

SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL TRAVEL STRATEGY 2008

Date of issue: August 2007

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1: INTRODUCTION

In response to changing legislation in the field of school transport, especially in respect of Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, there is a duty on Local Authorities (LAs) to produce an annual Sustainable School Travel Strategy. In the wider context of transport to and from schools, further education establishments and other educational facilities. Travel Planning is becoming an increasingly important method of introducing sustainable transport choices to a wide range of transport users. Through careful integration of the Travel Planning Service with the Road Safety Service, modal shift to more sustainable transport modes should not result in increased levels of killed and seriously injured (KS) casualties amongst vulnerable user groups.

This Strategy sets out to show how the Council will encourage the development and implementation of travel planning across the Borough and how it assesses and meets the travel needs of those who need to travel to and from educational establishments. This will apply to movements during the school day as well as at the beginning and end of the day.

Taking account of guidance already provided and with the ability to be adapted through time in the light of guidance issued, this strategy attempts to set out:

- ❑ How the strategy will **benefit the safety well-being** of those using the Community Transport Service;
- ❑ how it will improve the **environmental well-being** of the local area;
- ❑ the **context** in which the strategy is set, and
- ❑ the **strategic issues** that need to be addressed and outlines an **Action Plan** for its delivery.

Aims and Objectives

The overall **Aims** of this Strategy are:

1. **To ensure that systems are in place to secure fair access to schools in relation to school transport and those who are on low incomes;**
2. **all schools to have an authorised Travel Plan within the lifetime of the Strategy;**
3. **continuance and further refinement of a robust monitoring system for school travel planning;**
4. **to provide an assessment of the travel needs of the area;**
5. **to provide an assessment of the supporting facilities and services in the area;**
6. **to develop a strategy for the promotion of sustainable transport to and from schools and other establishments, and**

7. to provide a framework for consultation on matters related to transport to and from schools and other educational establishments.

To meet these Aims, the **Objectives** of this Strategy are:

- ❑ to provide a means for all schools to access the School Travel Planning service;
- ❑ to provide a means for schools with travel plans to train and educate students in the use of sustainable transport;
- ❑ to enable the uptake of sustainable transport for students and employees;
- ❑ to develop and implement a suite of 'soft' measures, including promotion and training;
- ❑ to increase the number of more sustainable trips throughout the borough through a campaign of awareness and education;
- ❑ to provide a safe, efficient and well maintained cycling and walking network;
- ❑ to reduce the actual and perceived dangers to cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users
- ❑ to provide more and better cycle facilities, and to remove theft as a barrier to cycling as a transport mode choice;
- ❑ to provide for the needs of more sustainable transport users at all stages of the land use planning and development control processes;
- ❑ to increase levels of public transport use for travel to school, and other education establishments.
- ❑ to reduce levels of car use on the school run;
- ❑ to ensure that the Council adopts hierarchies of users and infrastructure which prioritise the travel choices available to promote sustainable modes of travel;
- ❑ to reduce the environmental impact of transport across the Borough; and
- ❑ to improve, through the increased uptake of exercise, the general health and fitness of the school population of the Borough – linking with the Healthy Schools agenda.
- ❑ To ensure suppliers have and operate safe recruitment to ensure the safeguarding of children.

2: CONTEXT

2.1 National Context

The National Context for this document arises from the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Under the Act, there will be a general duty on LAs to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport, and this comprises four main elements:

- an **assessment** of the travel and transport needs of children and young people within the authority's area
- an **audit** of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions
- a **strategy** to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for
- the **promotion** of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions;

and must "...prepare for each academic year a document containing their strategy to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel to meet the school travel needs of their area"

This is dealt with in more detail in section 3 – Strategic issues.

A number of existing publications provide guidance for travel planning. Most of these publications originate from central government, reflecting – with the exception of School Travel Planning – a dearth of regional guidance on travel planning.

Travelling to School: An Action Plan/A Good Practice Guide (DfES 2003)

A pair of documents, intended to: “...bring about a step change in home to school travel patterns to cut congestion and pollution, but also to allow many more pupils to take regular exercise”.

