

# Somerset County Council Transport Policies

## School Travel Strategy

Part of the Active Travel Strategy



August 2012



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### Executive Summary

School travel is not just a transport issue – it is a vital element of ensuring children are able to access suitable schools and therefore plays a part in supporting a huge cross-section of the Council's aims and objectives, including education provision, economic development, health and community development. However, school travel can be problematic – the infamous “school run” responsible for around 20% of cars on the road during the morning rush hour. Many of these car journeys are unnecessary and this strategy aims to identify and support those who have other viable transport options to make a switch.

This strategy ties in closely with our education policies and takes account of the recent (ongoing) reviews of education transport provision (a statutory requirement). The council also has a duty to produce an annual Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy. This over-arching strategy sets the transport policy framework for this annual review and delivery plan. It also makes provision for a review of how our statutory and non-statutory services can be delivered most effectively, making the best possible use of limited funds.

Forthcoming changes in national education policy – notably the shift to Academies and FreeSchools and the extension of the school leaving age from 16 to 18 – also necessitate a strategic review of travel impacts, policies and practises.

95% of LEA schools in Somerset (86% of all schools) now have a travel plan, developed with assistance from the Council's School Travel Adviser team over the period from 2006- to 2011. Over this time, single-occupancy car use for school travel dropped from 29.2% to 25.3%. This strategy aims to expand on that success as we move from an era of travel plan development to implementation.

Local and national reviews of school travel plan effects and success factors over the last 5 years have been used to inform the development of this strategy.

#### **Aim**

We will help people walk and cycle to Somerset's schools and make the school transport services and infrastructure we provide more efficient.

#### **Objectives**

Objective 1: Help everyone take part – provide information, advice and resources that can be easily access, adapted and implemented by schools in a manner appropriate to their individual circumstances

Objective 2: Focus additional resources where the is most potential for change – in addition to the countywide support provided under Objective 1, deliver additional change by working more intensively with schools where there is greatest potential for change, or problems to be tackled.

Objective 3: Make the most of what we have - ensure the transport services we provide are as efficient as possible and target our work at what pupils need, using the techniques that deliver the best results.

Objective 4: Work with a changing environment - Ensure school travel provision and the travel planning process are able to respond to changes in the way education is provided and meet the challenges of a new, more flexible school environment and changing resource availability

### **School Travel Policies**

The policies proposed for effective delivery of the objectives are:

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Supports Objective</b>
STS1	We will empower schools to improve opportunities for sustainable travel	1, 2, 4
STS2	We will provide effective advice and guidance	1, 4
STS3	We will evaluate and, where appropriate, implement measures to overcome specific barriers and enable sustainable transport choices	1, 3
STS4	We will work intensively with selected schools to deliver additional travel change	1, 2

The main ways we will achieve these policies are by

- Providing resources and support to schools in implementing their travel plans and to achieve best practice;
- Engaging the planning process to bring about change and using all available means to monitor travel to school patterns;
- Finding practical solutions to infrastructure improvements and seek opportunities to deliver cycle training to schools; and
- Identifying and working with those schools offering the greatest potential for changing travel behaviour.





# 1 Introduction

**Education is widely recognised as an important issue, both for individual families and for the UK as a whole. All children aged between 5 and 16 in the UK must receive suitable full-time education, which most choose to do by attending school. Safe access to school is therefore pre-requisite of receiving suitable education, but travel to school can be problematic.**

- It is estimated that 1 in 5 of the cars on the road during the morning peak are taking children to school (National Travel Survey 2010) – the notorious “school run”. This extra vehicle traffic contributes to congestion, particularly in urban areas. The Cabinet Office estimates that congestion in urban areas costs the English economy almost £11 billion per year (Cabinet Office 2009<sup>(1)</sup>).
- Increase vehicle traffic also causes more pollution. 58% of UK domestic transport emissions are from passenger cars. This not only includes carbon dioxide - a major cause of climate change - but also other pollutants that are harmful to environmental and human health and affect air quality. Air quality management zones are in place in areas of Taunton and Yeovil.
- The Department for Energy and Climate Change estimates that 237 thousand tonnes of fuel were consumed by cars on Somerset’s roads in 2009. This not only causes pollution, it also relies on dwindling and increasingly expensive fossil fuels and is a significant cost for families. Approx 13,000 school children (15%) travel to school on free transport provided by the county council. This is an environmentally sustainable way to travel, but comes at a significant cost to the taxpayer.
- High levels of vehicle traffic are closely linked with health problems. These range from direct injuries through road traffic crashes and exposure to traffic fumes, through to the increased risk of long-term health problems including obesity, heart disease and diabetes associated with a sedentary lifestyle. In 2010, 1272 collisions were reported in Somerset. 30 of these were fatal and 179 resulted in serious injury. 146 of these injuries were to children, 17 of which were fatal or serious. The number of casualties on Somerset’s roads decreased steadily between 2000 and 2010 – an excellent result which needs to continue. A disproportionate number of injuries are to pedestrians, cyclists and people from deprived communities, mainly in urban areas. A 2008 survey (Living Streets) demonstrated that children who walk to school from a young age show greater road safety awareness and better knowledge of their neighbourhood than those who are driven.
- 8.7% of young people in Somerset are obese. However, this rises to 15% of those in Year 6 (aged 10/11). The Chief Medical Officer recommends that children should undertake at least an hour of physical activity each day to maintain health. Creating an environment that supports active travel and encouraging parents

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1 Cabinet Office (2009) *The wider costs of transport in English urban areas in 2009*

and children to incorporate walking and cycling into their daily routine will help to achieve this.

- Finally, studies have shown that children who walk or cycle to school arrive better able to learn - leading to better performance - and have more opportunities for social interaction than those travelling by car.

The studies quoted above outline the many benefits of switching from car to active modes of travel for the school journey. In Somerset, the levels of single-occupancy car use for school travel have been falling steadily over the last 5 years. However, around a quarter of children are still driven to school alone by car.

There is scope for additional change, particularly for primary school travel. 98.3% of Somerset residents live within 15 minutes travel of a primary school on foot or by public transport and 73.3% live within 20 minutes of a secondary school. In a March 2010 survey of 600 Somerset residents, 59% said they felt they should take personal action to reduce their use of the car. Most schools (86%) now have a travel plan that outlines actions and opportunities to support children to switch to healthier, more sustainable modes of travel.

This strategy outlines our plans to enable and encourage more children to travel to school on foot or by bicycle and to make the transport services and infrastructure we provide more efficient. In this way, we aim to maintain the important educational benefits of safe, convenient access to schools, while also maximising the health, economic, environmental and social benefits of ensuring as many of those journey as possible take place by walking, cycling and public transport.

## 2 Policy context

Travel to schools is affected by a wide range of factors in both the education and transport systems. This section introduces some of the key policies and guidance that will influence the strategy. It helps to shape the objectives set out in Section 4 and the options developed to achieve them in Section 5.

### 2.1 National education policy

UK Education policy naturally focuses on ensuring all children and young people receive a good quality education that meets their needs, attains the standards expected of teaching in this country and enables young people to achieve suitable qualifications.

