what the options are, and invite further comment from the school and the wider community. With help from the local authority, some schools have hosted Planning for Real events, where consultation is focused on a 3D model of the local area. People are invited to contribute their views on the proposed solutions, and to identify places where they would like to see changes, using flags on sticks. This can generate a lot of interest. Exhibitions of all kinds offer scope for involving pupils, whether in making the models or producing posters and other materials. Site changes such as cycle parking or a wet weather shelter offer another opportunity to let children have a say. Students can be invited to choose their preferred design, in the light of practical requirements and budgetary constraints.

► Julie Fergusson of Shropshire County Council said consulting with the school's neighbours played a vital role in the county's safer routes to school work. "We have had schools that were aghast at the objections from residents to their plans. You have to sell it to residents and get them on board at the beginning." The school travel team was very pro-active in dealing with these concerns: a consultation evening was usually held at the school, and plans are displayed in the local library. Problems were overcome with compromises, but there was also a strong priority given to tackling the real or perceived road dangers: "We usually go ahead with what is proposed."

Other channels of communication

Schools and authorities use many other ways to engage with different parts of the school community, including:

- Classroom discussions with pupils about the school journey – for example in citizenship
- A parents' meeting to discuss the issues, sometimes following a presentation from the local authority school travel adviser
- A general invitation in letters home and the school newsletter, for families to send their comments about problems on the school journey. Newsletters and letters home are also used to gauge interest in specific schemes – such as walking buses and walking incentives schemes – and to appeal for volunteers to run them.
- Seeking the views of representative bodies within the school such as the school council and the governors.

► At All Saints RC Secondary School in York, pupils took part in travel surveys and mapped hazards on the school journey in class. A participative consultation session was held at a Year 7 parents evening and the local authority school travel adviser made a presentation to the governing body. The process was seen as a great success as it involved all the key groups. It fired up students' imaginations, gave parents a chance to air their concerns and raised awareness of the issues with all school governors. The mapping exercise revealed the importance of resolving key issues distant from the school and showed that more pupils were worried about road safety problems than expected.

Further feedback and consultation

Further feedback may well be needed as proposals develop. Make sure results from initial survey work are reported back to the school community – for example, in a school assembly, school newsletter or a letter to parents – so that people know their views are being taken into account.

CASE STUDY: BROKE HALL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Involving all key groups

Type of school: Primary
541 students, age 3 – 11
Free school meals: 1%

At a Suffolk primary school, consultation helped to pinpoint parents' concerns about road danger, and found residents exasperated by inconsiderate parking. Both issues were tackled in the resulting traffic scheme.

Investigations at Broke Hall Community Primary School in Ipswich included a Planning for Real exercise. With assistance from the local authority, children constructed a model of the surrounding area. The activity helped them to visualise problems and solutions. The school particularly liked the exercise for its educational value and found it an effective way to gain pupils' views.

A newsletter invited parents to contribute their ideas about what could be done to address the traffic problems around the school and encourage walking and cycling. Parents wanted to see crossing facilities on two busy roads.

Local authority officers went door to door to consult residents about these ideas. Emerging proposals were outlined in a public exhibition at the school to which parents, residents and councillors were all invited.

Local authority road safety officer, Mike Motteram, said visiting local residents was a particularly positive move. "Where we encountered objections, we explained what the school and the county council were trying to do, and tried to reach a happy compromise." Knocking on doors enabled officers to involve neighbours who would not have come to the exhibition, but were delighted to be consulted.

Changes made to the surrounding area included footpath improvements to create surfaced and lit walking routes between estate roads, offering all-weather shortcuts along pedestrian desire lines. Outside the school, the authority installed a new zebra crossing and parking restrictions: low wooden bollards kept cars off verges, while double yellow lines and traffic regulation orders at key locations helped keep crossing points clear and deter parking. Two crossing patrols were also introduced on a busy radial route into Ipswich.

Head teacher Monica Adlem said it was important to find out where families lived and how they got to school, rather than guessing what was needed where, but added, "Don't be too judgemental, parents who live close to school and drive may have good reason to do so." She advocated convincing pupils that walking and cycling was healthy and fun as the best way of getting the message to parents. Travel awareness raising took place in lesson time before Walk to School week.

Families who drove to school were encouraged to park some distance away, and community police visited about once month to remind parents of parking restrictions.

Surveys indicated that walking to school had increased, with half of students now arriving on foot, while the percentage of children arriving by car was down from 51% to 45%.

3.3 Taking forward the proposals

Results from the initial consultation and the other information collected should enable the working group to develop a set of proposals – or an action list – for the travel plan. The school travel plan toolkit in the previous section gives details of possible initiatives and their implementation. At this stage, it can be useful to seek advice from other officers within the authority, such as highways engineers, the cycling or walking officer, and staff dealing with public transport, school transport and road safety education and training. Make sure the proposals take account of the issues prioritised in the consultation, and address the full range of journey needs, including, for example, journeys following after-school activities. Also bear in mind the success factors identified in section 1.1.

Planning the implementation

Once the working group has drawn up an action list, they can decide who is going to do what, when actions are expected to take place, which measures have cost implications and how they are going to be funded. It may also be necessary to recruit new parent volunteers for specific schemes. You will need to establish how long the school can expect to wait for different components of the plan that require local authority support. Some proposals are much easier to take forward than others and it is worth looking for some ‘early wins’ that will help sustain enthusiasm. There is often a particularly long wait for highways engineering schemes so it is important to let schools know about this and to keep them informed of progress: if they hear nothing, they may well assume proposals have been shelved or forgotten.

Vetting and insurance

Where people from outside agencies or parent volunteers will be taking part in activities which involve regular contact with children, it may be necessary to follow a formal vetting process. At the time of writing, both the Vetting and Barring scheme and the Criminal Records Bureau checking process are under review, with recommendations to be announced in 2011. In the meantime schools are advised to continue with their usual safeguarding procedures, including Criminal Records Bureau disclosures. Further advice is available from the Vetting and Barring Information Team, email: info@vbs-info.org.uk. Information regarding the CRB checking service can be obtained via the CRB, website www.crb.homeoffice.gov.uk and via the Local Education Authority.

