

Somerset County Council

“Developing a Sustainable School Travel
Strategy”

Preliminary Document:
”Setting the Scene – Making the Links”

August 2007

This document is also available in Braille, large print, on tape and on disc and we can translate it into different languages. We can provide a member of staff to discuss the details.



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Education and Inspections Act

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 imposes a new duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport for schools.

The Act defines sustainable modes of travel as those that the local authority considers may improve the physical well-being of those who use them, the environmental well-being of all or part of the local authority's area, or a combination of the two. For example, walking and cycling are likely to improve health of those travelling on foot or by bicycle. They may also bring environmental benefits by reducing pollution and traffic congestion. Bus and car sharing may also be beneficial to the environment, compared with people travelling in their own cars.

There are four main elements to the duty.

- An assessment of students' travel and transport **needs**.
- An audit of the sustainable travel and transport **infrastructure** to and from or between schools, colleges or other education placements.
- A **strategy** to develop sustainable travel and transport.
- The **promotion** of sustainable travel.

To comply with the new duty the County Council has to publish a Sustainable School Travel Strategy on our website by 31 August each year, with effect from August 2007. The Department for Children, School and Families (DCSF) recognise that they have given us very little time to do this with the act coming into force on 1 April 2007, and it is therefore understood that the initial strategies will not be comprehensive and may be subject to greater consultation to engage stakeholders, but may highlight work in progress and refer to development work to be undertaken in the future.

1.2 Purpose Of This Document

Somerset County Council has been delivering effective strategies for sustainable school travel for a number of years. However, we do recognise that there is more that can be done to ensure better integration of activity across the services that impact on school travel, and to respond effectively to new legislation.

The importance of implementing a sustainable school transport network in order to encourage a change in culture away from private car use for school journeys is seen as paramount in developing future transport strategy. To this end, sustainable transport is viewed locally as the essential infrastructure at the heart of all new key Local Authority initiatives. Following the introduction of recent legislation around sustainable transport and the provision of budget to develop a sustainable transport strategy, it is the intention of Somerset County Council to undertake a complete review of our school travel within the wider

context of overall transport policy, with the aim of delivering a robust, holistic, best-value solution based on a first class sustainable transport model. This is seen very much as a cross-cutting exercise, encompassing not only school planning and review, transport planning, new school development proposals and admissions policy and practise, but also engaging a wide range of internal and external partners including neighbouring authorities, schools, Diocese and Church groups. A network diagram of our contributory partners and projects can be seen at the end of this document in Figure 4.2: Making the Links. It is envisaged that the Sustainable School Travel Strategy will have impact and implications going beyond statutory school transport provision and be an integral part of a complete sustainable transport strategy.

It will be important to develop a new strategy that generates:

- A real difference in the way that services are delivered;
- A real difference in outcomes for children and young people such as improved health, safety and access to services;
- A real difference in outcomes for the wider community such as reducing the growth of congestion and air pollution;
- A real, long-term difference in travel culture that ensures future sustainability of our communities and environment.
- A best-value, state of the art school travel solution that will provide Somerset with a sound, sustainable platform for the future

This document sets out a concise evidence base for school travel in Somerset, a brief summary of our existing approach to sustainable school travel and our planned approach to developing a new strategy over the coming year.

2 SCHOOL TRAVEL IN SOMERSET – SUMMARY OF TRAVEL NEEDS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

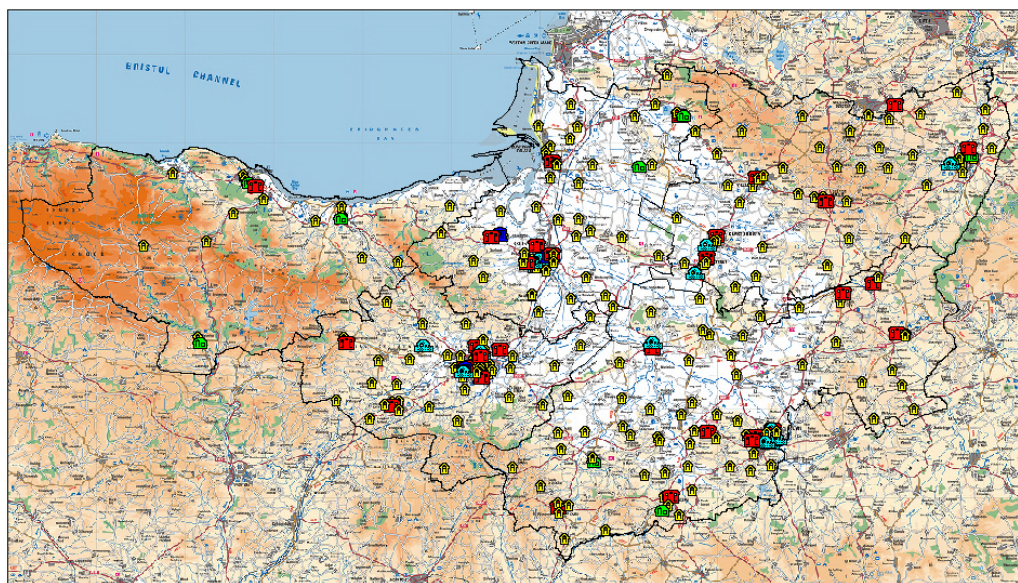
2.1 Location of schools

Somerset is home to 498,000 people, about 10% of the population of the south west region. The settlement pattern is one of dispersal, only about a third of the population live in our four largest towns of Taunton (63,536), Yeovil (42,140), Bridgwater (36,892) and Frome (24,150). Schools are located in a similarly dispersed pattern resulting in many people needing to drive their children to school and huge challenges in providing cost-effective sustainable travel solutions.

Somerset has 318 schools in total, of which 34 are independent schools, 14 are special schools or Pupil Referral Units, 30 are secondary schools and 240 are primary.

Figure 2.1 shows the location of our existing schools.

Figure 2.1 Location of schools in Somerset



2.2 School Admissions

There are currently approximately 61,000 children attending primary and secondary schools in Somerset with approximately 13,500 children starting or transferring school each year. 11,500 children are transported on a daily basis, of which approximately 1,200 qualify for enhanced school services and transport provision, including Special Educational Needs children and children within the care of the Local Authority.

From 1999 to 2006, Somerset operated an admissions allocation process which prioritised parental first preference over local schools. This, coupled with the rural nature of the county and statutory requirements regarding Looked After Children and enhanced inclusion for SEN pupils, has led to increased numbers of often longer individual journeys.

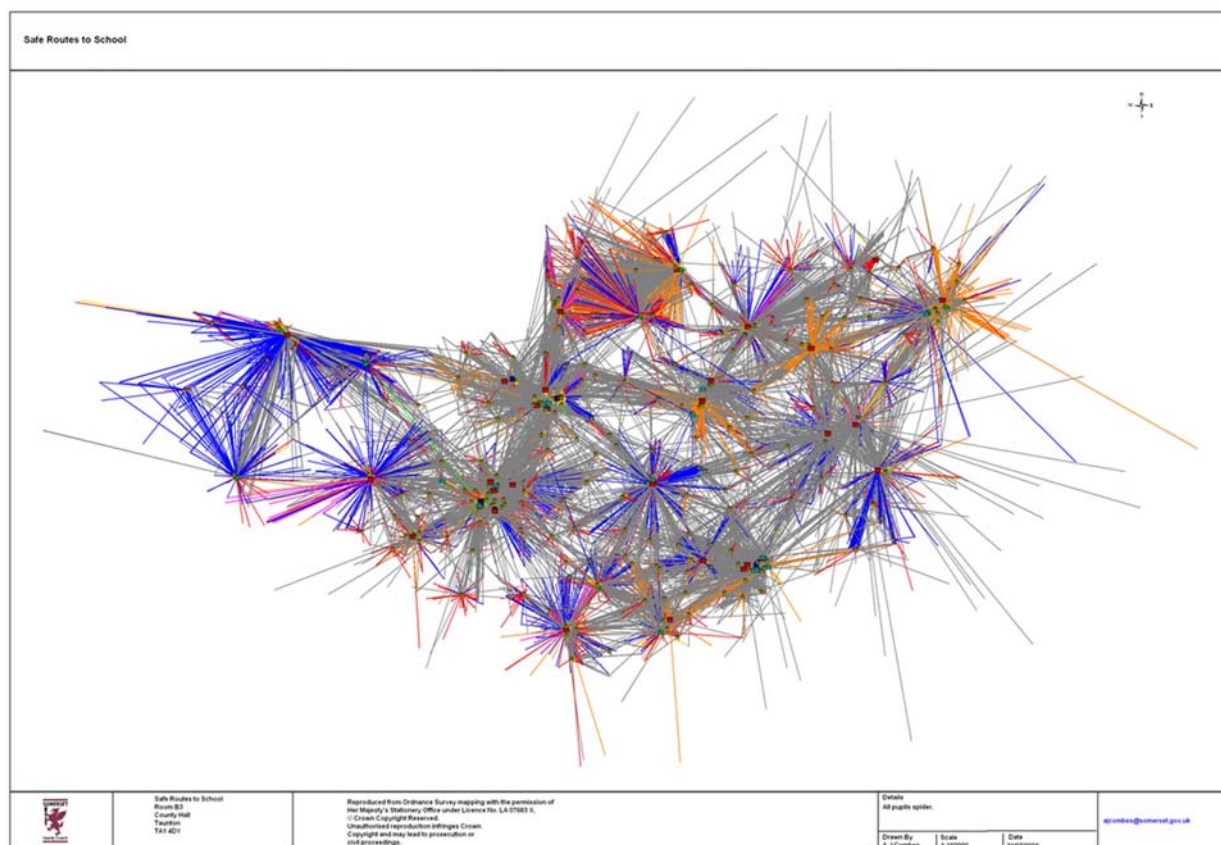
In February 2007, a new Admissions Code of Practice was introduced which has seen Somerset move to an "Equal Preference" model of school admissions allocation. This gives greater control to the local authority in terms of the placement of children in schools. Somerset County Council has recognised that this generates significant new obligations and possibilities in managing the movement of children throughout the county. The development of an appropriate transport strategy is seen as a fundamental component underpinning the whole admissions policy, both for existing schools and those to be developed in the future. This has prompted a complete review of statutory transport provision, budget and policy development, outlined in section 3.6.