All children of compulsory school age (currently 5-16) must receive suitable full-time education. This need not be through attendance at traditional schools or education establishments, but may include such things as home schooling, participation in other learning schemes and training. However, although the exact number of children receiving non-traditional education (e.g. home education) is unknown, it is thought that the large majority of children (over 99%) attend some form of educational establishment.

Transport is therefore an extremely important part of the education process, as it is key to ensuring children are able to access suitable schools. Local authorities must provide free transport to the nearest school for children of compulsory school age, where the distance to school is more than 2 miles along the shortest safe walking route (for children under 8) or more than 3 miles for children over 8. There is also additional entitlement for some children with disabilities, special educational needs or from low income families.

Education policy in the UK is undergoing significant changes, many of which will affect school travel and transport. A summary of the key changes and their possible impacts include:

- An increase in the school leaving age from 16 to 18, rising in stages between 2013 and 2015 (Education and Skills Act 2008). Around three quarters of 16-18 year olds already attend full time education or training, but the additional numbers set to be returning to further education or workplace training will place additional requirements on the transport system.
- The Academies Act 2010 made provision for high-performing maintained schools to convert to academies. Academies are publicly funded independent schools which enjoy a number of freedoms and flexibilities from Local Authority control. Amongst these freedoms are the ability to determine their own admissions criteria, change the length of terms and school days, determine their own catchment areas and have greater control over the school budget and site management. All these things are likely to have an impact on the nature and provision of school transport, as distance from home to school and availability of services and facilities are determinants of travel behaviour (see section 3).

Somerset County Council will retain responsibility for the provision of home to school transport for all schools, including academies.

- The Schools White Paper 2010 extended the academies programme further, setting an aspiration for all schools to become academies (or Free Schools) by 2014.

The Secretary of State for Education has recently established an Action Research Project to understand how local authorities can best respond to the new challenges of transport provision in a school system with increasing numbers of self-determining Academy schools. As part of the development and implementation of our School Travel Strategy, we will monitor the progress of this project and seek to incorporate any useful outcomes and advice into our school transport practises.

### 2.2 National school transport policy

In addition to the general duty to provide free home to school transport for eligible children, the government has issued a number of further policies and strategies for the provision and management of school travel. These strategies recognise the benefits of active travel for school journeys and aim to encourage a shift from car travel to walking, cycling and public transport.

In 2003, the Department for Transport and the former Department for Children, Schools and Families launched a joint initiative to tackle rising trends in car dependency for school journeys. The Travelling to School Initiative (TTSI) set out a range of measures to increase the use of healthy and sustainable modes of travel to school, including a target for all schools to develop a travel plan by 2010.

School travel plans are management strategies for travel to/from a given school. They are specific to that school – identifying barriers and opportunities particular to the school location and needs, then determining what measures will be most effective in encouraging and enabling sustainable travel to that school.

More recently, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 conferred on local authorities a duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport, and to publish a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy (SMoTS). There are five main elements to the duty:

1. An assessment of the travel and transport needs of children and young people;
2. An audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure used within the authority when travelling to, from or between schools, colleges or other places of education;
3. A strategy to develop sustainable travel and transport so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for;
4. The publication of the strategy on the authority's website by the 31<sup>st</sup> August each year
5. The promotion of sustainable travel and transport on journeys to, from or between schools and other places of education.

## 2.3 Somerset's policies on education and school transport

There are 309 schools in Somerset. Prior to the Academies Act in 2010, 277 of these were maintained schools, with 32 independents.

30 schools in Somerset have now converted to academies. A further 6 schools have submitted applications for conversion to the Department for Education and 3 schools in Bridgwater have applied to combine into a single Academy catering for 4-18 year olds. In line with government policy, Somerset County Council supports the conversion to academy status by schools with a successful track record in standards, inspections and financial management and will work with all schools through the Children and Young People's Compact to secure the best educational outcomes for all young people in the county.

For the remaining maintained schools, Somerset County Council operates an admissions allocation process based on the "Equal Preference" model. Distance to school is an important criterion in the allocation of school places, as it is recognised that longer journeys tend to rule out walking and cycling as viable transport options. The Prospectus provided to families when choosing a school for the first time also encourages parents to think about how they plan to transport their children to and from school when selecting schools, as this will have a daily impact on their child for their entire school life. This is particularly relevant in a rural county like Somerset, where public transport services may be limited and rural road routes relatively slow and circuitous. As more schools convert to Academies and manage their own admissions arrangements, it will be important for the management teams to understand the connections between home-school distance, mode of travel and associated time, health and wellbeing implications so that they can take this into consideration and provide appropriate advice to parents during the admissions and allocation process.

As outlined in section 2.1 above, the County Council has a duty to provide free transport between home and the nearest school for children meeting nationally-defined criteria. Currently, Somerset County Council offers a more generous service, extending that offer to the child's catchment school, even if that is not the closest. The County Council also offers subsidised spare seats on school buses for children not entitled to free travel and subsidised season tickets to around 11,000 students attending post-16 education.

In 2010, approximately 13,000 school age children (around 15%) made about 6 million trips per annum on free transport provided by the County Council. This is well above the national average of around 9% (see Table 2, section 3.3.3). Demand for school places in Somerset is forecast to rise steadily until at least 2016. This may increase the entitlement to free school transport for the next few years, as shortage of school places in urban areas may force some children to travel further to schools on the edge of towns.

Provision of free school transport ensures children are able to attend school regularly and is a sustainable transport choice. However, such high levels of transport provision do come at a cost and, with an aspiration to reduce public spending, the County

Council is currently reviewing how home to school transport can be provided most efficiently (see section 3.3.4). Options under consideration include reviewing transport procurement and alterations to school operational hours to enable more strategic use of existing vehicles. Currently, 10% of free transport entitlement is due to the presence of around 190 “danger points” that makes certain routes unsuitable for children to walk along. Implementing engineering solutions to rectify some of these danger points to enable safer walking conditions for children and others will be evaluated as part of this strategy (see section 6). Other outcomes from the current review of education transport provision will also inform the implementation of this strategy.

In agreement with the national policy position, Somerset County Council recognises the benefits of encouraging active, sustainable travel to school. Reducing the proportion of school journeys undertaken by car was a policy in our second Local Transport Plan (2006-2011) and, between 2004 and 2010, a dedicated team of school travel advisers worked with most schools in Somerset to develop travel plans to support this objective. A review of progress so far is outlined in section 3 below. Somerset’s current Sustainable School Travel Strategy, required under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, can be found on the County Council website at [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk).

Healthy, sustainable travel for children and young people continues to be an important aim in our Future Transport Plan 2011-2026:

We will help people walk and cycle to Somerset's schools and make the school transport services and infrastructure we provide more efficient.

Active travel for school journeys supports all the over-arching aims of the Future Transport Plan:

- Living sustainably – by reducing congestion and pollution from vehicle transport
- Ensuring economic wellbeing – by reducing congestion on the county’s roads and by ensuring services are provided efficiently
- Enjoying and achieving – by supporting educational achievement through improved access to school and helping children engage with their communities
- Staying safe – by improving infrastructure and providing training and services that make it safer to walk and cycle
- Being healthy – by encouraging more daily physical activity, a critical part of a healthy life.