2.2 The Education (Schools information)(England) Regulations 2002

The LA is required to publish the general arrangements and policies in respect of transport for pupils of compulsory school age and below to and from schools and school and FE 6th forms and colleges. More detailed information is laid out in Section 4 on Policy areas.

Making Smarter Choices Work (DfT 2004)

A guide for LAs on Smarter Choices, and how to use them to improve traffic flows and ‘make life more pleasant for local people’.

The Future of Transport: a Network for 2030

Published in 2004, ‘The Future of Transport: a network for 2030’ sets out the Government’s strategy for transport over the next 25 years. Key to this strategy is the way in which travel is changing across the country.

As a key part of the Government’s environmental objectives, walking and cycling need to be made a real alternative for local trips. This will reduce car use and congestion and increase social inclusion as well as improving safety and air quality. It will also increase levels of physical fitness.

2.3 Regional Context

2.3.1 Regional School Travel Adviser Service

In order to address the lack of guidance in school travel planning at a regional level, the Travel to School Initiative Board (see Travelling to School: an Action Plan) has set in place a regional network of advisers, charged with providing information, training and disseminating best practices regionally in the field. No such network presently exists for business/workplace travel planning or residential travel planning.

2.3.2 Regional Transport Groups

Local Authorities within the North East area meet on a regular basis to network on operational issues and how best services can be delivered within the Home to School Transport Services. In addition to this there is an ATCO (Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers) North East area Special Interest Group – Home to School Transport that meets in York which involves a much wider area to the south including Sheffield and South Yorkshire. This group feeds into the National ATCO Meetings.

2.4 Local Context

2.4.1 Stockton on Tees Local Transport Plan – 2006 to 2011

The second Stockton –n Tees Local Transport Plan (LTP) covers the five-year period from April 2006 – March 2011, and sets out the Council’s strategy for the future development of the Borough’s transport network. The LTP draws upon the national, regional, sub-regional and local contexts to develop a series of aims and objectives set against the five themes of the Central Government/Local Government Association’s Shared Priority for Transport, namely:

Congestion;
Accessibility;
Road Safety;
Air Quality; and
Other Quality of Life

The LTP also includes a set of indicators and targets against which progress towards the delivery of the aims and objectives will be measured over the lifetime of the Plan.

Whilst the LTP sets out the Council’s Long-Term Transport Strategy, there is a series of supporting ‘Daughter’ Strategies that have informed this Strategy as well as forming a ‘suite’ of mutually supportive and self-referencing policy documents. These include:

- The Road Safety Strategy;
- The Cycling Strategy (as many routes are shared access); and
- The walking strategy

2.4.2 Stockton on Tees Climate Change Strategy

Currently in draft format, this shortly to be published document:

“..aims to enable the community to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. To make any real progress, it is essential to raise awareness of the climate change issues in all sectors of our community. When people understand the link between carbon issues in all sectors of our community. When people understand the link between emissions and climate change they are more likely to change their lifestyle.”

A number of actions are indicated in the Action Plan arising out of the document, and the relevant issues are:

- All schools to participate in the Eco Schools programme by 2010;
- Improved public transport network coverage;
- Increased reliability of transport systems
- Encourage more cycling and walking trips
- All schools to have a School Travel Plan in place by 2010

2.4.3 Information on eligibility for transport when applying for primary and secondary school places

Each year, the Local Authority (LA) publishes a booklet for parents on admission arrangements which includes information about Home to School Transport. The School Admissions Team work closely with the Community Transport Team to ensure that relevant information is exchanged on allocation of school places.

2.4.4 Community Transport Team

The Community Transport team co-ordinate a fleet of vehicles which are utilised in the most effective way to maximise resources. Education, Social Care and Dial a Ride services are managed within the team.

Within an educational context, Home to School Transport is organised for special needs pupils across the age ranges 4 – 19 years; mainstream primary and secondary education pupils; access to swimming facilities; 14-16 pupils attending vocational courses with colleges and private provider settings and 16+ to school 6th forms, and FE colleges within the Borough.