2.3 Location of pupils and travel patterns

Somerset has pioneered the collection and analysis of postcode data to identify location, travel mode and undertake spatial calculations for all pupils at Local Education authority (LEA) schools. This work has contributed to the inclusion of Mode of Travel within School Census. Somerset is taking this work further by bringing Census, Map and pupil preference data on to a single accessible (to schools, parents, public and LA Officers) platform InfoMapper Viewfinder www.viewfinder.infomapper.com.

In addition to delivering the majority of the key components of the needs assessment and infrastructure audit required for delivery of this strategy (see Appendix 1) Viewfinder also provides a platform for data collection and exchange that links to the new joint report from HM Treasury and DCSF "**Aiming High for young people**; a ten year strategy for positive activities". This strategy builds on the **Youth Matters** programme and follows the creation of a new duty for local authorities to secure young people's access to positive activities (section 6 of Education and Inspections Act 2006). Sections 4.58 - 4.64 refer to specifically to transport and the expectation that LAs will take into account young people's travel needs.

Figure 2.2 below shows school travel journeys for every child in the County. Grey lines represent those children not going to their nearest school, principally as a result of parental choice. Of the children not attending their nearest school, approximately 60% travel by car, as increased journey distance in almost all these cases rules out walking and cycling as a realistic option. Blue lines show a high use of school buses particularly in the rural west of the County.

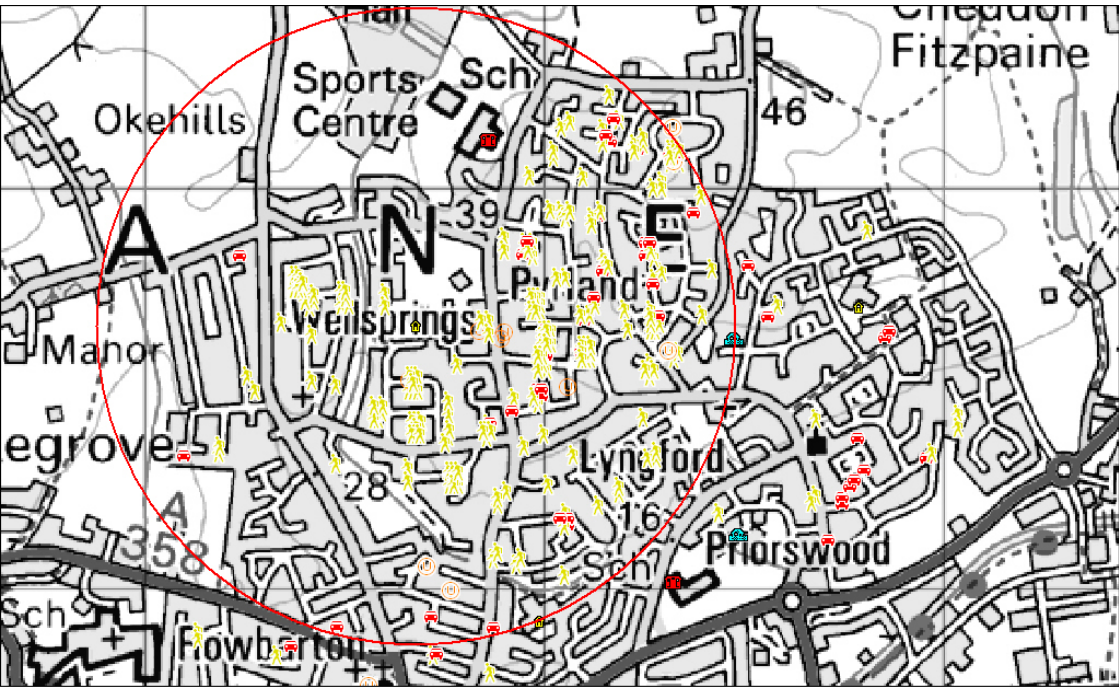
Figure 2.2 Journeys to school based on postcode location data

We have assembled a comprehensive data set for this information running back to 2002 which has enabled us to understand school travel modes and patterns, establish journey distances and typical thresholds where walking and cycling trips to school tend to cease and are replaced by car journeys. The information gathered from each school is used to inform council decision making and strategic planning, and is also fed back to parents and schools via an annual School Travel Healthcheck to help them identify and address their individual school travel profile and inform their school travel plans. An example of an individual school travel profile for a primary school is shown in figure 2.4 below. Yellow pedestrian figures show the home locations of children walking to school; red cars indicate children who are driven. The red circle indicates an 800m radius from the school – the practical walk threshold identified by Somerset County Council based on current travel patterns.

Table 2.3 Practical walk threshold distances in Somerset compared with statutory distances

Type of School	Somerset practical walk threshold	Statutory threshold
Primary	800m	3200m (children under age 8)
Secondary	2000m	4800m (children aged 8 and over)

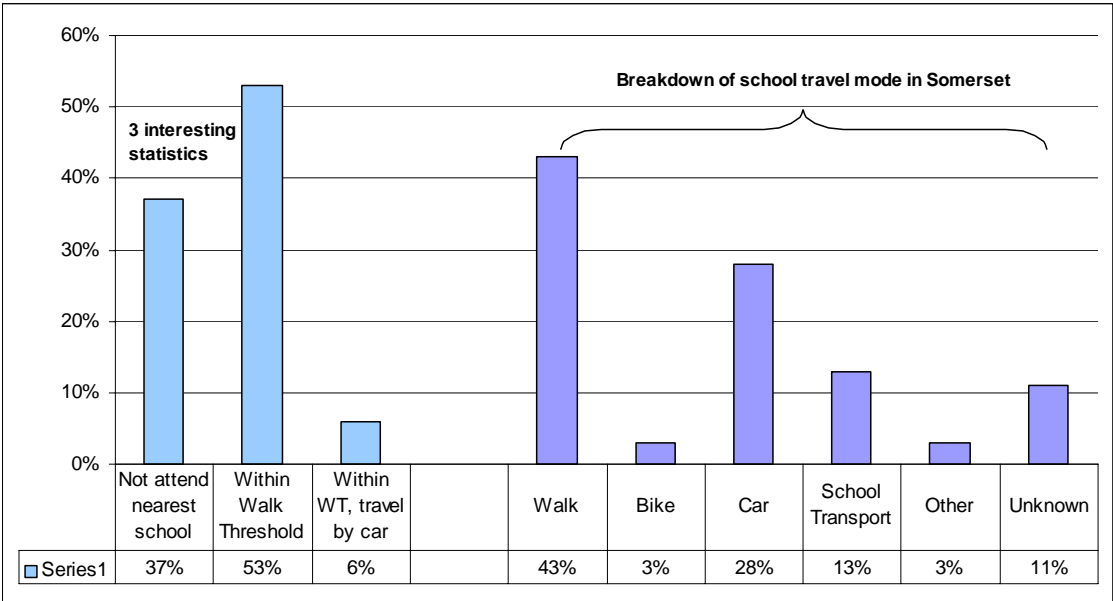
Figure 2.4 Individual school travel profile



2.4 Mode of travel to school

Figure 2.5 below shows a summary at a County level of current school travel modes. The data is also available at individual school level.

Figure 2.5 Mode of travel to school (2007)



The data collected shows that despite the rural nature of Somerset, 43% of children currently walk to school. This is very positive. It also indicates that the great majority of those living within the identified thresholds do tend to walk or cycle to school, which is encouraging. However, the distances we have identified as being realistic thresholds *in practice* do fall short of the statutory distances set out by DCSF. In order to maximise the proportion of children walking to school, our challenge will be both to encourage the 6% of children living within the practical walk threshold but who still travel by car to start to use a more sustainable means of travel, and to gradually push that threshold out to greater distances.

Overall 37% of children do not attend their nearest school, principally as a result of parental choice. This naturally increases the likelihood of the child being outside the walk/ cycle threshold, and therefore it is more likely that they will be driven by car. At primary school level approximately 45% of children are not attending their nearest school.