Active travel for school journeys also contributes to many of the objectives detailed in the Walking, Cycling and Road Safety strategies, as well as many wider aims, such as reducing child obesity through more active lifestyles and raising attainment and achievement.



## **3 Review of school travel and travel planning**

### **3.1 School travel planning in the UK and Somerset, 2003 - present**

To meet the demands of the 2003 Travelling to School Initiative (see section 2.2), a team of School Travel Advisers worked with schools in Somerset to develop travel plans between 2004 and 2010. 95% of Local Education Authority (LEA) schools in Somerset now have travel plans, plus two (6%) independent schools – around 86% of schools in total. Each school has identified targets for reducing single-occupancy car travel and an action plan to achieve those targets. In most cases, LEA schools received a government grant to implement some of those actions, although this was withdrawn in 2010. Independent schools did not receive any grant funding, which explains the comparatively low levels of engagement.

From 2006-2011, schools reported how their pupils travel to and from school via the annual School Census. This information is converted into a “Healthcheck” each year, profiling the travel patterns of each individual school and including a map of pupil home locations and their usual mode of travel to school. This enables us to identify clusters of car use and relate them to possible barriers in the school environment. In 2008 we also conducted a mid-point review of school travel plan implementation and performance, receiving updates from 71% of schools with existing travel plans.

A considerable amount of data and information about school travel and travel planning has therefore been collected over the last 6 or 7 years. A number of reports evaluating the success of travel planning on a national scale have been completed, and Somerset County Council has also conducted a review of school travel locally, seeking to identify trends in school travel behaviour and find out “what works” in school travel plans.

In addition, a number of complementary sustainable travel projects – notably the Cycling Demonstration Towns and the SustainableTravelTowns - have been implemented in selected towns and cities, with the aim of investigating what happens when resources are intensively targeted at increasing cycling or reducing car travel respectively. Many of these included projects aimed at children and schools, providing an additional useful source of information and best practise.

### **3.2 National reviews of sustainable travel in schools**

National efforts to encourage a switch from car travel to other modes of transport for school journeys has lead to a steady decrease in single occupancy vehicle use from 28.8% in 2006/07 to 26.5% in 2009/10. Car use has switched primarily to walking and public transport use (approx 1% increase in each) and car share (approx 0.5% increase). Despite the introduction of Bikeability cycle training, Cycle Demonstration towns and other measures to promote cycling, overall levels of cycling to school in the UK have remained static at 2% of all school journeys.

There is a significant body of national transport policy and research devoted to school travel, reviewing the benefits and challenges of school travel planning and attempting to identify successful trends and features.

### 3.2.1 Benefits and challenges of school travel and travel planning

Atkins' (2010) 'An evaluation of the 'Travelling to School Initiative' Programme'<sup>(2)</sup> reviews the Department for Transport and Department for Children, Schools and Families' project to increase healthy and sustainable travel to school through travel planning. The study considers a range of data sources using a comprehensive set of research questions.

The study found that the TTSl project did deliver a range of benefits, including reduced car use and increased active travel. However, it also notes:

- These increases occur for schools with *and without* travel plans
- Considerable variation in performance.

The study also outlines a number of challenges that will be faced as we move into the next phase of travel planning:

- Most schools now have travel plans, so the nature of the support needed moves from travel plan development to implementation.
- Assimilating new evidence about what works best.
- Assessing value for money of travel plan schemes, as the benefits (e.g. health, wellbeing, social skills, educational attainment, pollution reduction) are not easily expressed in economic terms
- The cessation of central government funding for School Travel Advisers (STAs) and increasingly constrained resources amongst all stakeholders. The study established the importance of STAs in delivering effective travel plans and suggests that they will continue to be required in the future, to support schools in through the coming phase of travel plan implementation, review and assimilation into normal practise.

Evaluations of the 'Sustainable Travel Towns'<sup>(3)</sup> and 'Cycling Demonstration Towns'<sup>(4)</sup> (Sloman et al., 2010 and Sloman et al., 2009) support some of the issues identified by Atkins (2010). The Sustainable Travel Towns evaluation highlights different levels of engagement in STPs across the study area, even amongst schools with STPs. Despite this, it reports relatively consistent benefits at the aggregate level. The Cycling Demonstration Towns evaluation notes that certain demonstration towns (Darlington and Derby) performed particularly well in encouraging cycling to school, but the precise causes of this success are complex and difficult to isolate. Whilst resource

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2 Atkins, 2010. *An evaluation of the 'Travelling to School Initiative' Programme: final report / October 2010*. Report for the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Transport

3 Sloman L, Cairns S, Newson C, Anable J, Pridmore A & Goodwin P, 2010. *The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns: Summary Report*. Report for Department for Transport

4 Sloman L, Cavill N, Cope A, Muller L and Kennedy A, 2009. *Analysis and synthesis of evidence on the effects of investment in six Cycling Demonstration Towns*. Report for Department for Transport and Cycling England

availability played a part, it was not possible to state simply that x measure achieved y in z situation. The individual circumstances of each school affected the success of the measures implemented.

These reviews highlight the difficulty of isolating “successful” STP measures and of predicting the likely impact of any action implemented in a particular school. The individual circumstances of each school affect the potential success of each travel plan and mean that different measures are appropriate for different schools. They also show that strength of commitment to travel plan actions does not necessarily indicate how successful they will be at reducing car travel. Not all school travel plans are, or should be, alike. A different approach may be needed with each one, and may need to change over the lifetime of the travel plan.

### 3.2.2 Recommendations from national reviews

A significant part of the literature is devoted to potential solutions to school travel problems. Newson et al.’s (2010) guide to ‘making school travel plans work’ considers case studies of successful attempts to influence school travel behaviour and considers the new challenges faced by STPs in the coming years.

Despite the difficulties in attributing “success” to specific travel plan measures, Newson et al. (2010) concluded that STPs are able to deliver a range of benefits, from congestion reduction and road safety to punctuality, social skills and improved learning ability. They have been able to identify a range of attributes shared by many successful school travel plans:

- A good relationship with the local authority and a supportive head teacher.
- Wider ‘buy in’ - from pupils, staff and even the school prospectus.
- Ongoing engagement - for over two years.
- A wide range of travel awareness measures.
- A champion and working party to lead the STP.
- Material changes to safety – through physical safety schemes or alternative measure like walking buses.
- Parking restrictions.
- Good facilities for walking, cycling and public transport (including cheap fares).

A model process for STP development is proposed to help travel plans achieve these favourable attributes.