In addition, transport is provided from rural villages for students to access college in the wider Tees Valley area. More recently a vehicle has been purchased to support opportunities in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. This enables schools, local youth clubs and charitable organisations to support learning opportunities after school, weekends and during holiday periods as well as during the school day.

2.4.5 Independent Travel Training

A drama group was commissioned, through Pathfinder funding to undertake independent travel training to groups of students in special schools in Y10/11 and this formed the basis for further work to be developed in school. The Community Transport team is working with the Commissioning Service to obtain care staff to work with individual special needs pupils to support independent travel training. This is an area that will continue to be developed.

2.4.6 Stockton on Tees Post 16 Transport Partnership

The partnership consists of representatives from the LA, Community Transport Team and Transportation Service, School 6th forms, 6th form college and FE colleges, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Connexions Service, and is intended to provide supported travel for post-16 students up to 19 years. Some concessionary travel is agreed for post 19 students depending on the availability of the transport. The partnership supports sustainability of transport eg, increase use of public transport through a half fare travel permit; purchase of mini buses to support travel to 6th forms and colleges, purchase of secure cycle storage sheds for colleges and encourage independent travel training.

2.4.7 Every Child Matters, Extended Schools and Integrated Service Areas

The agenda for change leading from the Every Child Matters and the Extended Schools project is already influencing almost every area of operation of the Council's service delivery. This is very much the case with Road Safety, and consequently the integrated School Travel Plan service. The adoption of an online data collection system has already enabled the Council to better involve children and young people in the delivery of the School Travel Plan service particularly, with tangible benefits in terms of identifying issues, and better targeting of resources to specific problem areas, through the use of more reliable, better quality data and feedback. The new system also provides an opportunity for real hands-on involvement of individual students in the instigation, development, implementation and monitoring of their own School's Travel Plan.

The new integrated service area teams are currently being developed which will involve staff across various agencies working together, one team being placed within each of the 5 integrated service areas within the Borough.

3: IDENTIFICATION OF NEED

3.1 Introduction

In order to equitably allow access to school transport where it is required, there must be a robust and transparent method of needs identification and allocation at work, to which all have equal access.

There are two methodologies employed in the identification of need for transport provision within the Borough. One is directly linked to the development of School Travel Plans, through the use of *schooltravelplan.net*, and involves the direct input of travel mode and supplementary information by students themselves, supported by parental and teacher surveys. This data stream is also supplemented by the use of School Census data, which will be used to establish an effective baseline in order to monitor modal shift through mandatory indicator LTP4.

The second method involves the use of postcode mapping and is used as part of the Council's discharging of its duties in providing Home to School Transport. The policy, recently amended in light of new duties and responsibilities arising from the Education and Inspections Act 2006, applies to:

- Children and young people normally resident within the Borough of Stockton on Tees

- Children and young people of statutory school age
- Children and young people from vulnerable families living in the Borough

There is a separate Home to School Transport Policy for young people between 16 and 19 years.

3.2 Home to School Transport

The Local Authority (LA) has a statutory duty to provide free transport using a mileage criteria for primary and secondary pupils. New duties have been imposed through the recent Education & Inspections Bill for the LA to provide free transport to those families on low incomes so that transport as research shows these families can be disadvantaged as they are unable to opt for a school further away due to the cost of transport. These duties apply to primary pupils in September 2007 and secondary pupils in September 2008. Additional duties also apply to families on low incomes who apply for places in a voluntary aided school because of religion or belief. More details can be found in the LAs Home to School Transport Policy.

4: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT ISSUES

4.1 Overview

The previous Chapter described how the Council has identified needs for transport within the Borough, the arrangements currently in place and explored the development of a strategy for the promotion of sustainable transport and Travel Planning within the Borough. This Chapter sets out a revised structure and funding regime designed to ensure that the 'headline' objectives set out above are met. The remainder of the Chapter identifies the policy areas within which Home to School Transport contributes to meeting the objectives of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and the Stockton on Tees Local Transport Plan (LTP).

The Council's long term Transport Strategy, as set out in the second LTP, is based on the set of Core Aims and Objectives set out below. Travel planning will play a key role in meeting many of these Aims and Objectives.

