

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 Transport 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 (KSI) casualties amongst vulnerable user groups.

This Strategy sets out to show how Middlesbrough 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 a particular school/college catchment 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.

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.

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 Advisor Service

In order to address the lack of guidance in school travel planning at a regional level, the Travel to School Initiative Board has set in place a regional network of advisers, charged with providing information, training and disseminating best practices regionally in the field.

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 Local Area Agreement 2007 to 2010

Within the local area agreement for Middlesbrough, we have set out to meet transport needs more effectively.

The Mayor's "Raising Hope" agenda is built on four pillars. One of which is to provide Middlesbrough with a 'transport network, which can meet the needs of a town on its way up'.

To achieve this, four objectives for transport have been created.

The objectives briefly include:

- Promoting economic growth and regeneration by providing accessibility improvements.
- Making our streets safer by reducing the number of accidents and casualties.
- Reduce the number of journeys by car to lower congestion levels and improve air quality and the environment.
- Encourage investment to deliver public transport improvements.

Vision and Objectives

From these objectives, the Mayor developed five key transport priorities that would form a community transport strategy.

These priorities include:

1. The transport network will help the local community to have access to employment and other services, such as education, health, leisure and shopping.
2. Congestion will not hinder economic development; impair the quality of the local environment or cause severance in our communities.
3. Reduce the number of accidents and casualties on the roads.
4. Reduce the environmental impact of transport on air quality, noise and climate change.
5. Sustainable highways maintenance: encouraging the increased use of cycling and walking through appropriate maintenance and access improvements.

This transport strategy is being progressively implemented across Middlesbrough and is outlined in the local transport plan.

2.4.2 Middlesbrough Council Local Transport Plan – 2006 to 2011

The second Middlesbrough 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

2.4.3 Middlesbrough Climate Change Community Action Plan

The action plan 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 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

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

Under the Middlesbrough Home to School Transport Policy pupils aged between 4 – 16 years of age are eligible for free transport if they live over two miles for primary aged pupils and three miles for secondary aged pupils by the shortest walking distance from their catchment area school.

National changes to be introduced for pupils transferring to the secondary sector in September 2008 extend the eligibility criteria for free home to school transport to include pupils from low-income families, who reside over two miles from their school, by the shortest walking distance and the school is one of the three nearest schools.

With regard to students aged over 16 years of age attending Colleges of Further Education, the Local Authority participates in a half fare permit scheme which allows students aged between 16 – 19 to travel to and from the College of Further Education at a half fare rate. Students aged over 16 years of age with special educational needs attending Colleges of Further Education are provided with free transport if transport was identified as a non educational provision in their last statement of special educational needs. A student may qualify for free transport if he/she has a medical condition that necessitates transport and that view is supported by the Council's Medical Officer.

The Middlesbrough Educational Transport Partnership considers providing support, to students aged over 19 years of age, attending Colleges of Further Education who have learning and/or physical difficulties.

2.4.5 Children, Families and Learning - Pupil Support - Home to School Transport

The Home to School Transport Section co-ordinates the transport, on a daily basis, of approximately 1,300 pupils who qualify for free home to school transport. The section contracts a fleet of in-house and privately operated vehicles to undertake the transport.

2.4.6 Tees Valley Post 16 Transport Partnership

The partnership consists of representatives from the all 5 Local Authority transport sections, Community Transport Teams, 6th form & FE colleges, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Connexions Service. It is intended to provide supported travel for post-16 students up to 19 years.

The partnership was formed to research current practices from each authority and organisation, with the view to investigating the possible provision of having one travel card that enables young people to travel for half fare.

An executive member report has been produced to seek financial approval for the scheme in the coming months, so that it can hopefully start in September 2008.

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.

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

3.2 Home to School Transport

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to provide free transport using a mileage criteria for primary and secondary pupils. The Education & Inspections Act 2006 widens the eligibility for free transport to pupils from lower income families as research has shown that lack of affordable transport can act as a barrier to choice when expressing a parental preference for a school. These duties apply to primary pupils in September 2007 and secondary pupils in September 2008.

Further details can be found in the Middlesbrough Home to School Transport Policy.

4 SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT ISSUES

4.1 Overview

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 Education and Skills (DfES).

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

Middlesbrough 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 to the provision of a dedicated free Home to School Transport Service.

As mentioned previously, we are hopeful of securing extra funding that will allow the Post 16 Partnership additional funding 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 XX% 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 Middlesbrough'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 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 Middlesbrough Council employees, including teaching staff based at schools and sixth form colleges.

5.1.4 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.

5.2 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

During 2006/07, there will be a programme for the introduction of 20 mph speed limits outside all schools within the Borough, with a roll out of implementation over the lifetime of this Strategy.

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 car 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 is 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.

5.3 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, we will seek 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'.

5.5 Congestion

5.5.1 Monitoring

We are currently looking into the possibility of having a similar electronic travel plan builder that is currently in operation for workplace travel planning. Other Tees Valley authorities are currently using such systems, so we hope to be able to mirror their practices as it's a much more effective way of collecting and disseminating data within the Tees Valley.

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.