Coordinating and leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a champion and a working group</li> <li>• Involve pupils in development and implementation</li> <li>• Agree the aims early</li> <li>• Coordinate with other schools</li> </ul>
Assessing the issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the issues by observing and asking (staff, parents and pupils), don't assume you already know</li> </ul>

Taking the proposals forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the STP</li> <li>• Get sign-off</li> </ul>
Focusing on results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop targets linked to the plan's objectives</li> <li>• Monitor progress and review the plan</li> </ul>
Sustaining momentum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make taking part fun</li> <li>• Embed the plan in other areas of work and start regular events</li> <li>• Capture the new intake of students</li> <li>• Plan for champions moving on</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Model process for STP development and implementation (Newson et al 2010)

To support schools in delivering travel plans that meet these standards, Newson et al (2010) go on to identify features of successful local authority strategies for school travel planning:

- Selecting schools – most successful authorities engaged more closely with a small number of schools. There are a number of different approaches to selecting schools. These include road safety issues, areas of deprivation, unusual modal splits, planning applications and links with other transport schemes. Working with clusters of schools can be particularly helpful (for example linking secondary schools with their feeders, schools in the same area or schools with similar issues).
- Acknowledging the different needs of each school and having a range of measures to address them. The study provides a “toolkit” of well-evidenced travel change measures that can be selected and deployed in individual schools as appropriate.
- Advice – guidance and events should be available to all schools. Competitions, awards and national campaigns are also important.
- Good communication about progress with any scheme elements being delivered (or considered) by the local authority.
- Identifying (and recognising or accrediting) different levels of development in STPs.
- Engaging in the planning process – procedures should exist to engage in applications for new schools at an early stage.

Cairns and Newson’s (2006) review of success factors in school travel plans<sup>(5)</sup> mirrors many of the findings above and also notes the importance of improving safety in encouraging more walking and cycling. They also note that good cycle infrastructure, both on and off site, was associated with more positive cycling attitudes and trends.

5 Cairns S and Newson C, 2006. *MAKINGSCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS WORK:EFFECTS, BENEFITS AND SUCCESS FACTORS AT ENGLISH SCHOOLS*. Independent consultants’ report in collaboration with Transport for Quality of Life and Transport 2000

Liddell et al's best practice guidance for local authorities (year unknown)<sup>(6)</sup> also notes the importance of considering the circumstances of each individual school and the range of factors that may affect travel at each one. It provides an interesting characterisation of school types (Figure 2, below), helpful for thinking through the variety of aspects and issues affecting education and travel at different schools. We used a broader version of Liddell's typography (Figure 3) when developing the objectives and options for school travel in Somerset outlined in Section 5.

**Rural schools**  
  
Large catchments, general lack of transport funding, high car usage, high bus usage, scattered journeys.

**Urban schools**  
  
Smaller catchments, more transport funds generally available, lower car usage, more walking and more accidents (especially in inner city areas).

**Primary (and middle) schools**  
  
Smaller catchments, shorter journeys, high car usage, low cycle usage, parents choosing travel mode, personal safety issues.

**Secondary schools**  
  
Larger catchments, longer journeys, more potential for cycling and public transport, pupils and parents choosing travel mode.

Figure 2 - School typology (Liddell et al, year unknown)



Figure 3 - Wider school typology

6 Liddell H, Clarke C and Jowell T, year unknown. *School travel strategies and plans: a best practice guide for local authorities*

### 3.3 Review of school travel in Somerset

#### 3.3.1 Travel trends in Somerset, 2006-present

The proportion of pupils travelling to school by car has shown a steady decline over the duration of the school travel planning project, dropping from 29.9% in 2006/07 to 25.7% in 2010. This exceeds the national progress outlined in section 3.2.

While it is not possible to attribute that change specifically to school travel planning activities, total vehicle mileage in Somerset increased by 2.6% over the same period, so the change in the proportion of driving for *school* journeys is against the general county trend for all trip purposes (DfT National Road Traffic survey data).

Mode	06-07 adj	07-08 adj	08-09 adj	09-10 adj	10-11 adj	11-12adj
Boarder	0.50%	0.34%	0.61%	0.58%	0.55%	0.20%
Bus Type Unknown	0.13%	0.36%	0.49%	0.59%	0.54%	0.63%
CAR	29.05%	26.85%	26.18%	25.48%	24.99%	24.65%
Car Share	2.52%	3.25%	3.86%	4.42%	4.85%	5.12%
Cycle	3.13%	3.27%	2.98%	2.96%	2.72%	2.57%
School Bus	13.70%	14.06%	13.82%	13.67%	13.74%	13.84%
Other	0.35%	0.21%	0.12%	0.10%	0.14%	0.11%
Public Bus	1.99%	1.57%	1.40%	1.25%	1.12%	1.00%
Train	0.00%	0.01%	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.01%
Taxi	0.86%	0.82%	0.74%	0.68%	0.63%	0.59%
Walk	47.77%	49.27%	49.78%	50.26%	50.71%	51.29%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Table 1: Mode of travel to school in Somerset, 2006/07 to 2011/12 (source: School Census)



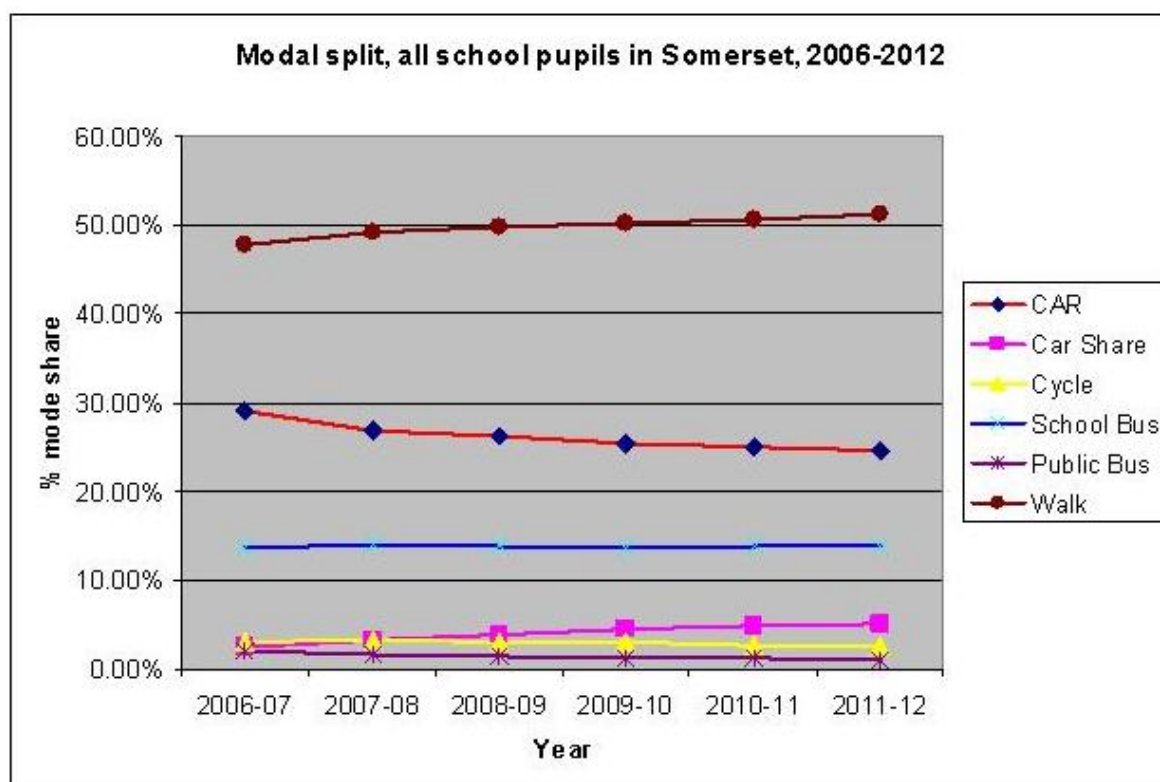


Figure 4: Mode of travel to school in Somerset, 2006/07 to 2011/12

The trends in travel choice over time show that the reduction in single occupancy vehicle use has mainly been due to a shift to car sharing and walking. Other modes have remained relatively stable since 2006.