The Council will ensure that all of the eligible schools within the Borough have a Travel Plan in place by 2010, in line with the national target set by the Travel to School Initiative (TTSI) Board and agreed by the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Travel Planning's Contribution to meeting the Core Aims and Objective of the Long-Term Transport Strategy is contained in the LTP

4.2 Existing Transport and Travel Planning Arrangements

Stockton on Tees Borough Council provide a range of support options for those travelling to and from school and other educational establishments, from support for walking and cycling through safe routes and school travel planning, promotion of sustainable transport, and provision of a dedicated Home to School Transport Service, which forms a major part of the community transport provision for the Borough.

The service covers Primary, Secondary and Special Schools as well as transport to adult users supported through Social Care and a Dial a ride service across the Borough.

Through the Pathfinder Post 16 Partnership additional funding has been provided to support the Council's half fare permit scheme for students across the Borough enabling them to travel across the Tees Valley area, 24/7.

4.4 School Travel Plans

Funding was received in 2004/05 from the DfES and allocated to schools under the Schools Travel Plan programme which has enabled this Borough to achieve Travel Plans for 40% of schools. This work will continue with schools to meet the target of all schools having a travel plan by 2010.

5 POLICY AREAS

5.1 Travel Planning

5.1.1 School Travel Plans

We will achieve the national target of all schools to have a school travel plan in place by 2010. Interim targets leading to the 2010 date have been set and these are explained in greater detail in the chapter on Action Plans. We will achieve the national target through the use of 'schooltravelplan.net', our online travel plan, survey and data comparison system.

5.1.2 Every Child Matters

The Travel Plan team are actively involved in Stockton's Extended Schools development , and along with the Road Safety Team, are using practices developed during this process to improve service delivery. Work will continue with partners within the Borough, cementing and improving on already existing partnerships. Integrated Service Areas, due to be implemented in 2007 will also need to be included in the future.

5.1.3 Workplace Travel Plans

A Travel Plan briefing pack has been developed in partnership with Middlesbrough Council, under the banner of 'Do You Really Need It', further information can be obtained by logging on to the website www.doyoureallyneedit.com. The Briefing Pack will be distributed to 250 of the largest businesses within the Borough backed up with an offer of Fuel Efficiency Driver Training (linked to a programme of Management of Operation Road Risk (MORR) training) as well as support in developing and implementing a workplace travel plan. Procurement of an online travel plan generation system went live in May 2006 in order to coincide with the launch of the information packs. In the medium term, it is intended that other Tees Valley Authorities will adopt the same system.

5.1.4 Corporate Travel Plan

A Council Travel Plan is currently under development and approval of the Plan will be sought in 2007. Roll out of the initiatives within the Plan over the lifetime of this Strategy to provide and promote sustainable travel choices for all of Stockton Council employees.

5.1.5 Travel Planning and Development Control

A number of travel plans have been developed through conditions placed on new development through Section 106 Agreements. The Council's Planning Division administers this process. In partnership with the other Tees Valley Local Authorities, the on-line workplace travel plan information and generation system described above will allow a process formalisation and development of a robust monitoring system which can be administered within existing resources.

5.1.6 Travel Plan Strategy Development

There is a Travel Planning Development Group which considers long term strategy and to identify and implement methods of better integrating travel plan relation services, especially in the light of new guidance arising around residential travel planning, and its relationship to the Local Development Framework (LDF).

5.2 Safety

5.2.1 Safer Routes to School

There will be implementation, through the travel plan process, and as appropriate opportunities arise, at least three 'Safer Routes to School' schemes per year throughout the life of the Strategy.

5.2.2 20 mph zones

There will be a programme for the introduction of school safety zones, which may include 20 mph speed limits, at appropriate schools across the Borough.

5.2.3 Danger, and the Perception of Danger

As part of the Road Safety Strategy, a programme of education, training and publicity has been developed to support the infrastructure improvements for vulnerable road users. This should make the use of more sustainable alternatives to the private care more attractive to potential users.