2.5 Accessibility to school and further education using public transport

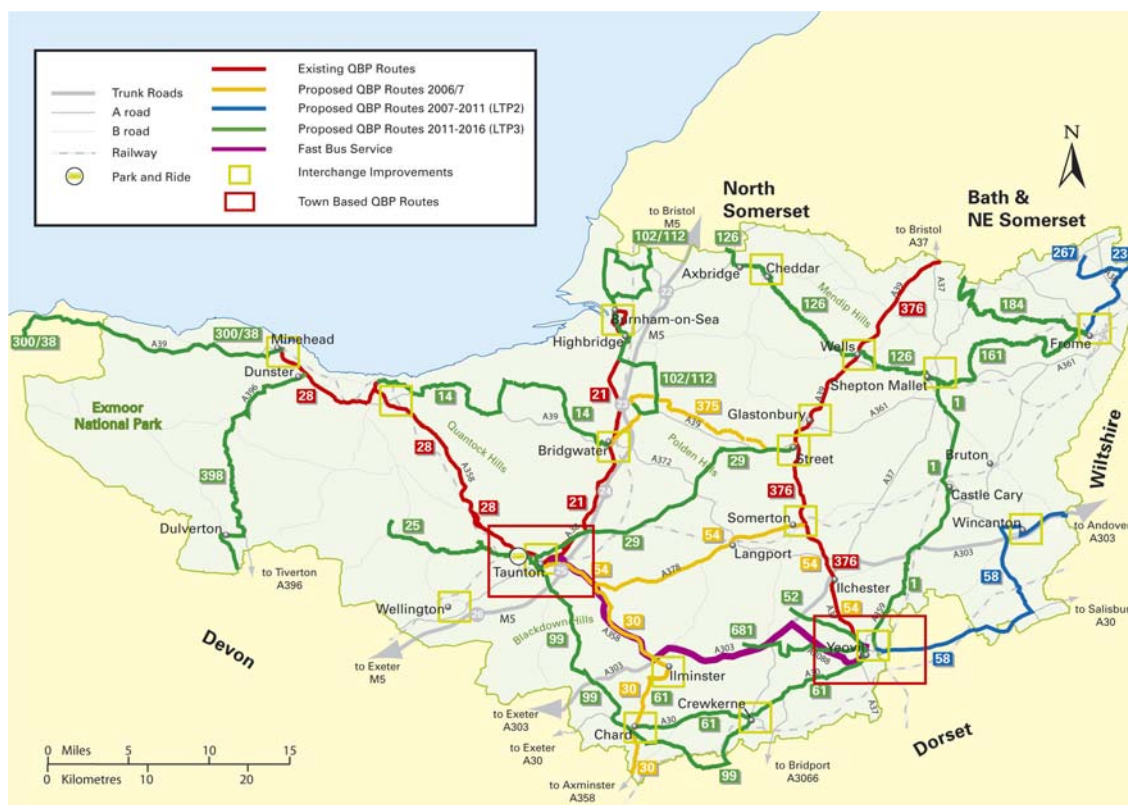
The Local Transport Plan sets out a 'tiered' approach to public transport service classification and provision. The Council is committed to concentrating financial support on the operation of a fixed core bus network, enabling operators to also increase investment in these quality corridors (QBP's), in turn leading to increased patronage and commercially viable routes.

We have identified the following three tiers:

- **County:** "Fastlink" Quality Bus Partnerships serving main town centres – Taunton and Yeovil;
- **Sub-County:** Quality Bus Partnerships serving routes between town centres such as Frome, Wells and Wincanton; and
- **Rural:** Slinky/taxi bus/community/voluntary services linking deep rural areas and villages with the sub-county bus network.

The Sub-County and County services have a major role in tackling the government's shared priorities for transport including congestion in the main urban areas through mode shift, as the main town centres are typical destinations for the target users of these services. The rural tier being served by our demand responsive transport services (known as 'Slinky' buses) and voluntary/ community transport plays an important role in improving accessibility for the more dispersed rural communities and maintaining the sustainability of our small towns and villages.

Figure 2.6 shows the existing and proposed quality bus network

Figure 2.6 Existing and proposed quality bus network

As part of the Accessibility Planning Strategy developed for the Local Transport Plan 2, access to education was investigated. Although only a very small percentage of children use public transport as a means of travelling to school (approx 1.4%), travel to school is generally good in Somerset. It was therefore agreed that School Transport was not a priority area for further investigation or action.

However, opportunities to access Post 16 education were found to be a problem in some areas, so further investigations into the use of our public and demand-responsive transport to improve access to further education have been scheduled into the 5 year strategy (2008/2009). The Accessibility Planning team is working closely with the Learning Skills Council Post-16 Transport Group and has identified particular problems with access to travel information to Post 16 education establishments. Work is currently being undertaken to improve this through joint working with Connexions to develop Somerset County Council's "Moving Forward" website (online travel portal – see section 3.8 for more information) to include links to the new Area Prospectus website for Post-16 education. The Group is also in the process of commissioning a piece of work to help develop a Travel to Learn Strategy for Somerset.

Increasing opportunities for both school age and post-16 pupils to use public transport will be an important consideration in the development of our cross-cutting strategy.

2.6 Home to school travel

Approximately 11,500 statutory age children (approximately one quarter of all under 16s attending school in Somerset) make about 6 million trips per annum on free transport provided by the County Council. In addition a further 9,000 attend post 16 education, for whom we provide season tickets and bus services.

We provide free home to school transport for children who have a statutory entitlement under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, or who qualify by virtue of our discretionary transport policy which considers individual circumstances.

Currently, free transport is provided to:

- Children under the age of eight who live more than 2 miles from their catchment or nearest school (measured along the shortest available route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, may walk with reasonable safety)
- Children over the age of eight who live more than 3 miles from their catchment or nearest school
- Children from low income families i.e. those who are entitled to free school meals or whose parents are in receipt of maximum working tax credits
- Looked After Children
- Selected children with a Statement of Special Education Needs or attracting School Action Plus funding. Not all SEN pupils qualify for free school transport – an assessment is based on a number of factors including level of need, appropriacy and distance of school and family circumstances.
- Children with exceptional educational, medical or social needs.

In addition, Somerset County Council provides varying levels of transport support to:

- Eligible children attending denominational schools
- Selected students over statutory school age attending post-16 education. These include students with SEN, disability or medical problems, those from low income families and those for whom access to further education is difficult.
- Subsidised spare seats on school transport services for children who are not entitled to free transport

The type of transport provided is at the discretion of Transporting Somerset and may vary, but will always be appropriate to the needs of the child. Available options include school bus services, contract buses, minibuses, taxis, "County Tickets" for local bus services and the payment of petrol allowances to parents.

From 2007, the Education and Inspections Act comes into force in stages and makes several alterations to statutory duties to provide free school transport.

The first of these is the extension of free school transport to children aged between 8 and 11 from low income backgrounds. They will now be entitled to transport to any of their three nearest secondary schools, provided they are between 2 and 6 miles from their home. Children attending denominational schools on the grounds of religion or belief will also be entitled to free travel to their nearest denominational school between 2 and 15 miles from their home.

In addition, the introduction of more personalised learning options for 14-19 year olds, the extension of school hours and the Building Schools for the Future programme all introduce new challenges for the provision of school transport in a more flexible environment.

An important part of the development of the new School Travel Strategy will be

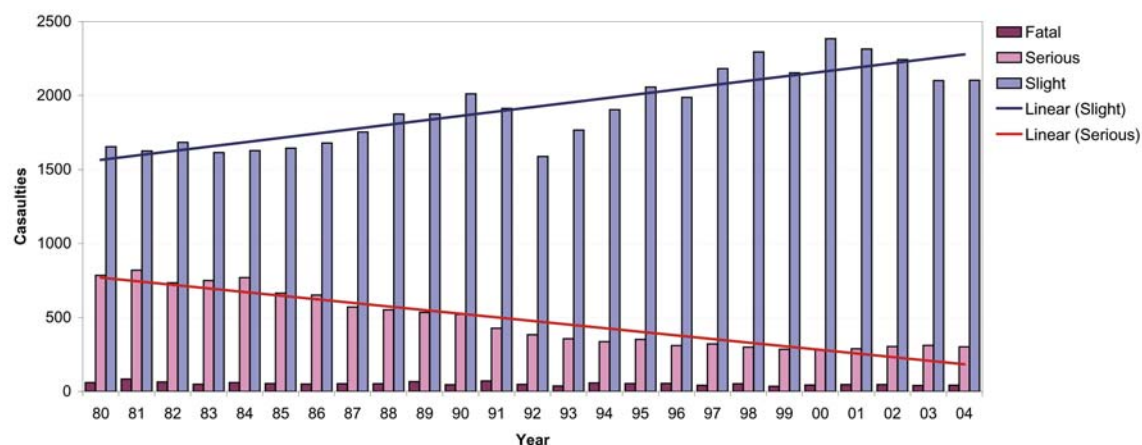
- a) to effectively meet our enhanced obligations to provide home to school transport under the Education and Inspections Act and in an increasingly flexible learning environment
- b) to comprehensively review our current system for providing statutory transport to ensure it is being tackled in the most efficient, sustainable and cost-effective manner, focusing on minimising the need for long distance, low occupancy transport.