Consideration of disaggregated results for primary and secondary results (e.g. see Table 2 below for 2010 figures) also demonstrates that car use in primary schools is around three times as high as in secondary schools. This may be due to the “obvious” factors that younger children are less able to walk or cycle longer distances and are less likely to make independent journeys. On the other hand, primary school children are more likely to live closer to their school – 1.6 miles on average for primary school children in the south west, compared with 3.3 miles for secondary pupils (National Travel Survey 2009<sup>(7)</sup>). The scale of the difference warrants closer investigation of the reasons for, and potential solutions to, high car use for primary school journeys.

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7 DfT: Transport Statistics Bulletin: National Travel Survey, 2010

and are less likely to make independent journeys. On the other hand, primary school children are more likely to live closer to their school – 1.6 miles on average for primary school children in the south west, compared with 3.3 miles for secondary pupils (National Travel Survey 2009). The scale of the difference warrants closer investigation of the reasons for, and potential solutions to, high car use for primary school journeys.

The overall positive trend in reducing car use for school journeys also masks considerable variation in the performance of individual schools. 54% of schools with a travel plan have achieved reductions in single occupancy car use, with the scale of change ranging from 0.8% to 36%. Some schools have shown strong increases in a particular mode of travel – for example, cycling or walking. In some cases, those shifts can be clearly attributed to a particular intervention or occurrence - examples include the loss of car parking space, building new cycle sheds or introducing a competitive stamp-card system for rewarding sustainable travel. However, in most cases, the reason for modal shift is difficult to determine, with a range of possible influences both within and beyond the school and its travel plan. It should also be noted that, particularly in small schools, shifts in the travel habits of just a handful of pupils can appear as very large percentage changes, especially in less well used modes such as cycling.

#### **3.3.2 Review of local travel plan performance and success factors**

In developing this strategy, we conducted interviews with 34 schools who had either shown consistently high use of sustainable transport or shown strong performance in encouraging one or more sustainable modes of travel, plus 14 “poor performers”, where car use either increased or remained consistently high over the travel plan period. We evaluated the school against a number of factors that could potentially have influenced their travel profile, including:

- Location, size and socio-demographic composition of the school (see Fig 3 above)
- Targets and objectives identified in their travel plan
- Extent of implementation of travel plan actions
- Receptiveness to travel planning/inclusion in school ethos
- Infrastructure changes introduced (within schools)
- Sustainable travel initiatives introduced
- Changes in the area around the school (e.g. new infrastructure, speed limits, parking availability)
- Other

We also discussed their perception of the main barriers to sustainable travel and implementation of their travel plan.

Unfortunately, our research did not reveal many clear connections between travel patterns and the various factors outlined above. Few of the high-performing schools were able to attribute their success to any particular scheme or occurrence and the poor-performing schools appeared to have implemented their travel plan actions with

a similar degree of enthusiasm and comprehensiveness to those that had yielded better results. There seemed to be little correlation between the objectives identified in the school travel plan and the actual change in travel patterns.

Our local findings therefore mirror the findings of the national reviews outlined in section 3.2 above – that the benefits of school travel plans seem to manifest themselves more or less equally, regardless of the exact objectives/actions specified in the travel plans, or the extent of their implementation. It is also difficult to draw general conclusions about “what works” in travel plans, due to the multitude of factors that could be affecting school travel in any given location.

The few correlations we were able to identify include:

- All the schools that had shown increases in cycling were offering cycle training and had improved their cycle storage facilities. Cycling increases mainly occurred in secondary schools.
- Many of the schools with consistently high levels of car use said that their location and/or the local infrastructure were barriers to sustainable travel. This was more likely to be a problem in rural areas with main roads running through them. However, geographical limitations were also cited by a number of schools showing positive change, demonstrating that progress can be made even in difficult locations.
- Schools with high levels of walking had a large number of pupils living locally. Conversely, a number of the poor performing schools mentioned children living out of the catchment area as a barrier to sustainable travel. This confirms the importance of distance as a determinant of travel and highlights how education policy (e.g. relating to allocation of school places) affects transport.

### **3.3.3 Comparison of school travel trend in Somerset and England**

The table below shows the modal split for travel to school in 2010, in Somerset and in England as a whole.

	Primary (age 5-10)		Secondary (age 11-15)		Total (age 5-15)	
Mode	Somerset	England	Somerset	England	Somerset	England
Walk	52.0	56.7	47.2	42.6	49.8	50.2
Cycle	1.7	1.1	4.9	3.1	3.2	2.0
Car/Van	35.4	33.8	13.0	15.8	25.0	25.5
Car Share	5.4	3.5	3.3	2.5	4.4	3.0
Taxi	0.5	0.7	1.1	1.3	0.7	1.0
Public Bus	0.3	1.6	2.2	14.8	1.1	7.7
School Bus	4.7	2.3	27.0	17.4	15.1	9.3
Other	0.0	0.2	1.3	2.5	0.7	1.3

Table 2: Modes of travel to school 2010: Somerset and England; percentages (source: DfT)

**The data indicates some areas of potential investigation/improvement:**

- Use of public bus services for school travel in Somerset is very low, and well below the average for the country as a whole – could this be improved?
- Cycling and car sharing levels in Somerset are much higher than the national average – could this success be extended?
- Use of school bus services in Somerset is very high. This is positive in terms of sustainable transport levels, but is expensive. As the council seeks to reduce expenditure, we will need to consider how these services are delivered and how pupils can be supported to switch to other sustainable options where they cannot be maintained.

#### 3.3.4 Review of education transport provision, 2012

The County Council is currently undertaking a review of transport service provision in Somerset, including home to school transport. The review will consider possible changes to the way services are delivered to maximise efficiency and reduce costs while still delivering a level of service that meets local and statutory requirements. Options including more efficient use of the school bus fleet, changes to school transport procurement and improvements to walking routes to reduce the need for vehicle transport will be assessed during the latter half of 2012. Recommendations from the review will be used to inform our future school transport provision and operation.

### 3.4 Summary

The local and national reviews of school travel planning to date indicate that the travel planning process is generally effective in reducing car travel for school journeys and increasing active travel, particularly walking. However, they also identify some challenges this strategy will need to address as we move travel planning forward from development to implementation and seek to encourage an even greater increase in walking, cycling and other sustainable modes of transport.