For schemes where volunteers take responsibility for children’s safety, such as walking buses, arrangements can be made for them to be covered by insurance, in case of an accident. This may be through the local authority or the parent teacher association. For further details see guidance on ‘How to set up a walking bus’ on the Department for Transport website:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/schooltravel/howtsetupawalkingbus>

The school travel plan document

A written school travel plan can help both the school and local authority to make a clear commitment to their proposals. This has been a requirement for schools receiving a capital grant for school travel initiatives. Schools in the study that had formalised the aims and targets of their work were generally more successful in reducing car use.

A school travel plan doesn't have to be a long document, but it should include:

- A brief description of the location, size and type of school
- A brief description of the travel/transport problems faced by the school or cluster of schools covering all pupils travel needs: journeys to and from school at normal start or finish times, journeys to attend pre- and after-school events and journeys made during the school day to attend activities at other locations
- Survey results showing how children currently travel to and from school and how they would like to travel to and from school
- Clearly defined targets and objectives (see section 3.4)
- Details of proposed measures
- A detailed timetable for implementation
- Clearly defined responsibilities
- Evidence that all interested parties have been consulted
- Proposals for monitoring and review

Detailed advice on all the essential and desirable elements needed to meet these requirements fully is given in the School Travel Plan Quality Assurance Advice Note (DCSF and DfT, 2007) and is available on the teachernet website, www.teachernet.gov.uk

The plan should be viewed as a living document, to be reviewed and updated over time.

Signing off

Before it is recorded in the local transport plan annual progress report as a 'school travel plan ready for implementation' a school travel plan should normally²³ be signed off by:

- The chair of the board of governors
- The local education authority (at assistant director level or above)
- The local transport authority (at assistant director level or above)
- All other parties who have contributed to the development of the plan or will play a key role in its implementation, for example, the school council, a local bus operator or the police.

Local authority school travel advisers are well placed to guide the plan through this process. Schools will need to consider how the travel plan is to be included in other school policies and statements (see section 2.5).

²³ Though DfT/DCSF agreed that larger authorities may request an easement of this condition by contacting their Regional School Travel Adviser.

3.4 Focusing on results

This chapter looks at the monitoring and evaluation of travel plan results at individual schools.

Aims and objectives

In drawing up the school travel plan, working groups need to set out the aims and objectives of their travel work. Among case study schools, detailed aims and objectives varied with the school's circumstances and aspirations, but typically focused on the following issues.

- Safer roads and safer journeys
- Reduced car use and congestion around the school
- Increased use of sustainable travel and support for existing sustainable travel
- More active travel and healthier lifestyles
- Greater travel awareness
- A more attractive area
- Opportunities for student participation and curriculum work
- Stronger community links.

Some schools also included process objectives, for example: “to determine the school travel problems affecting families at the school and develop strategies appropriate to the school and its students”, or, “to improve conditions for cyclists”. Initial objectives may need to be reviewed as the travel plan develops.

► At Park Brow Community Primary School the school's travel plan listed a variety of aims:

- Reduce the risk of accidents and dangers on the way to and from school
- Reduce the levels of congestion outside the school gates and improve safety around the school
- A quieter and more pleasant school neighbourhood
- Enable parents and children to choose walking, cycling and public transport with confidence
- Provide scope for children to gain confidence and travel with friends
- Give children the opportunity to have a say in decisions that affect them
- Play a part in reducing the consumption of fossil fuels
- Link to the school ethos of Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools
- Provide evidence to local residents that the school is committed to improving their environment
- Encourage parents to participate within the school community
- Involve pupils and get them to take ownership of the plan.

Park Brow's objectives included the following.

- Active promotion of the school travel plan throughout the school
- Encouraging more walking and cycling to and from school.
- A car sharing scheme for pupils, parents and staff.

Targets and monitoring...

Schools also need to set targets against which to monitor progress towards achieving the plan's aims and objectives. These should be measurable, time specific, realistic and easy to understand.

..for modal share

Most schools adopted targets related to a decrease in car use and an increase in more sustainable travel for the school journey. Modal shift targets that focus on desired 'end levels' for different means of travel, rather than a desired percentage change, are recommended, as a means of nurturing high levels of walking and cycling, as well as tackling high levels of car use. Bear in mind that for schools that already have low levels of car use and high levels of alternative modes, sustaining this is in itself an achievement. It may also be appropriate to set specific targets for walking and cycling, because of the benefits to health from active travel. Progress towards targets can be measured against the school's baseline travel data, using a hands-up survey or another reliable means of establishing modal split (see section 3.2).

..for road danger reduction

Although safety is likely to be one of the main objectives of the travel plan, monitoring the effect of safety improvements in terms of casualty reduction is rarely possible at the level of individual school sites, since these numbers are usually (and thankfully) relatively low. Schools need to identify other indicators that will help to assess their progress in improving safety and addressing perceived road danger.

A simple but effective way of doing this is to draw up a list of safety problems that the school wants to see tackled through the plan, including a rating in terms of their urgency and importance, and to review travel plan progress in putting in place measures to address these.

Schools may choose to carry out more detailed surveys as part of the monitoring process. If so, additional questions can be included to ask about children's experience of safety problems on the school journey. Questions can also be used to gauge the level of self-reported accidents on the school journey, as happened in York (see section 1.2). Some authorities collect area-wide data about casualties on the school journey.

It may also be useful to monitor indicators related to specific issues addressed by the plan, for example, changes in the speed of traffic on a key road following traffic calming or the volume of traffic using a particular rat-run.

..for completion of specific measures

Some schools set target dates for the completion of specific measures – such as the installation of cycle parking.

- At Hillside Avenue Primary School in Norwich, the school travel plan included the following objectives and targets:
- To increase the percentage of pupils walking, cycling or using buses to get to school to 60% by July 2006 (from 47% in 2004).
 - To have > 20 cycle trailers etc on loan to parents by July 2005.
 - To maintain current “no accidents” safety record.
 - To reduce average traffic speeds on minor roads around the school to under 20 mph by June 2005.

