

**Decision Session –  
Executive Member for City Strategy**

5th January 2010

Report of the Director of City Strategy

**School Travel Planning process and the associated ‘Safe Routes to School’ initiative**

**Summary**

1. This report outlines the work that has been undertaken by the Council in partnership with schools to increase the number of journeys being made to school by sustainable modes of transport. The report also reviews the associated ‘safe routes to school’ initiatives which have been identified as part of the travel planning process. The report concludes by examining the context in which this work will continue after March 2010.

**Recommendations**

2. The Executive Member for City Strategy is recommended to:
  - i) Note the content of the report.
  - ii) Note that officers will review the Census data, submitted in January 2010 to create a priority list of schools who will be specifically targeted in 2010/11. A further information report will be brought to a future meeting to advise of the priority list.
  - iii) Encourage school governors to continue to engage with the school travel planning process to increase the percentage of journeys made to school by sustainable modes.

Reason: The travel planning process will only affect staff and student modal shift with the engagement of the whole school community.

**Background**

3. The Travelling to School Initiative (TTSI) tasked every school to promote sustainable travel to school by encouraging more children to walk, cycle, use the bus or car share and to reduce car use. To help schools to achieve this, the Departments for Transport and Children, Schools and Families have been providing funding for School Travel Plan Coordinators (STPCs) to work with schools to create practical and deliverable School Travel Plans. By 31 March

2009, 81% of the schools in England had put such plans in place. In York, this figure was 89%

4. York's involvement with the TTSI started with the 'Safe Routes to School' initiative which began in 1995. The Council was approached by Sustrans to be involved in the national pilot scheme. The Council was very keen to be involved as the aims of this new initiative closely matched much of the work we were already doing but would bring it a fresh focus and direction. Following consultation with head teachers to gauge interest in being involved, three schools in York were chosen for the pilot project.
5. 'Safe Routes to School' forms part of a more general package of measures to improve safety in and around school sites. Other improvements include improvements which have been made to school cycle and scooter parking as well as school safety zones. A total of £200,000 will be spent on such initiatives during 2009/10.
6. 'Safe Routes to School' opened the way for initiatives such as 'School Travel Plans'. York has received £100k of central government funding since 2004 to support this work. The funding is due to end in March 2011.
7. In 2003, the DfT and DfES (now DCSF) published '*Travelling to School – A good practice guide*'. The document provided a range of suggestions for best practice but also outlined several targets. With reference to school travel plans specifically, the document stated:

*'We want local education and transport authorities to develop a joint strategic approach to school travel issues and to reduce car dependency for journeys to school in their area. School travel plans will be the key strategies for achieving this and we want authorities to work with schools or groups of schools to develop plans to meet local circumstances. Our objective is that all schools should have active travel plans before the end of the decade.'* (p48, *Travelling to School – A good practice guide*, 2003)

8. The Council's former Corporate strategy contained a target (CYC 5.3) for all schools to have a travel plan in place by the end of March 2010, which is coincident with the original cessation of the STPC post funding. The responsibility for encouraging schools to devise and implement these plans rests with the STPCs (2 x 0.5 fte).
9. Although the coordinators are charged with encouraging the schools to have a travel plan in place, schools are under no legal (or funding) obligation to do this, except for planning obligations and/or conditions applied to new schools or schools undergoing a significant (re)development. Maintained schools writing their first approved travel plan will receive a travel plan grant based on the number of pupils they have which may be spent on promoting sustainable travel to school. Independent schools do not receive this grant. Schools are not obliged to subsequently review or monitor their travel plans by government, although CYC require schools to do so as a planning condition as stated above.

10. Members will appreciate that schools now enjoy a large measure of autonomy in the running of their facilities. The lack of compulsion for schools to implement and monitor travel plans makes it very difficult for the Council to otherwise persuade schools that do not wish to implement a travel plan.

### School Travel Plans

11. Since 2004 and by December 2009, 92% of schools in York had adopted School Travel Plans. The table below outlines the list of schools which have not yet fully implemented plans.