The issues identified include adapting to the new phase of implementation for STPs and exploring which measures and situations deliver the greatest benefits. This is complicated by the wide range of factors influencing the success of travel planning measures at individual school sites. While we can learn lessons from the last 5 years about the *process* of effectively developing and implementing school travel plans, the actual measures and actions identified within each plan are dependent on the specific situation of the school. However, the national literature and our own research do allow us to develop a broad categorisation of school types (see Fig Y, section 3.2.2) and help schools consider measures that might be appropriate to schools in their category. The County Council can also provide useful information on how to implement schemes to increase sustainable modes of transport.

Following Newson et al (2010), this seems to favour a “toolkit” approach to the School Travel Strategy, in which information and advice about a range of measures are provided by the county council, from which schools can choose according to their individual needs. The process of developing and implementing school travel plans should also encourage leadership, foster school wide ‘buy in’ and be capable of sustaining its own momentum.

In addition, Newson et al's (2010) study and our own review of school travel plans in Somerset (see section 3.3.2) also indicate that there are some schools with greater potential for change than others. Another challenge for this strategy will be to identify these high-potential schools and provide increased support to achieve the maximum possible shift to active modes of travel.

There are correlations between the distance from home to school and the mode of travel used for the journey. As more and more schools take on responsibility for their own admissions arrangements, this strategy needs to consider how those issues can be address and incorporated into education and management policies.

Finally, there are some correlations between infrastructure provision and mode of transport, particularly in the case of cycling, which will be evaluated as part of this strategy.

The recommendations generated by all these studies have been used to develop options and considerations for our own strategy, outlined in Section 5. The results of ongoing transport reviews, and new recommendations and requirements emerging as the nature of education provision changes over the coming years, will be monitored and incorporated into this strategy over the lifetime of the Future Transport Plan.

### 4 Aims and objectives

Good school travel opportunities help give children the best start in life by ensuring safe access to suitable education. However, vehicle travel to and from schools contributes to congestion and pollution and providing school transport is a significant cost for the council. This strategy aims to balance these issues and help school travel deliver the best for everyone.

School travel in Somerset has shown a positive trend in reducing single-occupancy car use over the last Local Transport Plan period, 2005-2011. 86% of schools now have a travel plan that sets out objectives and actions designed to further reduce the need to use cars for school travel. Over the Future Transport Plan period, we wish to continue this positive trend, assisting schools to implement effective and efficient actions to increase sustainable transport and encouraging children and parents to choose those options. At the same time, we must ensure that access to good education opportunities for all children is maintained, by providing appropriate, efficient services and making sure people know about them and feel safe using them.

The local and national policies outlined in section 5 both support and shape this aspiration and have helped us develop our central aim for this School Travel Strategy. Research on school travel challenges and potential solutions has then informed the formulation of four supporting objectives that will enable use to realise this aim.

#### 4.1 Aim

We will help people walk and cycle to Somerset's schools and make the school transport services and infrastructure we provide more efficient.

#### 4.2 Objectives

To realise this aim we will have to:

- **Help everyone take part**

Encourage more people to travel to school using healthy and sustainable modes, opening more opportunities for everyone. Building on the school travel planning work completed between 2005 and 2010, support schools to implement the actions identified in their plans and make changes that encourage more sustainable travel amongst pupils. Share good ideas and provide guidance and information to schools in Somerset, helping everyone to make effective changes.

- **Focus additional resources where there is most potential for change**

Our analysis of school travel patterns over the past 5 years reveals that there are some schools/areas where good progress has been made in raising levels of walking, cycling and public transport and some areas where many children are being driven to school despite the presence of other viable, convenient options. In addition to our



general work with all schools, supporting and learning from schools where good progress is already being made and helping those where there is still great potential for change will deliver the greatest modal shift.

- **Make the most of what we have**

Ensure the transport services we provide are as efficient as possible and target our work at what pupils need, using the techniques that deliver the best results. Ensure parents and children feel safe and positive about using transport services and infrastructure.

- **Work effectively in a changing environment**

Ensure school travel provision and the travel planning process are able to respond to changes in the way education is provided and meet the challenges of a new, more flexible school environment. A changing education system, pressure on funding and developments in the School Travel Planning process all mean the strategy needs to grow and adapt to meet new needs.

### 5 Options generation

The local and national evidence on school transport trends and travel plan operations outlined in section 3 has been used to generate a number of possible options to achieve our aim of increasing active travel and providing more efficient services. These options are outlined in this section. Section 6 then presents an evaluation of these options in light of the forthcoming changes in education, transport and funding conditions described in Section 2.

#### 5.1 Considerations arising from local and national research and recommendations

The inability of both local and national reviews of school travel and travel planning to clearly identify a set of measures most likely to influence school travel habits under given circumstances strongly suggests an approach to travel management that leaves operational decisions at school level. The range of factors potentially influencing transport choice are so varied, spanning structural, operational, situational, socio-demographic, social and emotional considerations and more, that schools that appear superficially similar may react quite differently to the same intervention. This makes it very difficult to develop a reliable strategy approach of the “in situation x, do y” variety.

In addition, the rapidly changing education, transport and funding landscape calls for a flexible approach that can be quickly modified in scale and implementation in response to changing requirements. The coming moves towards extended education for 16-18 year olds and the move towards greater self-determination of school operation and admissions in the new Academy and FreeSchools will also bring new, as yet unknown, influences on school transport patterns. The ability of schools to set their own catchment areas and admission criteria, for example, may generate swings in travel behaviour, given the correlation between distance travelled and mode used identified in section 3 above. This too, suggests the need for a flexible approach and good communication with new schools and academies thinking of re-defining their operations so that they can understand the potential transport impacts.

While a suite of sustainable travel information and opportunities should therefore be available to all schools to use as they see fit, there are also clear barriers to sustainable transport choices in some locations – such things as infrastructure problems both within schools (e.g. lack of cycle storage) and in the surrounding area (e.g. lack of pavements or crossings), lack of suitable transport services and lack of skills, training or knowledge about potential modes of travel. In some cases, these are things that can be rectified to unlock transport choices for more pupils and parents, either by providing new useable routes, or by overcoming the safety concerns Cairns and Newson (2006) identified as being a critical barrier to active travel.

In addition, there are certain schools that have greater potential for achieving positive change than others. This could be for a variety of reasons, for example:

- A location and/or catchment that favours sustainable travel

- Changes in the school environment, operation or transport services that introduce new opportunities for sustainable travel
- A particular enthusiasm for sustainable, healthy transport amongst pupils, parents and school staff
- Schools who have only recently developed a travel plan or not yet implemented all the actions
- Schools with a current improving trend
- Current under performance e.g. schools in which a high proportion of pupils are driven to school over very short distances (easily walkable).

Targeting additional resources at these high-potential schools may achieve a greater level of change.

Finally, there are the areas of county-wide under or over performance identified through comparison with national trends outlined in Section 3. These could be addressed through specific county-wide improvement strategies.

## 5.2 Our options

From the considerations outlined above, we developed a number of possible options to address the problems with school travel and deliver our aim and objectives for increasing active travel to school and making services more efficient. The options are grouped into 6 categories, based on the type of measure, and compared against a “do minimum” scenario which lists just the statutory or corporate requirements for delivery of school travel matters.