We will also be improving school transport services and frontline delivery for pupils through:

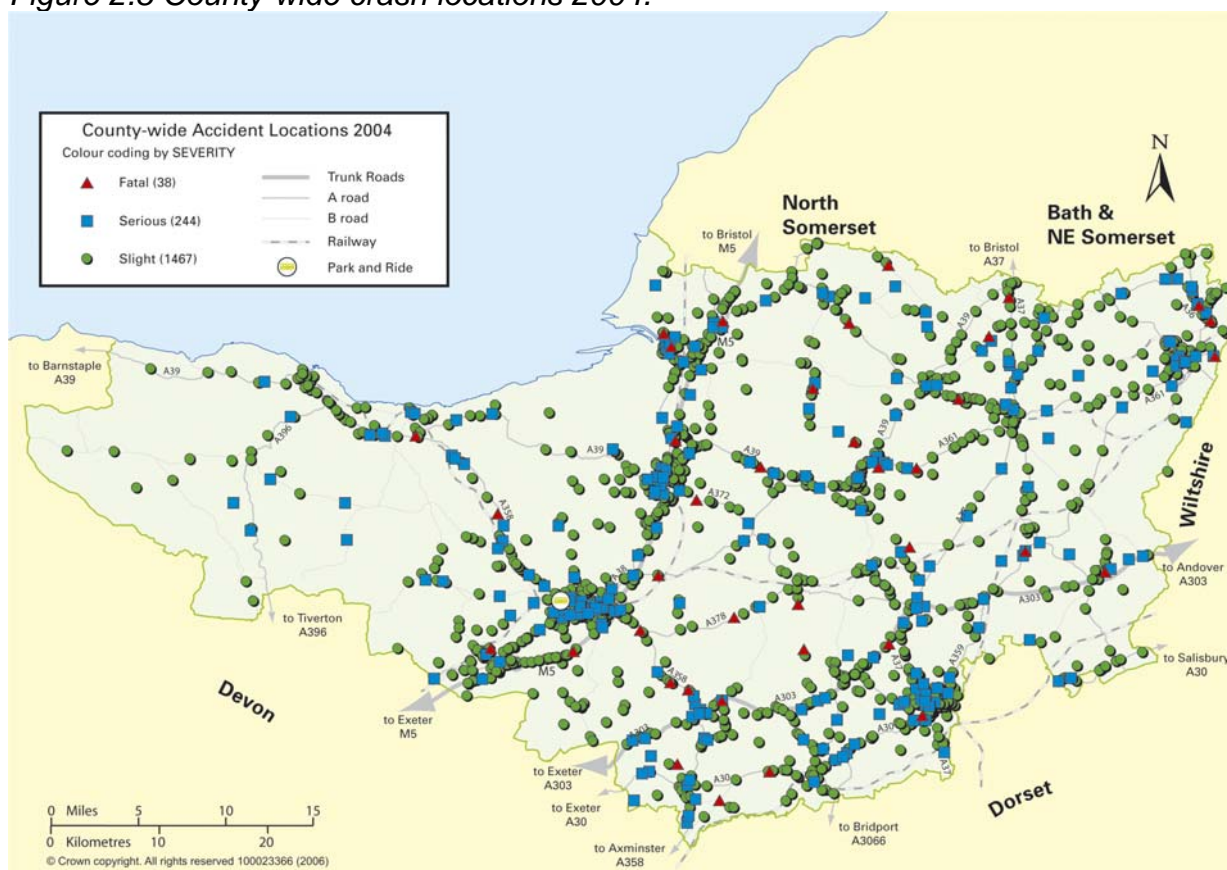
- Upgrade of the fleet;
- Further integration of special needs pupils with mainstream schooling, social services and health care provision;
- Further integration to help deliver 14-19 year olds national curriculum of personalised learning; and
- Further integration with admissions e.g. placement and transport entitlement are offered simultaneously.

2.7 Road safety

The long term trend between 1980 and 2004 shows a reduction in deaths and serious road casualties in Somerset as shown in figure 2.7, but an increase in slight casualties against a backdrop of approximately 100% increase in vehicles on the road. We have successfully tackled many of our serious accident hot-spots through a long-term programme of engineering, education and enforcement.

Figure 2.7 Road accident casualties in Somerset

Having tackled the majority of our accident hot-spots we are now left with a widely dispersed pattern of crashes, many of which are related to driver behaviour and loss of control. Figure 2.8 shows the location of crashes in the County in 2004, and shows that rural principal roads and main urban population centres should be the focus of our attention. Urban safety strategies are now being developed and through a new multi-agency Road Safety Partnership we are rolling out a programme of 'red route' treatments on our priority routes to bring together road safety engineering solutions with high profile education and enforcement programmes.

Figure 2.8 County-wide crash locations 2004.

Our road safety evidence base shows that relatively low numbers of children are killed or seriously injured in the vicinity of schools, therefore our work to reduce the number of killed and seriously injured children does not prioritise schools as a location for intervention.

Table 2.9 Total child casualties and child casualties within 200m of school

	2002		2003		2004		2005		2006		Total		% of total within 200m
	total	200m from school	total	200m from school	total	200m from school	total	200m from school	total	200m from school	total	200m from school	
Fatal	2	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	7	0	0.0%
Serious	18	3	21	5	33	4	20	2	19	2	111	16	14.4%
Slight	265	32	215	36	239	35	223	21	202	38	1144	162	14.2%
Total	285	35	236	41	272	39	247	23	222	40	1262	178	14.1%

We do, however, consider that it is vitally important that children learn the right skills and road awareness to ensure that this good safety record continues, and section 3.5 of this document briefly explains our current approach to road safety training in schools.

2.8 Congestion and Air Quality

Congestion in Somerset occurs mainly in the larger urban centres of Taunton and Yeovil where Air Quality Management Areas have been declared and to a lesser extent in Bridgwater.

Congestion is forecast to worsen in these settlements due to their regional significance as growth centres. The Local Transport Plan sets out a toolkit of measures to tackle congestion and pollution in these areas and identifies that changing school travel patterns will play an important role.

It is important that we protect the high proportions of children currently walking and cycling to school in these towns as the settlements accept new housing growth. We also need to ensure that the design of new developments facilitates more walking and cycling to school and that new schools are built in accessible locations. (For example the Building Schools for the Future project is redeveloping schools in Bridgwater, and ensuring effective sustainable travel to the sites and between the sites is a key objective of the programme).

Congestion problems are at their worst in the AM peak between 7.30 and 9am. We recognise that encouraging more sustainable school travel at this time could have a significant impact on congestion as a whole and contribute to improving our environment for all.

2.9 Summary of key issues

This chapter has set out some of the evidence that we have been using to deliver our sustainable school travel activity to date. The evidence presented

here has been chosen to convey the main strategic issues and challenges that the County faces, but it is only a small extract of a much larger evidence base that continues to be collated and analysed.

Appendix 1 sets out the data that the Government recommends should be collated to help develop the sustainable school travel strategy, and shows our progress in collecting this data and where we currently have gaps.

Key issues and their implications for development of the sustainable school travel strategy are summarised below.

Key Issues	Implications for the Strategy
Dispersed settlement pattern	Heavy reliance on school transport in rural areas. Provision of cost effective school transport will be challenging especially with increased parental choice and increasing flexibility in curriculum provision and school hours.
47% of children travel to school via sustainable modes of transport (43% walking), with 53% of children living in walking threshold distance.	The strategy will need to further promote walking with the relevant schools in urban areas, and protect these travel patterns as towns grow and new schools are provided. We will also need to address the 6% of children currently living within the walk threshold who are taken to school by car, and gradually increase the distances over which people will walk or cycle.
37% of children not attending their nearest school.	Attendance at more distant schools naturally increases the propensity to drive. The strategy should aim to increase the numbers of children attending schools within the walk/cycle threshold by a combination of raising awareness of transport issues to inform parental choices and favouring allocation to nearer schools through the new admissions procedure.
Increased emphasis on parental choice of school in Government policy.	Increased choice will lead to increased travel distances and reduce the likelihood of reducing car use as a means of travelling to school.
New statutory regulations regarding provision of school transport introduced by the Education and Inspections Act	The strategy will need to set out how we can effectively meet these new demands for transport provision while ensuring a cost-effective, sustainable and quality service.
New admissions code of practice (2007)	The strategy will need to set out how our new "Equal Preference" admissions system can be built on, and contribute to, a complete sustainable transport strategy
New school development and Building Schools for the Future	The strategy must be sufficient robust and far-reaching to ensure that transport considerations inform the location and development of all future schools in Somerset.
Changes in provision of 14-19 education, personalised learning and extended school hours	The increasing flexibility of learning provision and school hours generates significant challenges for sustainable school travel. The strategy must be capable of accommodating this new approach and preventing a rise in car use despite the need a greater variety of

	journeys
Significant proportion of people travelling less than 2 miles by car in AM peak, in main urban areas.	Reducing proportion of people travelling to school by car could have an impact on congestion in these towns.
Very small proportion of children using public transport as a means of travel to school.	It is unlikely that public transport will provide a major means of travel to school for statutory age children, but significant opportunities exist to improve access to post-16 education using public transport. Public transport provision should be considered as part of the holistic approach to sustainable transport strategy.
No significant pattern of crashes or child casualties in the vicinity of schools.	Road safety highway improvements should not be focussed in the vicinity of schools, however general cycle, pedestrian and road safety awareness training packages should be delivered within schools.
Congestion occurs mainly in the main urban areas of Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater	The strategy should consider how sustainable school travel can help tackle congestion in these settlements.
Pollution exceeds Government health thresholds in Taunton and Yeovil	The strategy should consider how sustainable school travel can help tackle pollution in these settlements.