Reviewing and reporting on progress

The working group will need to decide in advance when and how it will review progress and update the travel plan in the light of new findings. Incorporating school travel work in the school development plan can help to formalise this process. Any review is also an opportunity to report back to the school, recognise the efforts of everyone involved and celebrate what has been done so far to make journeys safer and encourage sustainable travel. While it is helpful to focus on measurable results, it is vital not to lose heart if the school has not yet achieved the hoped for reduction in car use. Many changes may be needed to make a difference to travel choices. In the meantime, the improvements you make will be of immediate and lasting benefit to those already walking, cycling or using bus or rail.

3.5 Sustaining momentum

School travel plans call for considerable voluntary effort and enthusiasm. Successful plans operate in a way that helps to keep those involved on board and to recruit new participants over time. Schools can also take steps to ‘mainstream’ the plan, so that travel arrangements are built into the normal running of the school.

Making it fun

Initiatives that everyone enjoys can become self-sustaining. Lots of schools have found ways to reward and celebrate the efforts of those taking part in travel initiatives, with special days and promotional events. Primary age children are pleased to get stickers, small prizes and certificates in assembly (which are inexpensive for the local authority to supply). Initiatives can go stale and need to be pepped up with fresh ideas. Local press coverage also helps in acknowledging everyone’s hard work.

It is particularly important to look after volunteers, and to involve them in the running of the scheme in ways that are sociable and enjoyable.

► At St Michael’s CEVC Primary School in South Gloucestershire, travel work started in 1999. A small parent group met regularly at the start of school to ensure everything was running smoothly. Sue Haslam, a parent and part-time teaching assistant, said: “Don’t give up! Be prepared to think outside the box. We are quite social and don’t really go for formal meetings....In order to get our message across, we have to say the same things again and again but maybe in different ways. Pester power is also useful.”

Embedding the plan

Case study schools that had successfully promoted sustainable travel for several years were sometimes unaware how much their travel policies had become part and parcel of their everyday practice. Schools can integrate travel initiatives into school life by:

- Including the aims of the school travel plan in the school’s development plan and school travel policies in the school prospectus
- Making some travel initiatives a regular event on the school calendar – for example, annual cycle training or Walk to School week
- Giving ongoing reminders about travel in school newsletters and letters home
- Making travel activities part of the curriculum and linking to other school initiatives – such as the Healthy Schools award or Eco-Schools.

Capturing the new intake

Several case study schools took the opportunity to discuss the school journey with the parents of children entering reception, or new students coming into secondary school, and saw this as a key group to influence. Some primary schools prepared their Year 6 children for the journeys they would be making to secondary school. A September re-launch – when the new intake arrives - can help to revitalise walking buses and other initiatives.

► At Burford School in Buckinghamshire, the school’s travel co-ordinator Rosie Brake, talked briefly to new parents at induction afternoons, and said this was an important part of the travel plan: “That is their first view of the school. You get the whole year group captive.” A leaflet explained about the school’s travel initiatives.

Planning for ‘succession’

Travel plans often lose impetus when the original champion leaves. Schools need to consider ahead who will take on the co-ordinating role. Spreading the load through a working group, and recruiting new volunteers or involving different staff on an ongoing basis can make it easier to avoid the problem, and more likely that there will be a natural successor. Ultimately, passing on this responsibility to a new pair of hands should help to reinvigorate and refresh the plan.

CASE STUDY: PARK BROW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Special breakfasts and days out keep the walking bus on track

Type of school: Primary
386 pupils, age 3 – 11
Free school meals: 50%

► At Park Brow Primary in Merseyside, children taking part in two walking buses could eat for free at the school’s breakfast club on Fridays, and enjoyed a free day out at a local authority-owned adventure park at the end of term. The walking bus celebrated its first birthday with a special breakfast and balloons for children.

Debbie Dempsey, a school learning mentor who co-ordinated the scheme, said it had been important to find a structured way of involving walking bus volunteers, with regular ‘coffee morning’ meetings. Careful planning had also been a factor in sustaining the initiative – volunteers developed the routes themselves, with the help of the council in assessing safety. In the autumn term, the walking bus was re-launched with posters and letters home to recruit new parent escorts.

Tackling lateness was the main motivation for setting up walking buses. Where, at one time, 40 – 50 children had arrived late, this was cut down to 10 or 11, and teachers commented that children who had previously had difficulties in listening and not shouting were now much calmer when they got to school.

While there were 18 children arriving on walking buses at the time of our interview, some 15% of pupils had joined them at one time or another, and even those who no longer did so, now arrived at school more promptly. The initiative had also helped build links between the school and the community. Local people waved when the children went past and community wardens were prepared to step in as escorts, if parents were away.

The breakfast club, which was launched at the same time as the bus, cost 50p a day and served nearly 40 children. The local bus company had contributed £500 towards toasters, bowls, plates and a table football game.

The school had worked closely with travel adviser Paul Buntin from Knowsley Council. To deal with concerns about stray dogs and dog fouling, he arranged for dog wardens to start work early and for dog mess litterbins to be installed in the area. Broken lights on the zebra crossing were replaced with vandal-proof ones. Funding had been secured for a pelican crossing on a dangerous dual carriageway.

Park Brow had seen a small increase in its already high levels of walking, with the percentage of pupils arriving this way rising from 61% to 65%, while car use had also reduced.

SECTION 4

MAKING IT HAPPEN

The local authority school travel strategy

This section focuses on the local authority's school travel strategy. School travel advisers play a pivotal role in its delivery: they promote the idea of school travel plans, facilitate and support those co-ordinating the plan within schools, and help them to gain access to advice, resources and funding from different parts of the local authority and external agencies. Advisers can be very 'hands on', joining the walking bus, taking part in school assemblies or making presentations to parents and governors. But they also have a strategic role in shaping the school travel programme, reviewing its effectiveness and making links with other schemes in the local transport plan, and related policies.