### “Do minimum”:

- Respond to requests for advice
- Comment on planning applications
- Meet statutory requirements for providing school travel
- Review school travel strategy each year

### Option categories:

1. Resources we could offer to all schools, to be used flexibly dependent on their individual needs
2. Working more intensively with selected schools to deliver additional change where there is greatest potential
3. Working more effectively and flexibly with schools, particularly given the forthcoming changes in school operation and management
4. Tackling barriers to sustainable travel through targeted infrastructure improvements, provision of training and other interventions
5. Improving the way we work, to deliver the most effective services with tighter funding constraints
6. Seeking additional sources of funding for school travel.

A full list of all the options considered in each category can be seen in Table 3 in the next section.

## 6 Appraisal and implementation

This section sets out how the options developed in Section 5 were tested to select the best ones to form the strategy set out in Section 7.

### 6.1 The appraisal process

The options developed above were appraised using Somerset County Council's Modal Strategy Appraisal Tool (MSAT) to assess their costs and benefits. The tool measures the performance of options against a wide range of factors, using an approach developed from best practise guidance. As well as our objectives, it is also designed to reflect other important factors such as cost and scale of impact. It has been developed to ensure that our strategies provide the best possible value by evaluating all options in a consistent way.

MSAT uses a spreadsheet to assess our options against the appraisal categories. In order to capture the full range of issues, from easily measured factors such as cost, to more difficult ones like journey experience, two types of measurement are employed. Some things are measured by selecting from a range of values and others use more descriptive measures, accompanied by a traffic light system to flag up areas of concern. Results are provided in the form of a numerical score (for the more easily quantified aspects) and a series of written comments and traffic light indicators. It is important that all indicators are properly considered. Particular attention has been paid to ensuring those less easily measured factors are not forgotten in Section 7.

Section 6.2 discusses the results of this process and begins to shape the preferred strategy developed in Section 7.

### 6.2 Appraisal results

This section sets out the results of the appraisal process described above and begins to develop a picture of the type of strategy that will best meet Somerset's school travel needs.

Table 3 below sets out the cost-benefit scores for the options tested through the MSAT process. Those that scored over 20 are coloured green, those that scored between 15 and 20 are amber and those that scored below 15 are not coloured. These divisions are not significant, but provide an easy means of visually distinguishing the high value schemes from the low value. However, it must be remembered that this is only one measure of priority, best suited to those options that can be easily quantified. The full MSAT process also contains a qualitative analysis element, in which wider benefits and contributions of each option must also be assessed.

In particular, schemes that relate to working with new schools and academies generally receive low-moderate scores in the quantitative analysis, as there are currently only a few academies. We know, however, that the number of academies

will be increasing rapidly over the coming years, so being involved in that process and spreading understanding of transport issues from the outset will have benefits beyond those that can be quantified in the short term.

Similarly, options that increase understanding and awareness - including school travel health checks, site audits and promotion of active travel benefits - do not generate direct benefits in themselves, but do enable schools to understand their own travel patterns, problems and opportunities, and hence to participate effectively in other schemes.

A full copy of the results of the appraisal can be seen in Appendix A.

"Do minimum"	
Measure	MSAT Score
Comment on planning applications	22.0
Review school travel strategy each year	20.0
Respond to requests for advice	19.0
Meet statutory requirements for providing school travel	11.0

<b>Package 1: Resources we could offer to all schools</b>	
<b>Measure</b>	<b>MSAT Score</b>
· Encourage pupils to shape the STP	28.2
· A "toolkit of measures" – in-depth information on the wide range of things schools could do to support active travel	24.8
· Regular communication and information to help schools sustain the momentum of their travel plans	21.2
· A STP league table	19.6
· Initiatives and advice to make the STP a positive thing; making it a living document that is owned by the whole school	17.4
· Support to consider schools' role in the wider community and how that affects travel	17.2
· Materials to help families think about travel from the earliest opportunity e.g. during school selection, enrolment or open days	17.2
· Addressing parental concerns about walking and cycling by engaging whole families in school travel initiatives	15.1
· Materials and lesson plans to bring travel into the wider school curriculum	14.4
· Site audits to help schools identify barriers to active travel on and around their site	14.2
· Help pupils understand the benefits of changing the way they travel	14.0
· Promote travel promotion opportunities (e.g events or new initiatives) to schools	13.6
· An individual travel "health check" for schools each year	12.9



Package 2: Working more intensively with selected schools	
Measure	MSAT Score
· Schools that perform well when assessed against a scorecard comprising a variety of favourable indicators	24.5
· Geographical Clusters – groups of schools in areas with good transport networks an infrastructure, giving good potential for sustainable travel	20.6
· Schools undergoing significant change, opening opportunities for new transport choices	18.8
· Schools with either a very good, or very poor, current record of active travel	18.2
· Setting a challenge for all schools and working with those who are most enthusiastic	18.2

Package 3: Working more effectively and flexibly with schools	
Measure	MSAT Score
· Reviewing/rewriting old travel plans	26.0
· Introducing new schemes that encourage use of popular or unusual modes of travel (such as scooters)	19.4
· Information and advice to assist the development of schools' admissions criteria and school travel provision policies (particularly for new schools and academies)	18.6
· Working with new schools, including new free schools and academies, to develop new travel plans	17.2
· Supporting schools to change their travel policies to favour active travel	17.2

<b>Package 4: Tackling barriers to sustainable travel</b>	
<b>Measure</b>	<b>MSAT Score</b>
Infrastructure improvements to reduce 'Danger Routes'	24.8
Training: for cyclists, pedestrians, bus buddies etc	20.6
Identify and improve poor facilities in schools	20.5
Targeted infrastructure improvements to remove barriers to walking and cycling	18.6
Introduce parking restrictions and reduce speed limits	16.3
Financial support to individuals to use sustainable modes, e.g. through bike loans or help purchasing bus tickets	14.5

<b>Package 5: Improving the way we work</b>	
<b>Measure</b>	<b>MSAT Score</b>
Understanding what is needed and what works: asking pupils, monitoring change and assessing schemes	22.5
Develop procedures for engaging effectively with planning applications for new schools	21.5
Investigate how public bus services could better serve schools	20.2

<b>Package 6: Seeking additional sources of funding</b>	
<b>Measure</b>	<b>MSAT Score</b>
Make any internal and external funding more accessible to schools by enabling them to submit applications to secure money to implement their travel plan schemes – an "incentives fund".	29.2
Support/submit applications for funding to third party organisations	15.0
Pro-actively seek external funding for school travel initiatives	14.4
Apply for funding from the council's Integrated Transport Block to finance small schemes to improve school transport conditions	9.3

Table 3: Cost-benefit scores returned by the MSAT scorecard for the various options considered

## 7 Preferred strategy

The appraisal results in section 6 help us to identify the best measures to take to meet the four objectives described in section 4, which together will enable us to meet our aim of helping people walk and cycle to Somerset's schools and make the school transport services we provide more efficient.

This section describes the preferred strategy developed from these results.