3 OUR EXISTING APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL TRAVEL

3.1 School travel objectives and targets

Sustainable school travel contributes toward the following objectives of the Local Transport Plan:

- Reduce social exclusion and improve access to everyday facilities; and
- Reduce the growth in congestion and pollution and improve health.

The activity also contributes towards the following key objectives of the Councils Children and Young Peoples Plan:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying and Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving Economic Wellbeing
- Service Management

Progress in delivering sustainable school travel is currently measured by the following indicators and targets:

Table 3.1 Current Indicators and Targets

Indicators and targets 2006-2010	Current progress
All schools to have a travel plan by 2010	On-track for delivery, currently 141 out of 320
Maintain car usage mode share for school travel at 29.2% until 2010	On-track for delivery due to recently setting a 'standstill' target in the face of increased parental choice of school.
Reduce children killed or seriously injured by 50%, from 34 ('94—'98 average) to 17 by 2010	On-track for delivery, currently 20.

Between 2003 and 2006, the car mode share for primary school children fell from 44.4 to 39.0%. In the same period, car mode share for secondary school children rose from 11.3% to 14.4%. While this is an overall reduction in the proportion of car journeys to school, the increase in driving to secondary schools is a point of concern. The increase in driving corresponds to an increase in the proportion of children not attending their nearest secondary school, believed to be a result on the increased emphasis on parental choice in recent government policy. As there are only 30 secondary schools in Somerset, choosing not to attend your closest one may involve a significantly longer journey.

One of the aims of the new strategy will be to reduce the numbers of children travelling longer journeys to school by:

- a) raising awareness of travel issues to positively influence parental choice of school. To this end, the 2007 admissions prospectus includes for the first time, a prominent paragraph on the benefits of attending local schools and a mandatory section for parents to complete stating how their children will travel to their chosen schools, thus ensuring that travel to school is embedded into the decision making process
- b) structuring our new admissions policy to favour allocation of children to more local schools. This is explained in more detail in section 3.6 below.

As the sustainable school travel strategy develops a wider range of indicators and targets will be considered.

3.2 School travel plans

School Travel Plans are a package of measures to facilitate safer and more sustainable travel to and from the school. The process is pro-actively undertaken by the schools with help from the Councils school travel team and examines :

- the current way children travel to and from school
- the effect that choice has on individuals and the wider environment
- the safer and more sustainable alternatives available
- opportunities to improve sustainable alternatives in order to make them more attractive and to encourage mode shift.

The School Travel Plan can identify and include both physical measures such as road crossings, or modifications to entrances as well as policy issues such as promoting safe and sustainable travel to new parents and pupils. These activities (particularly when undertaken in conjunction with nationally supported resource material) provide a valuable learning resource, which has ever strengthening links to the National Curriculum.

The production of Travel Plans is a voluntary process and forms only one part of an overall solution. The process of working with school communities to produce the plans completed to date has identified many areas for potential improvement to existing procedures / policy that can and does achieve improvements in travel to school by sustainable modes. To this end, we see the Travel Plan process as wider than the production of plans and achievement of modal shift for individual schools. We see it as vehicle to identify and test opportunities, which, if successful, can be scaled up to the benefit of all schools. It is also a means of securing awareness and fostering good travel habits in our children from an early age for the long-term benefit of individuals, communities and the environment.

Connection with the Healthy Schools programme has also helped schools to see travel planning as an integral part of providing a safe, healthy and progressive school environment and has raised parental and child awareness of the benefits of sustainable travel options. We aim to strengthen our relationships and connections with Healthy Schools and other sustainable

initiatives through future years to ensure that the importance of travel choices continues to be given recognition and priority. It will also be important for us to work more closely with schools who have produced travel plans to provide support and encouragement through ongoing 'account management', to help them convert their plans and initiatives into real behaviour change.

The new Sustainable School Travel Strategy will extend and complement the work already started by the school travel plans, giving us a stronger basis from which to offer support and services to those schools aiming to reduce their travel impacts. We will also continue to support and encourage schools through specific initiatives and promotions such as the Wild About Walking campaign. This is outlined in more detail in section 3.8 below.

The production of Schools Travel Plans not only benefits us in enabling schools to effectively cut their car use, it also provides us with information and data from which to generate a comprehensive picture of real travel habits, patterns and issues. It will also be important to use this information to inform future decision making, initiatives and targets across the Council and relevant partner authorities and agencies.

3.3 Infrastructure improvements

Funding for the delivery of works identified by the school communities comes from both the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and directly from the Government's Travel To School Initiative (TTSI) in the form of Devolved Formula Capital funding (DFC) paid directly to the schools.

The LTP sets out a comprehensive strategy and capital investment programme for improving the highway and transport network and the County Council has its own 'revenue' funds to deliver transport services such as subsidised bus networks, demand responsive transport and school transport services. In addition, certain infrastructure needs will be secured from development funding through the section 106 process.

A proportion of the overall LTP funding is used to deliver a programme of minor infrastructure improvements that are identified through working with school communities on travel plans and Children's Services, such as safe pedestrian access, covered waiting areas, lockers and cycle parking.

Schemes are currently considered for LTP funding through a priority scoring process which assesses the extent to which the scheme proposals will help deliver the objectives and targets set out in the LTP.

We are working with Children's Services and the TTSI to reach a point where these facilities are seen as core items within local and national Asset Management Plans and funded accordingly. In the meantime we and the TTSI recognise the validity and value in the use of LTP funding to both support modal shift and support the transition of these items of work into the DFC funded Asset Management Plan process.

Somerset County Council has also adopted a set of design guidelines for the development of future schools and the renovation of existing ones to ensure that school sites are suitable and safe for pedestrians and cyclists, and that the design itself favours sustainable modes of travel over car use. The guidelines are based on the following key principles:

- Establish the hierarchy of users - vulnerable modes (Pedestrians and cyclists) to be given priority on school sites. Access to the site should reflect the priority for vulnerable modes.
- Pedestrian & cycle desire lines within the site should be identified, mapped and provided for. Vehicles should be kept clear of these desire lines.
- All changes to on (and off) site infrastructure should be assessed according to the criteria given in LTN 04 – convenient, accessible, safe, comfortable and attractive.
- There should be a general presumption against parents driving on to site.
- There should be a presumption that vehicle access to school sites should be controlled e.g. using Automatic barrier systems
- Map known postcodes for pupils attending / likely to be relocating to the school.
- Draw an 800/2000m radius around the school - the walking threshold distances for Primary/Secondary schools (also see RPG 10). If pupils live further away than this they are likely to come by car. If necessary re-position the school site to make sure the majority of pupils fall within the appropriate threshold distance.

With the developing Building Schools For the Future programme and the move towards multi-centred learning these guidelines are also evolving to encompass the growing need to consider how best to provide for sustainable travel between sites and for new ways of learning.

A key area for development of the new strategy will be to consider how to make the most effective use of the various funding streams in an integrated programme to deliver sustainable school travel.

3.4 Transporting Somerset

In April 2003, following a best value review, Somerset County Council established an Integrated passenger Transport Unit (now operating under the brand of 'Transporting Somerset'), to bring all the strands of transport delivery in Somerset to one place and under one management stream. Elements were brought into the Unit from:

- Education Transport;
- Environment – Community Transport;
- Social Services Transport;
- Atkins – Contracted Transport Procurement.

The reason for the amalgamation of the functions was to deliver transport in a more strategic way and integrate transport across modes and departments to deliver multifunctional transport for the citizens of Somerset.

Some of the initial steps sought to invigorate areas flagging under legacy systems of procurement. In particular, this focused on education transport where the established practice of long-term contracts had led to stagnation in the market place and a complete lack of innovation. The creation of a rigorous retendering regime has led to much greater competition for tenders, a desire to work in Somerset and numerous new initiatives leading to safety and vehicle improvements such as CCTV and high capacity yellow buses. Overall, these initiatives have led to savings in the school transport budget. In 2005/6 £230,000 of efficiency savings were made in the school transport mainstream budget. This money has been reinvested in other areas of the school transport network such as small vehicle provision for those who are unable to travel on mainstream school vehicles.

Transporting Somerset has also introduced a County Ticket scheme using the ability of the Council to bulk purchase tickets for our Citizens. This bulk purchase power has allowed cost-effective 'go anywhere' ticket delivery to all post-16 students, achievable by current significant levels of subsidy contributed by Somerset County Council, typically around £1 per student per journey. We are undertaking a detailed evaluation of the success of this initiative and will consider if it would be appropriate to roll-out to secondary schools as part of the new sustainable school travel strategy.

It is recognised that the Sustainable School Travel Strategy should be developed as part of a wider sustainable transport programme, with strong integration and complement between the two.