**Table 1 – Schools not having submitted STPs at December 2009**

<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Other</b>
Burnholme	Acomb	Bootham	Applefields
Fulford	Burton Green	Minster	The Danesgate Centre
Manor	Hemplands		
	St Aelred's		

12. All of the schools identified in table 1 are engaged in the process and whilst not certain, it is likely that a majority of the schools above will deliver travel plans by the end of March 2010.
13. All of the submitted and approved travel plans have actions plans attached to them with targets to decrease their car use and increase the sustainable modes split. Whilst the targets vary, an example from a recently submitted travel plan is as follows:

<i>Decrease to the number of cars journeys to school</i>					
<i>Target</i>	<i>Who it is for</i>	<i>Completed by</i>	<i>Monitoring activity</i>	<i>Owner</i>	<i>Review date</i>
<i>Reduce car usage from 14% to 12%</i>	<i>parents, carers (students) and, staff</i>	<i>April 2010</i>	<i>Staff and parents survey data.</i>	<i>Hilary Reed SLT</i>	<i>June 2010</i>

14. The STPCs continue to work hard to encourage schools to deliver and review their plans. It is important to recognise however that unless the school takes ownership of its plan it is unlikely to deliver a shift in the percentage of students or staff traveling to the school by sustainable modes.

## **Proving the success of travel plans in encouraging modal shift**

15. Whilst it is difficult to identify the precise impact that a travel plan has had in encouraging modal shift at a school when considered in isolation, the modal split of student journeys to school has been recorded on an annual basis since January 2007 as part of the school census.
16. An indication of the modal shift which has been achieved is included at table 2 below. The census data represents the mode used to travel to school by students, rather than by the whole school community.

**Table 2**

### **Mode Share of Journeys to school (all schools)**

<b>Mode of Transport</b>	<b>2006/07 Baseline</b>	<b>2008/09</b>
Car/Taxi	18.6%	20.1%
Car share	1.1%	1.0%
Public Transport	10.7%	13.3%
Walking	52.9%	54%
Cycling	6.9%	6.8%
Other	0.1%	0.3%
Not recorded	9.7%	4.3%

17. The car use recorded has increased over the past three years but this is more likely to be a result of inaccurate recording in the early data submissions than because of an actual increase. The statistics submitted in January will give a clear indication as to whether the number of journeys being made to school is constant or may even downward trend.
18. In Autumn 2008, a significant amount of effort was invested to encourage schools to accurately collect their data in the January 2009 census. It was established that a proportion of schools had not been collecting data for all students every year, but rather only the new intake of students. If, for example, a secondary student was driven to school in Year 7, but was cycling by the time they reached Year 9, this change would not have been recorded..
19. On receipt and analysis of the January 2009 census data, maps were produced for each school in York displaying their modal splits. It is intended that this exercise will be repeated with the January 2010 data. By comparing the two sets of data it will be possible to draw conclusions as to whether the number of students traveling to school using sustainable modes has increased.

20. Particular focus will be given to the eight schools submitting travel plans in March 2009 to analyse whether the introduction of a plan has had an impact on the modal split. The data maps have been supplied to the schools and an example plot is re-produced in Annex A. The background map is not displayed for child protection purposes. The STPC's use the census data and associated maps to advise schools as to how they are doing in achieving their targets and to help schools develop specific strategies to encourage active travel to school.
21. STPC's will use the census data to target schools during 2010/11 where there is the potential for greatest mode shift. The data is also used in the writing of travel plans to provide baseline data against which schools can set their targets and monitor their performance.
22. The schools identified in the data analysis as described above will also help to inform engineering schemes at schools in 2010/11. In addition to the STPCs, two engineering staff work on school safety schemes as part of their remit to deliver engineering safety schemes more widely across York.

### **School Safety Schemes**

23. School Safety Schemes include School Safety Zones, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and School Cycle Parking. The first programme of School Safety Schemes started about 10 years ago and focused on SRTS initiatives for all York's Secondary Schools. SRTS aims to promote safer, more environmentally sustainable and healthier ways of getting to and from school, with particular emphasis on walking and cycling. Typical SRTS measures include crossings, improved footways, cycle routes and road safety measures. The extent of the scheme generally depends on the number of pupils, where they live, and the speed and volume of traffic on the surrounding road network.
24. This work was followed by School Safety Schemes being provided outside all 60 Primary Schools in York with a school safety zone surrounding the main entrances, where practical. This included the provision of 20mph speed limits with speed tables and speed cushions, parking controls and improved crossing facilities. This phase of School Safety work was substantially completed in 2006, although further fine tuning of the schemes have taken place since then.
25. With road safety much improved by slower vehicle speeds directly outside schools, the focus then shifted to SRTS for Primary Schools. This years' programme of works is shown as Annex B with 7 schools expected to benefit from measures this year, and a further 5 feasibility studies which will hopefully form the basis for next years school safety allocation. Requests for such highway improvements are usually generated through the School Travel Plan process, and it is expected that the school should be actively promoting walking and cycling.
26. It is also common for safe routes to school measures to have benefits for the wider community, for example, a recently introduced zebra crossing in Wigginton at the site of the School Crossing Patrol also benefits pedestrians using local village amenities. In addition, a small amount of funding is made