4.1 Involving and selecting schools

As a school travel adviser, you can promote school travel work in a number of ways. You might simply invite schools to be involved in initiatives, through a written invitation to the head teacher. You could actively publicise the programme with leaflets, articles and presentations at local forums. Newsletters and events produced to support already active schools (see section 4.2), have the added benefit of promoting the programme more widely. In many cases, schools hear from other schools about school travel activities and approach the authority themselves. Case study authorities said common reasons for schools getting in touch were traffic problems at the school gate, a desire for safety measures on local roads and links with the Healthy Schools award scheme. To sell the idea to schools, travel advisers in our study recommended telling them about the benefits of travel planning and reassuring them that the authority would support them in the process. In recent years, the availability of capital grants for school travel improvements has undoubtedly provided an important incentive for many schools to produce travel plans, so that for some authorities the main challenge now rests in ensuring that these are actively sustained.

Advice on working with schools

If you haven't worked with schools before, the following advice may be helpful.

- Make sure the head teacher is kept informed – even though someone else may be co-ordinating the project. For example, copy them into reports from meetings, press coverage, newsletters etc.
- Discuss at an early stage how those steering the plan will communicate. Phoning teachers can be difficult because they are often in lessons. Email works well, but only if the person you are trying to reach checks their email regularly.
- You need to know that primary school age year groups include the Reception class (age 4/5) followed by Years 1 – 6 (age 5 – 11), while secondary age year groups are Years 7 – 11 (age 11 to 16). Sixth form year groups are Years 12 – 13 (age 16 – 18).
- Teachers or other supervisors should always be present if you are working with pupils unless you have the necessary clearance. If you are working with children on a regular basis, you will need to undergo the appropriate checks which provide that clearance (see section 3.3).
- Find out term dates and be aware of key events on the school calendar – such as exam periods.
- Be sensitive to the ethos of the school, the interests and concerns of those involved, the demands on everyone's time and the fact that some people are involved in a voluntary capacity. Adjust your approach to the motivations and experience of the group you are working with.

- Take the opportunity to thank people – in reports and at the end of meetings as well as more informally. Those taking the lead to co-ordinate the plan particularly need your support and encouragement. Make it clear that they can contact you for help.
- Look for opportunities to involve children in all stages of the work and to ensure their views are part of the dialogue between the school and the authority.

► Stephen Littler, who worked with schools in Merseyside emphasised that people all had their own reasons for being involved in school travel work: “Health, road safety, congestion outside the school gate, the environment – there are lots of angles you can hit to find out what suits the school, rather than trying to force them to do something they don't feel is relevant to them.”

Appropriate caseloads

Most school travel advisers in our study felt it was important not to ‘spread their efforts too thinly’. They preferred to work fairly closely with the schools they engaged with, for example, participating in working groups and carrying out activities within the school. Advisers typically engaged more intensively with 5 – 10 schools each year and less intensively with a further five, though many more were involved through area-wide initiatives such as Walk to School week.

Inevitably school travel teams have to make some difficult decisions about which schools to prioritise for more in-depth work, and particularly for investment in comprehensive highways measures. Whatever criteria are agreed, the experience of the case study authorities suggests there is a need for flexibility. It is also helpful to offer some forms of support that are immediately available to any school prepared to work on school travel. In deciding which schools to work with closely, authorities take a range of factors into account, which are discussed below.

School interest, enthusiasm and commitment

Pragmatically, authorities can only work with schools that want to work with them. Some level of buy-in is a necessity and school travel teams naturally prioritise enthusiastic schools. Some authorities require schools to demonstrate their commitment in various ways before allocating significant time and resources to their travel initiatives.

Commitment is usually an incremental process, built through engagement, so it is important that schools receive the advice and support they need to guide them through the initial development of their travel plan. Equally, authorities do not want to waste their time. Some find it useful to set very specific requirements at an early stage, for example, the nomination of a co-ordinator, the establishment of a working group or a meeting that includes the head teacher. The expectations placed on schools in return for local authority support are discussed more fully later in this guide (see section 4.3).

Road safety problems

Road safety – usually judged by casualty rates or known accident problems – was the second most widely used criterion for prioritising school travel work, and was often viewed as the overriding consideration. Occasionally authorities had approached schools

with identified road safety problems, but found them unwilling to be involved in travel planning. Naturally, where this happens, problems will still need to be addressed by appropriate safety measures and it is important for school travel advisers to know what budgets are available for this purpose. While many authorities encouraged schools to draw up travel plans as a precursor to implementing a safe routes to school scheme, this was not always the case. In some areas, a large number of schools had been involved in safe routes projects before going on to produce travel plans, which were seen as raising awareness of highways improvements to deliver ‘something extra’.

Schools applying for planning permission

Securing school travel plans through the planning system is discussed later in this section (see section 4.4).

Inclusion of schools in poorer areas

It is important to consider how effectively your school travel strategy is serving families in poorer areas. Given the much higher rate of pedestrian casualties for children in lower socio-economic groups, some authorities had adopted criteria to ensure the participation of schools in areas of deprivation. It is not difficult to see that focusing local authority resources on keen schools with a good reservoir of parental support could prove socially excluding. While many of the schools in the study were in relatively ‘leafy’ and advantaged areas, there were also examples of very successful plans at schools serving poorer city catchments, sometimes rooted in strong community participation. Where schools were located in regeneration areas this could unlock new sources of funding for safety measures.

► In Cambridgeshire, the number of schools interested in joining the Safer Routes to School Project had rapidly increased. This had resulted in the development of a new application pack and prioritisation criteria. In addition to other selection criteria, the authority took account of the Index of Deprivation, to ensure deprived wards are participating in the programme.

► Nottingham City Council gave priority to travel work at schools with road safety problems, schools in regeneration areas, schools involved in the city’s schools reorganisation programme and those making planning applications. In addition, they worked with those schools that wanted to work with them.

Levels of car use and sustainable travel

Since school gate congestion often prompts schools to undertake travel work, those with high car use may be more likely to contact the school travel team. While some authorities prioritised schools with high car use on the basis of their potential for modal shift, others emphasised the importance of supporting schools that already had a high level of sustainable travel, to maintain this, and improve the safety of existing journeys. Moreover, the study showed that even where car use was already quite low, it could still be possible to reduce it further.