### 7.1 School Travel Strategy

#### Objective 1: Help everyone to take part

This objective requires us to inform and empower schools and families so they can take action to improve their own travel opportunities and make beneficial change. We will do this by:

- developing a "toolkit" of sustainable transport measures and scheme that can be accessed, adapted and implemented by each school according to their individual needs
- supporting schools to review, update and implement their travel plans annually to maintain momentum and achieve the greatest modal shift
- encouraging pupil involvement and ownership of the travel plan
- continuing to provide annual Healthcheck assessments of school travel patterns to individual schools, so each school can monitor its performance and identify opportunities and barriers
- introducing a league table of travel performance so schools can understand their progress against the county average and seek advice from comparable schools achieving better results
- sharing information and progress between schools to keep them up to date with new information, create enthusiasm and sustain momentum in travel planning
- assisting schools to identify new on-site infrastructure requirements and source funding to implement them
- investigating opportunities to give schools more access to available funding, providing support and incentive to implement active transport improvements.

### **Objective 2: Focus additional resources where there is most potential for change**

To deliver this objective, we need to work more intensively with schools where there is strong potential for change. National reviews of good practise (Section 3) recommend working more intensively with selected schools with good potential for change. Liddell et al (year unknown) outline four methods of identifying schools to work with:

1. Selective – choosing particular schools to work with on the basis of potential for change of existing transport problems
2. Responsive – helping schools as and when they request assistance
3. Reactive – establishing travel plans through the planning process
4. Challenge – inviting all schools to come forward with ideas, then selecting which to work with.

During the appraisal stage (package 2), we tested these approaches and found the Selective approach to be most appropriate for Somerset. We further tested methods of selection based on:

1. Geographical clusters of neighbouring schools in areas with good potential for sustainable travel
2. Schools already demonstrating enthusiasm and positive change
3. Schools with potential for change, based on their current travel profiles
4. A scorecarding approach, that evaluates a range of factors likely to contribute to potential for behaviour change.

The final, scorecarding, approach was identified as the preferred option for school selection.

### **Objective 3: Make the most of what we have**

This requires us to make sure services are as efficient as possible and identify cost-effective infrastructure improvements and other schemes that would unlock opportunities for walking and cycling on the existing network.

- Investigate how public bus services could better serve schools to bring Somerset's bus use up to the national average
- Investigating engineering solutions to some of the county's "danger routes" - routes that are deemed unsuitable for accompanied children up to age 8 to walk along to school
- Targeted infrastructure and service improvements to remove barriers to walking, cycling and public transport
- Continue to provide and expand Bikeability cycle training to help children cycle safely on appropriate roads.



## **Objective 4: Work effectively in a changing environment**

To achieve this objective, we need to prepare for the future, helping people to set things up in a way that supports active travel from the outset. It also requires careful monitoring of travel trends and the success of schemes, so that we can recommend the best possible measures in the future. We will do this by:

- Commenting on planning applications for new schools to ensure they create an environment conducive to walking, cycling and public transport
- Assisting schools to review their policies and practises to support more sustainable travel. The MSAT appraisal above allocates a low priority to this approach, but in a changing educational environment, with more schools setting their own procedures, this will become increasingly important and valuable over the coming years
- Investigating the causes, and potential solutions, for high car use in primary schools
- Monitoring the performance of school travel plans and measures to increase sustainable transport, sharing good practise and successful ideas
- Reviewing our school travel strategy to ensure it keeps up with changing practises and new information
- Working with new schools and academies to develop travel plans and understand the travel impacts of operational decisions.

In addition to these 4 main work packages, we will also incorporate any relevant findings arising from the current local and national reviews of education transport provision and any other relevant research.

The overall School Travel Strategy links closely with the “Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy” (SMoTs), which the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires local authorities to review and publish each year. Somerset’s SMoTs strategy will detail the delivery of sustainable travel actions for schools each year and ensure the implementation of the strategy remains current, relevant and effective.

## **7.2 Considerations, Issues and Risks**

### **7.2.1 Delivery**

The preferred strategy outlined above requires intensive communication, liaison and resource development. While most schools in Somerset now have a travel plan, we are also moving into a new phase of travel planning, shifting the focus from development to implementation— a new set of challenges for schools, particularly in an era of reducing funding. The level of communication and guidance needed to effectively support schools through this transition is likely to require the retention of

some sort of school travel advisory function in Somerset. Government funding for STA posts was withdrawn in 2010, so Somerset will need to investigate how this function can be most efficiently provided over the coming years.

### 7.2.2 Funding

Funding is a concern in the current era of economic recession. The current review of education transport provision in Somerset will aim to identify where changes can be made to deliver services more efficiently, making the best use of limited resources. Recommendations from this review will be incorporated into this strategy when available. While the MSAT process gave a lower numerical cost-benefit score to schemes proposing increased funding for school travel measures, the difference in engagement with the STP process between independent schools (who were not given grants for STP implementation) and LEA schools (who were) over the 2006-2010 TTSI period was extreme: only 6% of independent schools participated, compared with 95% of LEA schools. This demonstrates that an incentive of some kind can be vital in getting schools to start considering their travel issues at all, and small investments can help overcome site-specific barriers to active travel. Given the multiple benefits that can arise from increasing healthy, sustainable travel amongst children, meeting our objective of helping more people walk and cycle to school also helps deliver a multitude of other aims, e.g. reducing childhood obesity, increasing physical activity and raising educational attainment. Some of these aims are associated with sources of funding (e.g. public health) and there are some national grants and awards available for schemes that can achieve these aims. As part of this strategy, therefore, we will also seek, and help individual schools to seek, opportunities to implement well-evidenced travel projects through partnership working or accessing funding streams.

### 7.2.3 Monitoring

Until 2011, pupils' mode of travel to school was collected each year as part of the School Census. This created a robust, standardised dataset, comparable between years and local authority regions. The data collected has formed the basis of much of our analysis of school travel trends in section 3. However, in 2011, with little consultation, the Department for Education withdrew the requirement for collection and reporting of mode of travel data within school census. In Somerset, we are still able to extract any travel data schools and academies have collected from the Schools Information Management System (SIMS) but the risk is that, now that that data is not specifically required, schools will cease to collect it and the quality and completeness of the dataset will gradually diminish. Given the need to tailor school travel initiatives very specifically to a local area, the loss of data from even a few schools may reduce our ability to assess appropriate solutions for that area and monitor their success.

Discussions are continuing at a national level regarding the re-introduction of mode of travel data to the Census, or providing an alternative national solution. Until anything of that nature is resolved, Somerset County Council will continue to work closely with schools to encourage them to continue to record and submit this valuable information.



## 7.3 Summary

The strategy proposed provides a mix of schemes that share responsibility and ability to increase active travel to school between individuals, schools and the local authority. It will open up more opportunities for walking and cycling by removing barriers and safety concerns through targeted infrastructure improvements. It makes the best use of scarce resources by directing investment where it can deliver the best results, while also empowering families, schools and communities to take action themselves through the provision of detailed information on school transport initiatives and opportunities. The county council will be a conduit for up-to-date, well-evaluated information and advice, and will facilitate routes to funding and partnership working opportunities.

## 8 Appendices

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