3.5 Home to School Travel

Building on the strategic approach to schools transport planning initiated by Transporting Somerset, from April 2008 the allocation of all statutory school transport provision will be undertaken by the Schools Admissions team, ensuring a more holistic and integrated approach, comprehensive monitoring of entitlement and a simplified procedure for parents and other interested parties.

The rural nature of Somerset, combined with a previously preferred admissions allocation process which prioritised parental preference over local school has inevitably lead to school transport infrastructure where significant cross-geographical flows exist, across the larger urban areas as well as rural catchments.

As part of the development of the new strategy and associated procedures for implementation under the Admissions system, the current structure of transport provision will be examined in detail to identify opportunities to maximise efficiency, sustainability and cost-effectiveness by reducing long-distance, low-

occupancy transport provision, better integration with the public transport system and the promotion of local schools for local children. The new strategy must also accommodate the new transport provision requirements introduced by the Education and Inspections Act and flexible learning policies as outlined in section 2.6.

There is also the intention to make greater use of the Somerset Direct call centre service to provide information to parents and carers on transport provision. This will provide a more streamlined service to parents which will act as a one stop shop for all education enquiries, including transport. In addition, freeing transport officers from routine enquiries will allow them to contribute better to the strategic objectives of improving and enhancing the transport and travel options for children and young people

3.6 School Planning and Admissions

The introduction of a new Admissions Code of Practice effective from February 2007 has served as a catalyst for the undertaking of a thorough review of statutory transport provision across the Somerset maintained school network. From 2007, Somerset will be operating an "Equal Preference" admissions system, giving greater facility for the local authority to determine where children attend school and link this to appropriate transport provision.

Working with internal and external partners, the Admissions Protocol has been thoroughly reviewed to ensure:

- a) admissions publications for parents emphasise the importance of considering distance and sustainable modes of travel when choosing schools. A copy of the publication wording can be seen in Appendix 2.
- b) admissions criteria have been enhanced to ensure priority is given to local schools for local children and the linking of schools where parents might naturally expect that their children would progress from one local school to another, particularly if there are already siblings attending that school

To further integrate and strengthen this procedure, school transport will now be allocated in conjunction with admissions placements.

The developing School Travel Strategy will also need to be sufficiently robust and forward-thinking to accommodate imminent changes in school operation and planning policies. From 2010, all primary and secondary schools in Britain will need to provide:

- Childcare from 8am to 6pm
- Variety of pre and post school activities
- Community Services
- Access to specialist support services

Under the 14-19 agenda, young people will be encouraged to continue studying up to the age of 18 through the provision of specialised diploma courses at a variety of education establishments, including training providers,

adult education centres, colleges, schools and academies. From 2013, all young people aged between 14 and 19 should have access to such services and the support to undertake them. Such diversity in course provision and location must essentially be underpinned by a comprehensive transport strategy that deals with this increased movement of students.

3.7 Road Safety and training

Somerset County Council provides cycling and walking bus training to schools throughout Somerset to encourage the use of these modes. Our team of instructors deliver cycle training directly to pupils (RoSPA or National Standards levels 1-3), or train volunteer groups of parents and teachers to then train their own pupils (RoSPA). These instructors then monitor and assess the quality of training provided by the volunteer groups to ensure they are of the appropriate standard. For Walking Bus training, the Road Safety team audit and risk assess the proposed route of the Walking Bus and provide training to volunteers on conducting the Bus in a safe and effective manner.

In addition, the Road Safety officers provide educational support to ensure road safety is integrated with curriculum and topic work backed up with talks in schools on road safety awareness and accident prevention. The Road Safety team provides a service for School Crossing Patrols with training, supervising, equipping and monitor operations. As well as these services the team has a wealth of collision and casualty data, in particular in the vicinity of schools and this enables them to carry out school safety inspections and accident reduction campaigns as necessary. Somerset road safety partnership have recently appointed a senior accident investigation and prevention officer, who will have the overall responsibility for this process.

Somerset Road Safety Partnership work closely with the road safety audit team, the Highways department and Atkins (Engineering) to ensure that routes to school are as safe as possible. Together with the School Travel team, they work with children, teachers and parents to ensure that the children themselves have the knowledge and awareness to stay safe while travelling to school.

As the Schools Travel strategy moves forward, the Road Safety Partnership and School Travel team will be working to deliver more effective walking and cycle training in schools, with increased emphasis on the more in-depth, intensive National Standards cycle training. Somerset County Council is also working towards accreditation with the Bikeability cycle scheme.

Somerset County Council provides Independent Travel Training to enable and support increased independent travel for people with disabilities and to increase opportunities for access and inclusion for people who might otherwise be excluded. Clients are usually students who are older than 15, but the team also work closely with Adult Social Care staff and Connexions officers to assist older clients. A secondary aim is to reduce the number of taxis required for transporting people who can undertake journeys by a mixture of walking and

the public transport network. Somerset County Council employs four fulltime 'Bus Buddies', initially funded by the Pathfinder Project and Rural Bus Challenge.

3.8 Promotion of sustainable travel

Over the last year we have introduced an ambitious new 'Smarter Travel Choices' programme to tackle congestion and pollution in Somerset through promoting alternative sustainable travel modes - walking, cycling, public transport, car share and flexible working - through travel plans and consumer marketing campaigns.

Our activities in this area have been brought together under a new consumer brand – "Moving Forward" – in order to build a consistent, recognisable, persuasive campaign that benefits from sharing expertise across the areas of school travel planning, work travel planning, marketing and communications.



As part of the development of the Moving Forward brand, we undertook extensive research into the travel behaviour, perceptions, motivations and propensity to change mode of travel of the people of Somerset. This has allowed us to develop a better understanding of our target market and how to tailor our campaigns to persuade and motivate people to adopt more sustainable travel choices.

Many of these promotional activities are aimed at children and schools, making walking and cycling fun and engaging and encouraging children to take part. Popular existing initiatives include:

- "Walk on Wednesday" events;
- Continued promotion of InfoMapper ViewFinder as an online tool for schools;
- New starter packs ('Walking to School', and 'Arrive Alive') for all new entry pupils encouraging them to consider sustainable travel options, the health benefits of walking and cycling and road safety reminders;
- "Wild about Walking", a scheme that encourages walking to school through a colourful and engaging reward system in which pupils receive stickers and certificates by participating.

The response to these initiatives has been overwhelmingly positive. One school recently contacted us to let us know that the Wild About Walking scheme had increased the numbers of children walking to school from just 2 children to over half the school. The success of such schemes has encouraged us to extend these to new initiatives such as:

- A pilot scheme for new starters in secondary schools to encourage them to think about possible means of travel to their new school from the outset. This would include cycling and walking sessions, experience of using a bus, map/timetable reading and route planning workshops
- Repair and Ride: Extending our existing workplace travel initiative for free bike servicing to secondary schools who have an agreed school travel plan.
- Bus maps: Simple school-specific bus maps;
- Primary School Resource Pack: Teacher seminar and art resource packs to encourage sustainable travel as an art topic within primary schools;
- Quality Award Scheme: We are evaluating a school award scheme for sustainability ranking similar to best practice schemes in Devon and Buckinghamshire;

Schools Travel Planning will continue to be integrated into the wider Smarter Choices programme to benefit from being a part of a proactive high profile campaign, ongoing marketing and association with a strong brand.

We launched a website in June '07 – www.movingsomersetforward.co.uk – which is being developed to form a comprehensive resource of sustainable travel in Somerset. Once complete, it will contain information on cycling, walking and public transport routes across the county, including those around schools and post-16 education providers. There will also be information on safe cycling and walking, including cycle training, a car share database, maps and timetables.

4 DEVELOPING A NEW SUSTAINABLE SCHOOL TRAVEL STRATEGY

4.1 Project management and governance

There is still a significant review to undertake in order to develop a sustainable school travel strategy that fully recognizes statutory duties placed on Local Authorities and other partners while at the same time delivering an effective, practicable, cross-cutting solution and simplifying and streamlining accessibility for parents, children and other public service users.

The introduction of legislation relating to sustainable transport and the provision of budget to develop a sustainable transport strategy has facilitated this exercise and broadened even further the possibilities to deliver a holistic solution based on a sustainable model.

It is intended to use a significant proportion of the allocated budget to appoint a project co-ordinator on a one year fixed term contract, to lead on transport review and pull together the various initiatives already underway.

A key focus of this post will be

- To identify statutory needs, best practice and added value approaches to transport provision across Somerset and neighbouring authorities

- To develop a comprehensive transport strategy for review and implementation by June 2008 (Jan 08 – June 08)
- To undertake a complete review of existing policy and procedure and the development of new processes and procurement necessary to deliver the transport strategy, to be implemented in stages over a four year period (June 08 – Jan 09)

The project co-ordinator will be supported by a project board comprising senior managers from Children and Young People's Services, Strategic Planning and Transporting Somerset, plus operational support from Schools Travel Planning, School Admissions, Smarter Choices, and contributions from a range of internal and external partners including Accessibility Planning, the Road Safety Partnership, neighbouring authorities, education providers and others. Figure 4.1 shows the proposed structure of the project board and Figure 4.2 a schematic diagram of the main contributors.

It is proposed to develop the new sustainable school travel strategy through a cross-cutting corporate project run under an adapted PRINCE 2 methodology to ensure the project is managed appropriately and delivers to time and budget.