School type and potential for 'clusters'

Most authorities in the study tried to work strategically with groups of schools, focusing on various types of 'cluster', for example:

- A secondary school and its feeder primary school(s)
- Schools within the same locality
- Schools that were dealing with similar issues and could benefit from sharing ideas.

Most had found this approach effective and saw lots of advantages. Working with school clusters can:

- Benefit more people and provide better value for time and money
- Offer a more holistic approach – viewing the school in the context of the wider community
- Help build a culture for alternative travel, by generating shared enthusiasm and positive competition between schools across the area, while guarding against schools feeling isolated in their travel work
- Reinforce sustainable travel messages when younger children move from feeder to secondary schools
- Provide the critical mass to make some initiatives easier or more viable – for example a shared bus service or a jointly run walking bus
- Help schools to tackle traffic issues more effectively by presenting a united front to the local community
- Unlock funding tied to the area, such as sponsorship from local business.

Authorities mentioned the following pitfalls of working with clusters:

- Schemes may lose momentum because the less enthusiastic schools, or schools struggling with specific problems, hold others back. Conversely, where a keen school takes the lead, others may lose ownership of the process. Dividing responsibility and allocating discrete tasks at the outset can help to avoid this.
- Getting people to meet and work together can be difficult – though email can help.
- The scheme may result in compromise engineering solutions that satisfy none of those involved, or lead to a 'one size fits all' approach which fails to address schools' individual needs.

► In Cornwall, the county council appointed a consultant to work with a cluster of nine schools in the Falmouth area, where capital funding was already allocated for infrastructure projects. The authority said taking a cluster approach helped to enthuse schools and had brought about a critical mass for change.

► In Cambridgeshire, the school travel adviser co-ordinated an alliance of 15 (mainly fee-paying) schools and colleges in a defined area of the city. Schools were encouraged to share information by means of informal email exchange and a dedicated forum newsletter. This partnership had helped engender a sense of positive competition, and led to schools making good travel arrangements a selling point with parents.

Links with other transport schemes

By examining proposals for area-wide highways engineering or road safety schemes, school travel teams can identify opportunities for school travel work. This allows the schools' views to be taken into account in the design of the scheme and makes students more aware of improvements to the walking and cycling network.

► In Suffolk, the authority's Safely to School programme had been linked to Local Transport Action Plans, involving a wide-ranging public consultation exercise to address traffic issues over a 5 – 10 year time frame. Wherever these had been developed, schools had been the focus of at least some attention, with the school travel team invited to bring their expertise to the table.

4.2 Developing a framework for advice and promotion

A variety of resources and schemes can help to underpin the authority's school travel work, providing a wider framework of support for schools developing travel plans, while generating publicity and interest around the programme.

Information, training and support networks

Among case study authorities, resources provided to advise and train those leading travel plans within the school included the following:

- Written guidance

While there is a good deal of national guidance available, many authorities complement this with guidance tailored to their own school travel strategy and the services it provides. Guidance can be of great importance, setting out for schools what support they can expect and what is expected of them. Some authorities also make guidance available through a school travel website.

▶ Buckinghamshire described its guidance as a complete self-help toolkit, with a focus on “content, not glitter”. This was seen as a crucial resource, and handed to schools at an introductory meeting with the school travel adviser.

▶ In Norfolk, a CD Rom resource called *Solutions* took schools through the travel plan process, turning data into charts and providing a travel plan template.

▶ In Devon, the range of support available was set out in a guide called *Wizard Ways to Get to School* including a pack for promoting walking through the county's incentive scheme. The authority's website had a step-by-step ‘school travel plan wizard’ to help schools complete their plans.

- Newsletters

Local or regional school travel newsletters are useful for publicising events and competitions and the work of local schools. They are usually produced once a term and sent out widely, for example to head teachers, chairs of governors and councillors.

- Events and training sessions

Some authorities run seminars or training events for those involved in school travel work. Besides providing information and the moral support of networking with others, large events can be a way of thanking schools and celebrating achievement. Some areas hold in-service training days on school travel initiatives for teaching staff. Training needs to be designed to appeal to the target group – one authority had found little interest in evening sessions for teachers.

► In Buckinghamshire, schools were encouraged to appoint a travel co-ordinator who was invited to take part in special training meetings held every term. These sessions provided news of new ideas, funding opportunities and information about what works. In addition, there was an annual conference. Two parent champions had gone on to be employed in school travel work by the local authority.

► In Merseyside, schools involved in travel plan work were invited to participate in an annual celebration event in Liverpool. This had worked well as a way of sharing information between schools, and thanking them for their efforts

- Telephone and email support

Ongoing telephone and email contact with the school travel adviser, and in some cases with other schools through an email distribution network, helps travel plan champions to feel well supported in their work.

Competitions and award schemes

Local or regional competitions and award schemes can be very effective in raising the profile of school travel planning and motivating participation. These are sometimes run in collaboration with local or regional newspapers, securing ongoing publicity. Some authorities had made substantial funding available through travel plan grant schemes, ahead of the national Government programme for capital grants to support school travel measures.

► In Nottingham, 8% of primary schools and 30% of secondary schools had received funding from the city's school travel awards scheme. Sums of up to £15,000 had been provided through the local transport plan, for projects such as cycle parking and lockers for clothing, car share software, lighting improvements, and site-specific information about buses. The application procedure encouraged schools to take the first steps in travel planning, by assessing travel needs and carrying out a survey.

Participation in national campaigns

All the case study authorities promoted Walk to School events, making links with the national Walk to School campaign, and providing posters, leaflets and other resources to support schools taking part. Walk to School week can offer schools a good way into school travel planning, and some schools expand directly from the biannual Walk to School week to run more frequent walking promotions (see section 2.1).

4.3 Supporting participating schools

As section 2 shows, a wide range of initiatives can be supported as part of a school travel plan. On the basis of the case loads discussed earlier (see section 4.1) school travel teams typically provided around two days a month to the school in its most intensive phase of travel planning, though this varied considerably with individual need.