available to meet requests for school travel-related minor improvements such as dropped kerb crossing points and bollards to protect pedestrians.

27. There is also a yearly allocation of capital funding for school cycle parking. This is generated through the School Travel Plan process and supported by cycle training. Both these factors are essential to encourage a shift towards more cycling to school. This years programme of works is shown as Annex B and will benefit 6 schools. In addition, there is also a minor amount of funding for scooter parking.
28. Now almost all schools have or are working towards completing a School Travel Plan, much of the School Safety highway work has been completed. It is therefore particularly important to focus on maintaining momentum with the Schools through the School Travel Plan process on sustainable travel issues particularly with new pupils starting every year. However, school travel highway issues continue to arise, including school safety measures linked to new school builds and mergers, where the majority of improvements are funded through the planning process and provided by LCCS.

### **School travel plans and the planning process**

29. The Government's Planning Policy Guidance on Transport (PPG13) states that:

“travel plans should be submitted alongside planning applications which are likely to have significant transport implications, including those for... new and expanded school facilities which should be accompanied by a travel plan which promotes safe cycling and walking routes, restricts parking and car access at and around schools, and includes on-site changing and cycle storage facilities.”
30. Whilst not all schools in York have engaged with the travel planning process when developing or moving sites, a majority have. York High has been formed from the merger of Oaklands and Lowfield schools and have produced a school travel plan with the help and support of a STPC for March 2009, which they are now actively promoting.

### **Sustainable School Travel Strategy**

31. The Education and Inspections Act (2006), section 76:

*‘...gives local authorities a duty to prepare and publish a sustainable school strategy, leading to health and environmental benefits.’ (A Short Guide to the Education and inspections Act, 2006)*
32. The duty requires that the aforementioned document must be updated every year. York's strategy is in draft and consultation with members will take place in the new year before formal approval and publication. The modest level of funding received from central government as part of the duty (£12,000 per annum) should be put towards a creative initiative, tailored to York's circumstances, to encourage more children to walk and cycle.

33. The draft strategy details the services the Council currently provides through School Safety schemes, Road Safety Training, 'Walk to School' weeks as well as through the assistance and expertise offered by the School Travel Plan Coordinators in the production and development of Travel Plans.
34. In essence, the sustainable travel to school strategy pulls together all the measures CYC is doing and in many cases, has done for numerous years, into one document and includes an action plan for progressing these into the future.

### **Moving forward**

35. A letter sent to all local authorities jointly by the Departments for Children, Schools and Families, Department for Transport and Department of Health in November 2009 clarified Government thinking regarding the role of School Travel Advisors beyond March 2010 and in so doing, the future of the Travelling to School Initiative.
36. The key driver behind school travel plans to date has been the environmental and congestion agendas. All schools are expected to be 'sustainable' by 2020 and 'travel and traffic' is one 'doorway' which needs to be addressed if this is to be achieved. The air quality and climate change agenda are likely to increase in the coming years. The importance of changing travel behaviour in this regard cannot be underestimated and the Government letter (a copy of which is appended at Annex C) identifies sustainability and traffic congestion as two areas which should be targeted through the school travel planning process. The letter also identifies another key driver for the future production and maintenance of school travel plans and traveling to school initiatives:
37. The health of our young people. The Department of Health is keen to arrest the decline in the number of children walking to school. A school travel plan is required for schools to receive the 'Healthy Schools' accreditation and set against a backdrop of increasing obesity levels, school travel plans are likely to become more relevant as schools attempt to tackle this difficult issue.
38. The Government expects that work to build partnerships with third party agencies (eg Primary Care Trusts) is increased and identifies four key areas for specific focus:
  - a. Working to ensure that any schools still without travel plans complete one.
  - b. Refresh and revitalise plans at schools with a School Travel Plan (you may want to carefully target certain schools, such as those with the greatest potential for modal shift, or where there is an obesity issue)
  - c. Widen the scope of existing travel plans, incorporating travel at non-school opening/closing times
  - d. Widen the scope of plans to cover journeys made by teachers and other staff