5.2.4 Vulnerable Road Users

Development will continue with a programme of education and publicity to ensure that all schools, students, parents and carers are aware of risks related to vulnerable road users. This programme will be delivered through the 'Stockton Safer Roads', www.doyoureallyneedit.com and

www.doitbycycle.com websites, supported by direct, targeted information provision and pedestrian and National Standard Cycle Training. For those students with Special Needs, we are undertaking and will continue to develop a programme of personal mobility training.

5.2.5 Recruitment

There is a need to ensure that all providers of operate safe recruitment practises.

5.3 Modal shift

5.3.1 Car Journeys

We will work to reduce by 20% the volume of traffic arriving at the school gate to drop off or pick up children (measured through schools-based surveys).

5.3.2 Car Sharing

Although a degree of informal car sharing already goes on across the Borough (see Data Sheets for Existing and Preferred Travel to School), we will see k to formalise and increase levels of car sharing as part of the journey to school across the Borough through greater promotion, initially within the Authority through the use of www.2plustravel.com , the Tees Valley car sharing website, with wider promotion and take-up across the Borough over the lifetime of this Strategy.

5.3.3 Walking and Cycling Improvements

We will increase levels of walking and cycling to school across the Borough, through a combination of Travel Plan let infrastructure improvements and a programme of education, training and promotion.

5.3.4 Public Transport

We will ensure that up-to-date, accurate information on public transport is provided to schools, businesses and community facilities through a programme of targeted public transport promotion, and the progressive roll out of real-time bus information.

5.4 Sustainability

5.4.1 National and Local Campaigns

We will campaign to reduce dependence on the car as the exclusive means of transport to and from school through continued support for 'Bike to School Week', 'Walk to School Week', 'In Town Without My Car Day' and other sustainable transport campaigns, including our own cycling promotion 'Try Before You Buy'.

5.4.2 Carbon Reduction

We will work in partnership with Tees Forest to reduce the carbon load of the journey to school by helping to develop community forest-based carbon sinks, a project originally piloted by the Council for 'Walk to School Week' 2003, and now adopted by four of the Tees Valley Authorities.

5.5 Congestion

5.5.1 Monitoring

We are currently developing a robust monitoring regime for adopted and implemented authorised travel plans, whether school, workplace, voluntary or planning condition derived. The Council has moved to electronic data collection in order to speed the process of reporting and analysis for schools and is, in partnership with its Tees Valley neighbours, procuring a similar system for Workplace Travel Planning. All schools within the Borough currently use electronic data collection.

5.5.2 Parking

In support of travel plan-derived parking control measures, we will implement a rolling programme of school visits by parking enforcement team. The aim of this initiative will be to reduce the levels of parking at the school gate and in adjacent residential area; visiting a minimum of five school sites per term.

5.5.3 Alternative Parking

Concentrating primarily on Travel Plan schools, through the use of walking buses and 'park and stride' projects, we will support alternative parking areas for schools. Where feasible, these will allow parents to park away from the school gate and make part of their journey on foot.

5.6 Health

5.6.1 Increasing Fitness Levels Across the Borough

We will, through a focused programme of education, training and publicity work with partners to support corporate and Health Sector initiatives to increase levels of fitness in the school population of the Borough. The main areas of focus will be walking to school, cycling to school, and increasing levels of use of public transport.

5.6.2 Health Partnerships

We will continue to strengthen partnership links with the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Health Schools, in particular by working to identify common goals – such as increasing levels of cycling and walking – within the Health White Paper.

5.7 Children, Education and Social Care

The Community Transport Service is constantly working to reduce emissions and encourage more children to travel on local/public transport rather than by car. There has recently been changes to the organisation of school transport on Ingleby Barwick where the LA has awarded contracts to bus operators to provide transport for 500 children. This has proved successful with parents as there is now a waiting list for places on this transport. This has resulted in the use of cars off the estate.

There are further plans to introduce an eco driving training scheme within the service for all staff from April 2007 and it is predicted this will reduce fuel consumption. At the same time there will be a gradual introduction of new Euro standard buses and a switch to Bio Diesel Fuel.

The introduction of new computer software is predicted to further reduce mileage by routing vehicles more effectively.

APPENDX 1

An Action Plan is currently being developed up to 2010/11.