The support package

Most authorities had a core package of support that was available to schools they worked with. This commonly included the following:

- Help in co-ordinating travel surveys, in some cases including survey analysis
- GIS postcode mapping of where pupils lived
- Help with classroom based activities and assemblies
- Presentations to governors or parents
- Help in setting up walking buses – for example, advice, risk assessment of the route, meetings and training for parent volunteers, organising insurance cover and appropriate background checks (see section 3.3), providing tabards and incentives for children taking part
- Help in setting up walking incentive schemes – such as, advice, materials and incentives
- Help in setting up park and walk initiatives – for example negotiating with pubs, shops and restaurants to make parking available
- Promotion of Walk to School week
- Negotiations with public transport operators to arrange improvements
- Public transport promotion – for example, leaflets and posters, sometimes customised to the needs of the school
- New cycle parking
- Pedestrian and cycle training, or in some cases, training so that school volunteers could deliver this
- Help in setting up car share schemes
- Design and implementation of highways and infrastructure measures
- Participation in school travel meetings and support in drafting a school travel plan
- Assistance for schools in making applications for funding.

Although extensive, the package described above gives little idea of the diverse support offered by different school travel teams in the study. More experienced authorities were regularly involved in assisting or leading on 35 – 40 different travel initiatives.

The following less common forms of support were offered either as part of a standard package or on a more ad hoc basis.

- Loan of a speed gun and vehicle counter to gauge speed and volume of traffic
- Drama workshops for teachers and Theatre in Education for pupils, with a school travel theme
- Funding for a school conservatory to provide extra space for coats, bikes and scooters
- Improvements in street lighting and action to deal with stray dogs
- Co-ordination of cycle maintenance classes
- Provision of pool bikes, for example for staff cycling between sites

- A public transport surgery offering travel information to students
- Providing a communication channel for relaying student complaints about public transport to bus and rail operators
- Training sessions to help bus drivers to deal with confrontation and discipline issues associated with teenage travellers
- A display about the travel plan work for parents
- Funding for supply cover so that teachers could spend time on school travel class work
- A large map of the area for every class in the school to gather information about the school journey
- Colour leaflets, sometimes customised for the school – for consultations and specific initiatives
- ‘Planning for Real’ exercises (see section 3.2) or other exhibitions to help with consultation on highways measures.

Different types of support will involve different local authority staff.

Different packages for different types of scheme

As discussed earlier, school travel teams may distinguish between different levels of support they offer to schools, engaging more intensively with schools at the point when they are developing safe routes schemes, while offering other kinds of assistance to all schools. Secondary schools will typically require more intensive support than primary schools. A number of authorities had set up funds for small-scale highways measures, as well as major safe routes schemes, so that they could provide some safety improvements more quickly.

▶ Hertfordshire reserved certain services – such as co-ordination of travel surveys and other consultation mechanisms – for schools it was supporting in safe route projects. At the same time, the authority assisted all schools with a wide range of other initiatives – such as setting up walking incentive schemes, walking buses and park and walk schemes.

▶ Cornwall provided support at one of three levels:

Level 1 – the most intensive – was for secondary schools undertaking a safer routes project. The authority might help them through the travel survey process and produce a detailed safer routes study report.

Level 2 – for primary schools undertaking a safer routes project was less intensive, but still resulted in a safer routes report

Level 3 – involved encouraging participation in activities which helped schools progress towards developing a travel plan, such as pedestrian and cycle training, a walking bus and other initiatives.

▶ In Suffolk, the county had involved around 15 new schools each year in detailed consultations on Safely to School projects, but a programme of less extensive school gate improvements had been of benefit to a further 75.

Specialist initiatives officers

Some authorities had employed dedicated school travel officers to deliver particular initiatives, such as walking buses and walking incentive schemes, providing grass roots support to get travel plans up and running. This appeared to be an effective way of supporting activities and rolling them out to large numbers of schools.

► In Buckinghamshire, dedicated school travel initiatives officers, based in road safety, set up pedestrian training, walking buses and walking incentive schemes, all of which involve training volunteers.

What schools value

Among case study schools, school travel advisers were very much appreciated for the enthusiasm and hands-on involvement they brought to school travel work. Schools especially valued having the support of someone at the end of the phone who could engage with the school's travel problems as they arose, suggest possible solutions and call on appropriate expertise from other parts of the authority.

Highways measures were also highly valued by schools in the study. Asked what further support they would have liked, or would like to have in the future, schools commonly suggested particular safe routes enhancements, including safe crossings, parking restrictions, crossing patrols, and improvements to pedestrian and cycle routes. Schools that had already secured safe routes changes tended to be very pleased at this outcome and very positive about the role of the local authority in achieving this (though they sometimes identified additional safety issues they would like to see addressed in future).

Other forms of assistance case study schools commonly said they would find helpful were funding for specific aspects of the plan (for example to pay for prizes or for time spent by the co-ordinator) and improvements to bus services, including help in solving specific bus problems.

Making it clear....

...what you can offer

It is important to set out for schools what type of support is available, and to discuss with them what would be helpful.

Under the national action plan for travelling to school, local authorities were asked to use capital investment available through the Local Transport Planning process to make the infrastructure changes identified in school travel plans as quickly as possible. If you are offering a school a more limited level of support in the short term, give them a realistic idea about when they can expect more from the school travel team, and particularly how quickly the authority will be able to tackle their road safety problems.

Travel advisers sometimes feel frustrated when schools attach more value to infrastructure changes than to the activities schools can carry out themselves. It can be helpful to present other initiatives as part of a complementary package. Emphasise the benefits of more active travel to children's health and for reducing congestion at the school gate. Recognise

and agree that children's safety is everyone's priority: establishing this common ground will help in building consensus. Avoid treating highways measures to tackle road danger as a bargaining chip in the school travel plan process.

...what is expected

Schools also need to have a clear idea of what you expect them to bring to the process. A long list of commitments can easily be daunting for overstretched staff or for parents taking on the plan in a voluntary capacity. Again they will be reassured if you explain what support you are offering for these tasks, particularly for conducting and analysing surveys and other forms of consultation.