39. In addition, officers would like to give consideration to schools with existing travel plans which were submitted early in the travel plan process (2004-2006) and which would not pass the present quality assurance process which came into effect in August 2007.
40. It is acknowledged that School Travel Plans have a 'life' of around 3 years before car usage will potentially start to increase again. A significant proportion of Travel Plans were written between 2004 and 2006 and will need refreshing. Thus the need to identify and target schools with greatest potential for modal shift.
41. Upon receipt of the January 2010 census data, officers will work to provide members with a proposed list of schools which will form the basis for much of the STPC work for 2010/11. It is anticipated this list will be available in late March or early April 2010. Its success will depend on the schools willingness to engage with the STPCs.

### **Consultation**

42. Modal shift at schools is achieved with the input of a variety of departments from within the Council, not least the Road Safety and Sustainable Travel teams within the Transport Planning Unit and the Transport & Safety Engineers within Engineering Consultancy, all of whom have had an active input to the writing of this report.
43. School Information Officer within the Council's Management Information Service advised that Management Information worked closely with the School Travel Plan Coordinators in Autumn 2008 to ensure that schools were given the help and guidance they required to record accurate and up to date 'Actual Mode of Travel to School'. The 'Preferred Mode of Travel' as a local initiative was also collected last year. MIS supplied the data electronically for the School Travel Team to analyse and use when working with schools and to inform travel plans.
44. The data was readily available for both local and national performance indicators and has been checked for accuracy for audit purposes. This was a very positive collaborative working relationship which resulted in up to date travel data being available.
45. It is intended that the STPCs will work closely with the Management Information Team again during 2010-11 to ensure that the reliability of the travel data provided by schools is maintained.
46. In addition, partnership working with the individual schools and third parties, such as North Yorkshire Police (and in particular, the Police Community Support Officers for the wards in which the schools are located) is crucial to the successful delivery of both Safe Routes to School and School Travel Plan initiatives.



## Corporate Priorities

47. Continued support for School Travel Plan work would contribute to the following Corporate priorities:
- **Sustainable City** - There is considerable scope for reducing vehicle congestion delay on the overall network, and especially in the vicinity of schools, through greater use of sustainable modes, thereby reducing the associated adverse affects of motorised transport, such as air pollution and carbon emissions from the consumption of fossil fuels.
  - **Inclusive city** – The introduction and development of both engineering safety and educational measures increases access to schools and their associated facilities through a wider range of travel choices.
48. Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2): Support for the initiatives outlined above would contribute to several of the aims of the second Local Transport Plan, namely:
- To tackle congestion
  - To enhance opportunities for all community members, including disadvantaged groups, to play an active part in society;
  - To reduce the impact of traffic and travel on the environment, including air quality, noise and the use of non-renewable resources.

## Implications

- **Financial**

There are no financial implications

- **Human Resources (HR)**

A decision will be required at some point over the next twelve months as to how the promotion of school travel plans/ sustainable travel in schools is to be carried out following the cessation of government funding in March 2011.

- **Equalities**

There are no equalities implications

- **Legal**

There are no Legal implications

- **Crime and Disorder**

There are no Crime and Disorder implications

- **Information Technology (IT)**

There are no IT implications

- **Property**

There are no Property implications

- **Other**

There are no other implications

## **Risk Management**

49. There are no known risks.

### **Contact Details**

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**Report Approved**



**Date**

17 December 2009

**Wards Affected: All**

All

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### **Annexes**

Annex A – An example map of school postcode plots

Annex B – School safety Capital programme 2009/10

Annex C – Letter to local authorities concerning the future role of Road Safety Advisors post March 2010

### **Background papers**

- 1) *Travelling to School – A good practice guide* (DfT and DfES, 2003)
- 2) *A short guide to the education and inspections act* (DfES, 2006)