The project co-ordinator will prepare a project initiation document as a first stage in taking the project forward to ensure that the project plan and resources are clearly identified at the outset and that all participants are clear of their roles, a robust communication strategy is developed and risks to delivery of the project are fully understood and mitigated.

The transport review and strategy developed by the project co-ordinator over 2008 will provide the essential information base and objectives informing the future development and implementation of the new transport system from 2009-13, including the identification of any budget shortfall and allocation against required resources, detailed timescales and procedures for the delivery of the overall strategy.

4.2 Summary

This document sets out the county council's approach to delivering the Sustainable Travel to School Strategy, discusses our evidence base, and contains a brief summary of our existing approach to sustainable school travel and our planned approach to developing a new strategy over the coming year.

It is important that this strategy delivers real differences in peoples daily experiences on the ground and that our long-term approach should be shaped by consultation and feedback from those concerned with school travel across and throughout Somerset.

If you have any comments on this document please send them to:

School Travel Planning Team
C7 County Hall
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 4DY

Email: schooltravelplan@somerset.gov.uk
Tel: 01823 358224

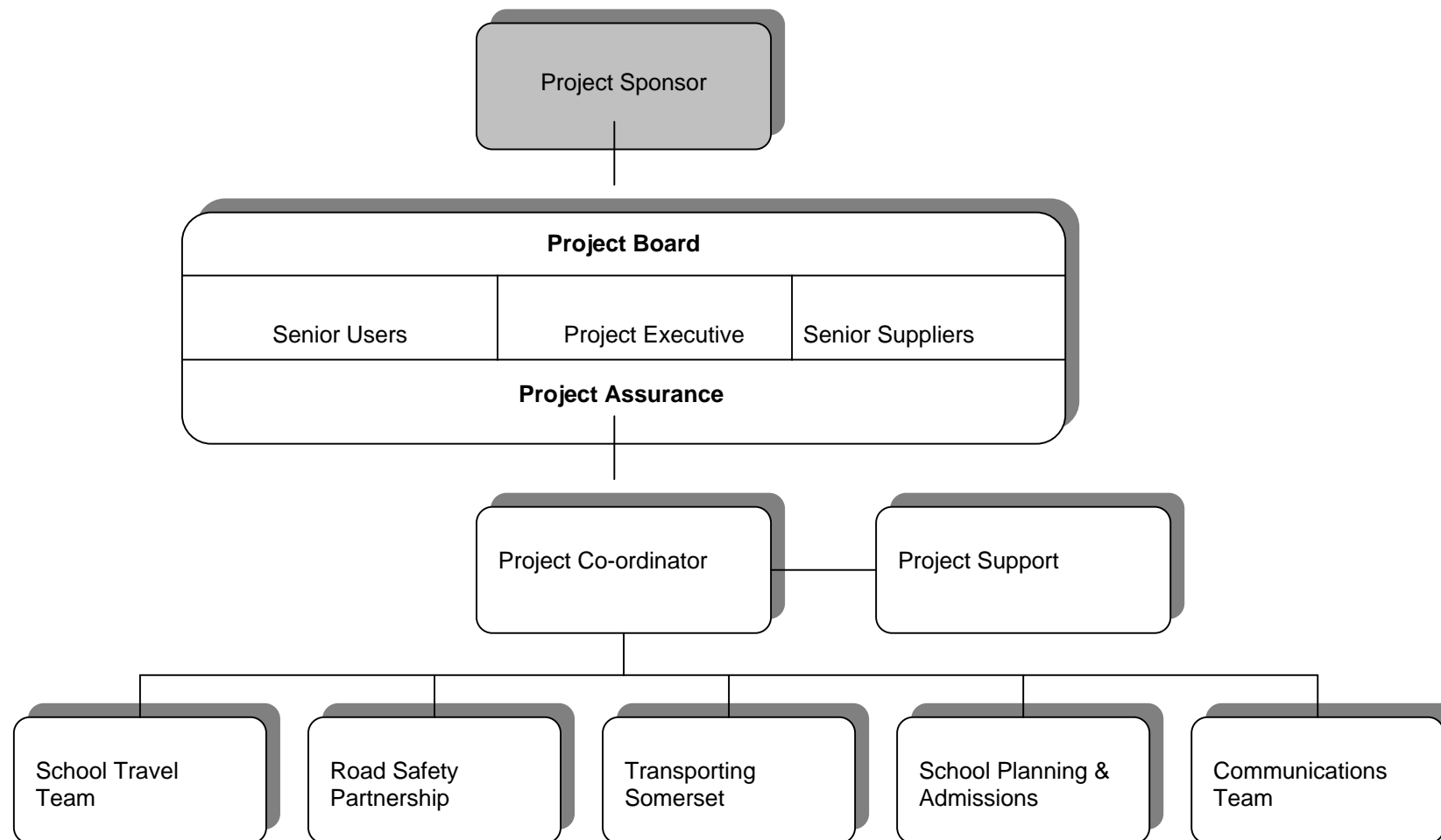
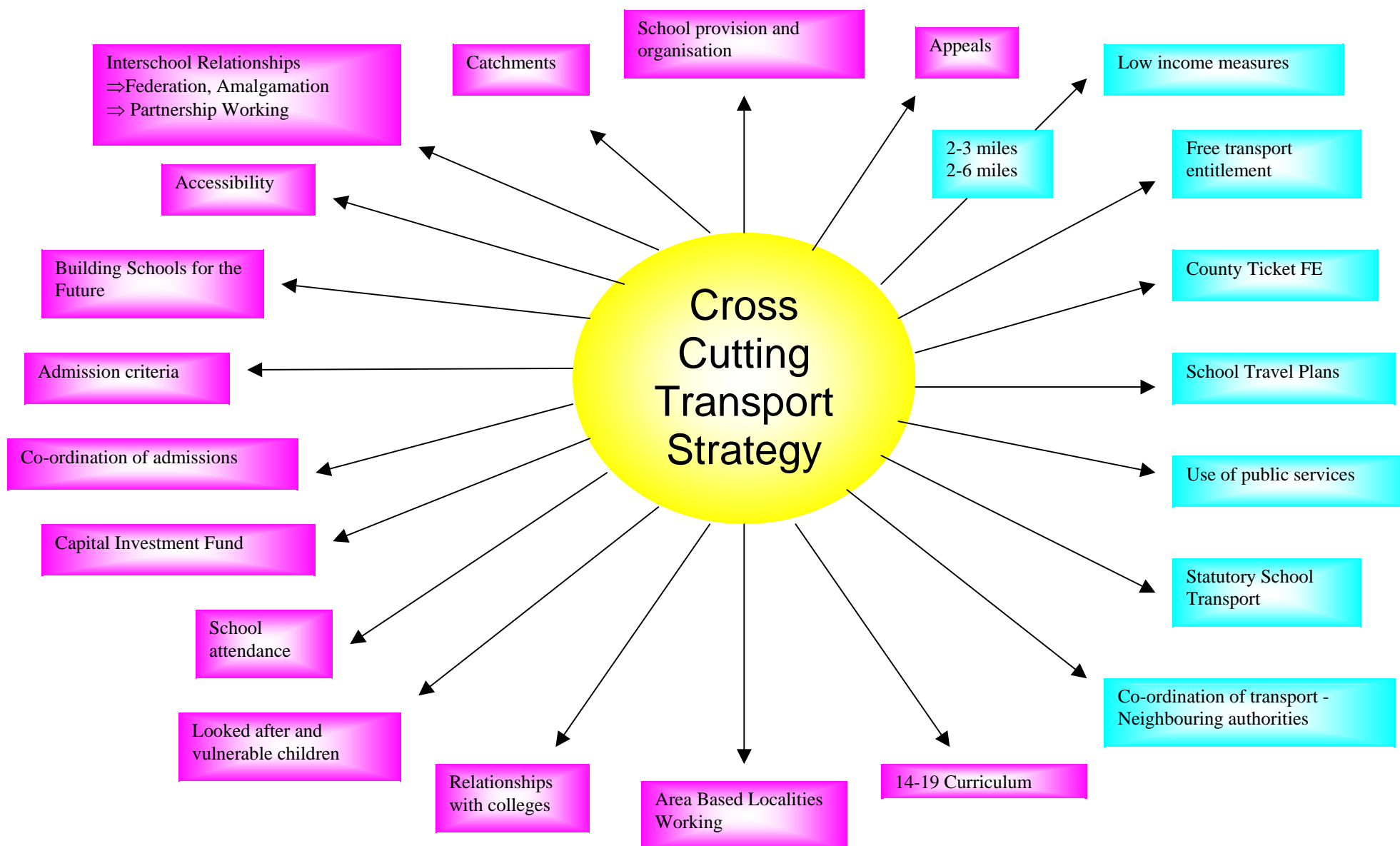
Figure 4.1 Project Board structure

Figure 4.2 Making the Links



4.3 Provisional Outline Project Timetable

The provisional outline timetable for the project is set out below. The full project plan and component activities, milestones and resource needs will be established by the Project Manager on appointment during the preparation of the Project Initiation Document.