It is important to make sure that the expectations or requirements placed on schools do not leave them feeling unsupported in the early stages of travel planning. Insisting that schools meet demanding requirements before you are prepared to engage closely with them carries a risk: while you may have successful applications from committed schools, you may also deter other schools that could benefit greatly from the programme, but need external support and nurturing to get started. At worse, these expectations may operate as a form of social exclusion, making the programme inaccessible to those schools that have less capacity to respond, but whose pupils may be more exposed to road danger.

Among case study authorities, key expectations placed on schools to which they were providing support included:

- Nominating a school travel champion or co-ordinator
- Setting up a working group within the school to take the project forward
- Undertaking – or taking part in – an initial travel survey, and participation in ongoing monitoring – for example, as part of the authority's annual hands up survey
- Consulting interested parties – or hosting a consultation run by the local authority
- Including travel awareness on the school curriculum and involving children
- Drawing up a school travel plan, that sets out proposals, responsibilities and other key information (see section 3.3).
- Linking the school travel plan to the school development plan or school improvement plan.
- A general expectation that the school would 'take ownership' of the travel plan.

The majority of authorities were happy for such expectations to be set out, discussed and agreed informally with the head teacher and others, rather than asking the school to sign a written agreement. One of the main benefits of setting out expectations is simply to make the process explicit for all concerned. As already discussed (see section 3.1) having the support of the head teacher is essential.

Some authorities tied expectations into an award scheme or to eligibility for Government capital grants for schools to support travel measures.

...and how long it may take

It is helpful to explain from the outset that the travel plan is a long-term commitment, and give a realistic estimate of the time it will take to secure highways changes. Schools are less likely to lose confidence in the process if you can secure some early wins, such as

cycle parking, and keep them updated about the authority's progress in bringing their plans towards implementation. Keep in mind that schools that hear nothing will assume nothing is happening!

CASE STUDY: MERSEYSIDE TRAVELWISE

Hands on support for Merseyside schools

In Merseyside, at the time of our research, 21% of schools across the conurbation had travel plans either fully fledged or in development. A team of advisers based at the passenger transport executive, Merseytravel, had formed a partnership with five local authorities to deliver the school travel strategy.

While school travel work was tailored to the needs of each school, the package offered at the outset typically included:

- A termly meeting, and review meeting at the end of the school year
- Advice on drawing up and implementing the school travel plan and resolving problems
- Colour leaflets to advertise different activities, which could be tailored to the school
- Walking certificates, walking banners, reflective tabards and armbands
- Support in setting up Walking Wednesdays, Fresh Air Fridays or park-away days, which could help the school get going quickly
- Curriculum resources related to school travel
- A monitoring service: schools received questionnaires for their baseline survey, and were sent a follow-up survey form in May, or on the first anniversary of their travel plan. The forms were analysed by an outside body, at the local authority's expense.
- Liaison with the local authority to fund infrastructure measures such as traffic calming, pedestrian crossings and 20mph limits or zones.

A wide range of other support might also be offered, such as:

- Help setting up a walking bus
- Liaison with the local authority to provide pedestrian or cycle training and to fund cycle shelters
- Promotion for cycling initiatives
- Negotiation with public transport operators to improve existing services
- A leaver's pack for pupils in the last year of primary school with information about bus routes and times to get to their new school by public transport
- Arranging for the Merseytravel Community Links team to run sessions in schools about behaviour on buses
- Help in setting up a car sharing scheme or a park and walk initiative
- Delivery of school assemblies on travel to school issues
- Lesson plans and resources for teachers
- Postcode mapping of where pupils lived

- Assistance in consulting parents, such as speaking at parents evenings, or talking to parents at the school gate
- Presentations to school governors and staff
- Securing grants for school travel work.

On completion of a draft travel plan, the school was asked to draw up a wish list of infrastructure and environmental improvements. Advisers provided most support in the first nine months of the scheme. From about a year and a half into the process, schools tended to run with the scheme themselves.

Sustaining school travel work

As already discussed, (see section 3.5) schools can adopt several strategies that will help in sustaining the school travel plan over time. Travel plans may lose momentum when the authority completes the most intensive phase of its work with the school. Advisers can combat this problem by:

- Keeping an open door, for example, through the provision of ongoing telephone support and networking opportunities for the school's travel co-ordinator (see section 4.2).
- Periodically returning to schools to refresh initiatives and make adjustments to any that are no longer working
- Introducing fresh ideas to prevent initiatives in established travel plans from becoming stale
- Providing support that is directed at sustaining and nurturing those contributing to the travel plan within the school – for example, a dedicated volunteer co-ordinator, supply teacher cover to allow staff to focus on travel, and funding for regular celebrations
- Careful management of the introduction of different initiatives over time – for example, providing cycle and pedestrian training as a follow up to an initial phase of travel work
- Keeping schools informed about progress in securing highways measures.
- Taking opportunities to promote existing travel plans through local media, so that schools feel their efforts have been recognised
- Encouraging schools to adopt strategies discussed in section 3.5.
- Charting school travel plan progress through a series of clearly defined stages – for example, with an award scheme.

► In Devon, school travel plan progress was recognised through a three-tier award scheme, with prizes at each level:

Bronze awards went to schools that had completed the first stage of travel planning, for example, setting up a working group, carrying out surveys and consultation, involving the wider community, setting out a request for travel facilities and engineering works, adopting targets and making links with the school curriculum and the school development plan.

Silver awards went to schools that had reviewed and revised the travel plan in the light of results from a follow up survey, a year after the first one, and could also provide a portfolio of evidence about curriculum work, awareness raising and other achievements related to school travel.

Gold awards went to schools that had sustained their travel work, with a further survey after two years, and could also show modal shift away from the car.

4.4 School travel plans and the planning process

Programmes to build new schools and to redevelop or expand existing schools provide a key opportunity to ensure that school sites are well designed to support sustainable travel. The vast majority of our case study authorities said they had initiated some school travel plans in this way, and those with most experience in this area found it an effective approach. Where new sites are being identified, it is vital to ensure that the location can be accessed by non-car means and that any travel plan can be effective. No travel plan can resolve all the problems arising from a bad location and it is likely that such sites will not be acceptable to the planning or transport authority.