Table 4.3 Provisional Project Timetable

Activity	Provisional deadline	Assessment Responsibilities
Project Board members finalised	September 2007	
Transport Co-ordinator Post advertised	September 2007	Project Board Review
Post holder appointed	January 2008	Project Board review
Project Initiation Document complete	February 2008	Project Board Review
Strategy complete	End of June 2008	Project Board, SEPT and Committee review
Review of policy and procedure begins	July 2008	Project Board review
Budget implications identified	September 2008	Project Board and SEPT review
New policy developed and implemented	January 2008	Project Board review
Budget allocation	April 2008	Service Area review and monitoring, followed by consultation

5 LINKS TO CURRENT SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS TRAVEL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Policy and Guidance	Link
Local Transport Plan	www.somerset.gov.uk/ete/ltp/2006/index.html
School Planning and Admissions Policy:	www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/learning/admissions/
Children & Young Peoples Plan	www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/childrenservices/cypp/
Home to school transport:	www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/ete/passengertransport/hstransport
School Organisation Plan	www.six.somerset.gov.uk/sixv3/content_view.asp?did=17286
School travel plans	www.youngtransnet.com/somerset
Sustainable travel promotion	www.movingsomersetforward.co.uk

APPENDIX 1: TRAVEL NEEDS AND INFRASTRUCTURE AUDIT GAP ANALYSIS

Items marked green - information is available, few barriers to implementation

Items marked amber – information progressing, needs application of additional internal resources

Items marked red – requires support of TTSI/other external partners to implement

Purpose	Data/Information	Sources	Proposed presentation format	Published for LA use	Published for parent use	Risks to implementation
Needs Assessment	Pupil usual mode of travel	School Census InfoMapper Viewfinder (Viewfinder) surveys of pupils, parents and staff in support of STP development	Internet based - Viewfinder, Supported with paper based output (School Travel Health Check) to schools.	Accessible to schools and LA via Viewfinder	School based summary shown via Viewfinder	Data already in schools and authority - Going live on Viewfinder Sept 07
Needs Assessment	Pupil Travel Preference	Viewfinder	Internet based - Viewfinder, Supported with paper based output (School Travel Health Check) to schools.	Accessible to schools and LA via Viewfinder	School base summary shown via Viewfinder	Data already in schools and authority - Going live on Viewfinder Sept 07
Needs Assessment	Pupil Home postcodes	School Census, GIS Curriculum based mapping by pupils in the classroom - Viewfinder	Internet based - Viewfinder, Supported with paper based output (School Travel Health Check) to schools. Web-based, electronic	Accessible to schools and LA via Viewfinder	Not to be made available on the public side of Viewfinder	Data already in schools and authority - Going live on Viewfinder Sept 07

Needs Assessment	School Location	SCC Gazetteer (corrected EduBase data)		Accessible to schools and LA via Viewfinder	School based summary shown via Viewfinder	Data already in schools and authority - Going live on Viewfinder Sept 07
Needs Assessment	Post 16 usual mode of travel	College travel plans and where integrated 6th forms are in secondary schools through Census and Viewfinder.		Accessible to schools and LA via Viewfinder (Not FE at present)	School based summary shown via Viewfinder (Not FE at present)	Where 6th forms are integrated data is available. We will have to explore availability and import of FE data.
Needs Assessment	Extended Schools journey info	Schools, CYPD, Transporting Somerset	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS		Limited data at present, not held in GIS format
Infrastructure Audit	Public transport routes & provision (bus rail and concessions)	Transporting Somerset, Accessibility Planning team, Transport providers, Travelline	Interactive GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder and Travelline	Limited availability of mapped data at present - probably best to draw data together at a regional level in association with Travelline to generate an interactive journey planning resource
Infrastructure Audit	Contracted school bus/taxis	CYPD, Transporting Somerset	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder	Limited data at present, not held in GIS format
Infrastructure Audit	Pedestrian routes	Mastermap ITN layer	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder	OS do not produce a map layer that meets the requirements of Ed and Inspections. This requires attention at the national level.
Infrastructure Audit	Cycleways	SCC and Sustrans GIS layers	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder	In process of working with Sustrans to import NCN layer to Viewfinder. Work needed to import SCC data

Infrastructure Audit	Road classifications	Mastermap ITN layer plus general mapping layers	Gis layer	Internal GIS - Mastermap ITN. Viewfinder - general mapping layers	Viewfinder - general mapping layers	Road classifications are well covered by OS mapping. No product that links highway network and rights of way network. Need to reach common understanding of what elements of ROW network to include under Ed and Inspections.
Infrastructure Audit	Existing hard measures – School safety zones 20 zones Zig zags Speed limits Traffic calming	Requires definition Mastermap ITN SCC Layer Mastermap ITN (plus local data) Mastermap ITN (check criteria for inclusion)	GIS layer	Internal GIS - Mastermap ITN. Viewfinder - general mapping layers	Viewfinder - general mapping layers	Mastermap currently contains: Mini Roundabouts, Width, weight & vehicle restrictions, bridge heights, Traffic calming, one way roads, vehicle type access and time restrictions. TTSI support required to press for addition of any additional info deemed to be essential.
Infrastructure Audit	Controlled crossings & SCPs	SCC Layer & Mastermap?	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder	Need to capture and import data (check with Pat Green / Pauline Draper)
Infrastructure Audit	Existing local measures – Walking buses Car sharing Park & stride Park & ride	STP team Census Not recorded Not recorded	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Shown as school level summary data on Viewfinder	Car share can be mapped with census data. Other data will require separate capture and display

Infrastructure Audit	Cycle storage	STP team	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Shown as school level summary data on Viewfinder	Use existing Viewfinder layer showing images of cycle parking
Infrastructure Audit	Cycle training	Road Safety Partnership	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Shown as school level summary data on Viewfinder	Need to capture and import data
Infrastructure Audit	Pedestrian training	Road Safety Partnership				
Infrastructure Audit	Road safety Education	Road Safety Partnership				
Infrastructure Audit	Independent travel training	Road Safety Partnership				
Infrastructure Audit	Air quality	LTP team		Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder	Need to import data
Infrastructure Audit	Soft measures -	Smarter choices team	Text / Tabular format	LTP docs		Contained within existing documentation
Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	Accessibility of schools	Viewfinder route plotting tool, STP's	GIS layer	Viewfinder	Viewfinder	Viewfinder route plotting tool goes live in September
Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	Network hierarchy	This element requires definition.				TTSI to define requirement
Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	KSIs	Road Safety Partnership	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder	Need to import data
Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	Pedestrian, cycling & child casualties	Road Safety Partnership	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder	Need to import data

Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	Congestion	LTP team	GIS layer	Viewfinder and internal GIS	Viewfinder	Need to import data
Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	Poor behaviour on buses & bullying	Transporting Somerset	Existing recording / reporting systems	Existing systems		Existing systems in place
Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	Infrastructure barriers – speed limits, lack of crossings , cycle storage etc	Viewfinder route plotting tool, STP's	GIS layer	Viewfinder	Viewfinder	Viewfinder route plotting tool goes live in September
Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	Lack of public transport and inaccessible stops	Viewfinder route plotting tool, STP's, Transporting Somerset	GIS layer	Viewfinder	Viewfinder	Viewfinder route plotting tool goes live in September Need to import Transporting Somerset data
Infrastructure Audit - Current barriers	Footway & road condition	Viewfinder route plotting tool, STP's	GIS layer	Viewfinder	Viewfinder	Viewfinder route plotting tool goes live in September

APPENDIX 2: TRAVEL CONSIDERATION WORDING FROM SCHOOL ADMISSIONS PUBLICATION 2007

Before you make your preference - Travelling to School

Somerset County Council is fully committed to promoting walking, cycling and, for longer distances, greater use of buses for the school journey.

When you are thinking about the schools you would like your child to attend, please consider the following:-

- * Children who walk to school are fitter, have better developed social skills, are more familiar with their surroundings, have better road sense and arrive at school more relaxed and ready to learn.
- * Walking, cycling or using the bus reduces congestion on the roads. Parents in Somerset who drive their children to and from school increase congestion on the roads by 20%, drive 11 million miles per year and generate 3,202 tons of carbon dioxide, the principal cause of human induced climate change.
- * Consider the cost of driving your child to school. Current figures put the average cost at £535 per year.
- * Unless the school you choose is less than 800m from your home you will probably drive your child to school.
- * Walking, cycling or using public transport offers children greater independence and flexibility - which is especially important at a time of change in the nature of the school day, with greater numbers of pupils staying for extra study, extra curricular activities and sport.

Where walking, cycling or public transport are not feasible, car sharing may be an option. This can save time and money and helps to cut traffic congestion and air pollution as well as being sociable for children. Car sharing can also reduce the costs for children whose families do not own a car.

If you are interested in encouraging walking, cycling or bus use then please speak to your child's current Headteacher who will be able to explain the school's travel plan to you or contact the School Travel Plan team, at Somerset County Council, on 01823 358224 or email schooltravelplan@somerset.gov.uk

IMPORTANT: Choosing a school to which you can walk cycle or access by bus will not be taken into consideration when allocating school places.

For information on bus routes in Somerset, please contact the Transporting Somerset Team based at County Hall in Taunton on 0845 3459155 or email transport@somerset.gov.uk