Setting up a protocol for planning applications

Planning applications for new development related to state schools are usually submitted by the education service, or by property services on behalf of education. The application is made to the development management team of the local planning authority, which may or may not be the same authority as the education service.

Where the application is considered to have implications for traffic and transport, it will also be referred to the transport development control team, within the local transport authority, for their views. Again, this may or may not be the same authority. In two tier authorities, planning responsibilities are at district council level with transport and education responsibilities at county level. In unitary authorities, both are within the same authority.

To ensure that the school's travel needs are fully considered from an early stage, the school travel adviser should establish links with the relevant teams in education, planning and transport (development control), and if relevant the sustainable transport team. Together all parties need to decide a protocol, covering the following steps.

1. There is an opportunity for pre-application discussions, covering the nature and principles of access to the site including the need for a travel plan and any transport assessment.
2. The planning authority requires applicants to submit a school travel plan alongside planning applications related to school development. In preparation for this, prospective applicants are referred to the school travel team for advice and guidance on the development of the travel plan, including targets and monitoring.
3. Upon receiving a planning application and its accompanying travel plan, the planning authority seeks the views of the school travel team.
4. The planning and transport authorities take account of the views of the school travel team in their assessment.
5. Mechanisms are established to resolve any disputes between the different parties so that an agreed position is reached on all aspects of the travel plan including implementation and monitoring. Steps should also be agreed for the eventuality that the plan is not implemented or its targets are not met.

In advising on these proposals, the school travel team will need to liaise with the appropriate contacts within the transport department, for example, the cycling officer and the public transport team.

Once the school travel plan has been agreed, some planning authorities make its implementation a condition of planning permission. Detailed advice on the use of planning mechanisms for securing travel plans is available.²⁴

Early intervention

It is in everyone's interests to ensure that planning applications submitted incorporate good access arrangements from the outset. Planning authorities need to turn around applications quickly and will not generally be able to incorporate extensive new proposals at the application stage. For this reason, it is important that the school travel team is involved in discussions with the education service and the school *before* the application is made. School travel advisers should liaise directly with officers in the education service involved in its capital strategy, to identify forthcoming proposals (for example in the year ahead) for school development and redevelopment. The school travel team can then have an early input into the location of the school as well as the design of school grounds and the development of the travel plan, and help in the provision of safe routes. This should ensure that an effective travel plan is submitted with the planning application.

Clear guidance

Schools and the education service need clear guidance on what they are being asked to do. Some authorities have produced guidelines to assist them in the process, specifying a series of requirements, including, for example, the establishment of a working group, the adoption of the travel plan by the governing body and its inclusion in the school development plan.

► In Hertfordshire, schools seeking planning permission for new development were asked to develop a travel plan before planning permission was given, and issued with guidelines produced by the school travel adviser to help them in this process. Implementation of the travel plan – which included a schedule setting out what activities would be carried out and by whom – was then secured by means of a planning condition. Introducing this process had the major benefit of enabling school travel staff to engage with the head teacher at an early stage, and there had been no enforcement issues.

► In Bradford, around a third of schools were being redeveloped as part of a reorganisation programme changing from three-tier to two-tier education. The local authority had requested that travel plans were submitted alongside all school planning applications. School designs were then scrutinised by the school travel team, and planning conditions might then be imposed to secure additional measures, such as safe crossings serving the school.

²⁴ *Good practice guidelines: delivering travel plans through the planning process*, produced by Addison Associates for the Department for Transport, 2009.

Design issues

Re-building and remodelling schools offers an opportunity to make state-of-the-art provision for school journeys with consideration for access by foot, bicycle and by bus.

► School journeys were taken into account in the design of the newly built All Saints CE Primary School in Ilkley, West Yorkshire. A wide shared pedestrian and cycle path swept up to the main entrance and cycle parking was about 15m from the school doors. A separate entrance on the opposite side of the school linked to sections of widened footway, a new toucan crossing on the busy A65 and a traffic-free river bridge.

CASE STUDY: THE NOTTINGHAM EMMANUEL SCHOOL

Planning for a cycling school

Type of school: Secondary
360 students, age 11 – 19
Free school meals: 25%

In the year before the Nottingham Emmanuel School opened, Nottingham City Council worked closely with the school's shadow governing body to develop travel arrangements. The school's target was for half its students to arrive by walking and cycling. As part of an extensive package of improvements, the authority removed a dark and disused railway bridge at the entrance to the school and improved visibility and signing on a nearby pedestrian and cycle bridge. The school, which was close to the city centre, also benefited from more general improvements to the cycle network. A new bus stop and pedestrian refuges were provided, and new school bus services were introduced over time, though the school wanted to see more. On the school grounds, an attractive new cycle shelter was installed in a central and visible location.

Head teacher, David King, himself a keen cyclist, led the travel plan. He recommended: "Start with something to propose that has a big vision about it: How is our school going to make a big impact to improve our local community?" In the months before pupils first arrived, he discussed travel arrangements with groups of prospective parents visiting the school, explaining about the changes underway, and listening to their concerns.

Once the school was open, he continued to keep the plan high profile, stressing the benefits to pupils and raising their expectations of the journey – for example, that it should provide a pleasant walk.

King and another member of staff were on duty between the school and the pedestrian bridge at the start and finish of the day, to supervise students and prevent bullying. Parents bringing children by car were encouraged to 'drop and go' at three designated points, all a short walk away.

As the city's school travel adviser, Jennie Maybury said her main role in the run up to the school's opening was in chasing the relevant contacts within the local authority to get the right people around the table at meetings of the school's transport committee. This included the cycling officer, the contracts manager for home-to-school transport in the local education authority, a county public transport officer and a safe routes to school officer, who oversaw the design of engineering measures. Local councillors and the heads of local primary schools were also involved and consulted. Overall, school travel officers spent more than 400 hours on the project.

The integration of safe routes measures with other local transport improvements made it difficult to give a precise cost to the scheme, but the authority spent around £130,000 to remove the bridge and introduce additional safe routes. No formal planning mechanism was used to secure the plan, but the authority's early involvement was critical.

A student survey six months after the school opened showed 17% of students cycled, 31% walked and 32% arrived by bus.

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