

School Travel Plans Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee

8 September 2010

School Travel Plans – Interim Report

Background

1. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee recognised certain key objectives and the following remit was agreed:

Aim

‘To identify an integrated approach to travel plan development that recognises the relationships between active travel and health, sustainability (particularly air quality and climate change issues) and traffic congestion and community cohesion.’

Objectives

- Understanding what works and what doesn’t work in York, and best practice elsewhere
 - Understanding the costs and challenges, in order to identify how the council, schools and their communities can do school travel planning better.
 - Identifying the best way to support schools with travel planning, either through the role of School Travel Plan Co-ordinators (subject to available funding being provided/identified), or providing support to schools through an alternative mechanism.
 - Identifying any key messages for wider travel planning in York.
2. In agreeing the above remit, the Committee identified the following timetable for their review:

Date	Workplan
Wed 8 Sept 2010 6pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of school Action Plans (20-25 newest/most recently updated) • List of York schools without Travel Plans (4%), and reasons why, if known • Review of relevant responses from Traffic Survey • Scope visits to schools (draft questionnaire) • Letter to schools to be visited to be drafted for Members’ consideration
Wed 13 Oct 2010 6pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information on travel initiatives identifying those which have worked well • Identifying best practice (both locally and nationally) – Paul Osborne from Sustrans to be invited to attend.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of information from Car Free Day and Jack Archer award. • Obesity figures to identify any links with those schools who have poorly performing travel plans • Information on what support from CYC schools can access online
18 - 21 Oct 2010 (exact dates / times to be agreed)	Visits to schools Mon – Thurs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (not Fri 22 Oct - last day of term) • Visit in pairs – 2 schools per pair
Thurs 18 Nov 2010 6pm	Consideration of draft final report.

Information Gathered

3. Recently Produced / Updated School Action Plans

Since the introduction of the School Travel Plan Coordinators (STPCs), the following 26 school travel plans (each containing an action plan) have been produced, based on the most up to date guidance from the Department for Transport.

School Name/Phase	Date	Reason	Comments
St Barnabas CE Primary	Mar-08	Healthy/Sustainable Schools	First Travel Plan
Carr Infants	Mar-09	Grant	First Travel Plan
Poppleton Ousebank Primary	Mar-09	Grant	First Travel Plan
Ralph Butterfield Primary	Mar-09	Grant	First Travel Plan
Haxby Road Primary	Mar-09	Grant	First Travel Plan
Hob Moor Primary	Mar-09	Grant	First Travel Plan
Hob Moor Oaks - Primary special school	Mar-09	Grant	First Travel Plan
Woodthorpe Primary	Mar-09	Grant	First Travel Plan
York High - Secondary	Mar-09	Planning/Grant	First Travel Plan
Huntington Primary	Oct-09	Grant	First Travel Plan
St Wilfrid's RC Primary	Nov-09	Planning	Planning required for building new nursery and changes to car park.
St Peters (inc St Olaves and Clifton Prep) - Independent	Dec-09	Planning	Written by Consultant employed by school in consultation with CP
Joseph Rowntree - Secondary	Jan-10	Review for planning	Draft for planning - Final to be completed by end 10/10
English Martyrs/Our Lady's RC Primary	Feb-10	Planning	To accompany Planning Application for merger of the two schools

School Name/Phase	Date	Reason	Comments
Acomb Primary	Mar-10	Grant	First Travel Plan
Robert Wilkinson Primary	Mar-10	Review	School working hard to reduce car use
Burton Green Primary School	Mar-10	Road safety	First Travel Plan
Hempland Primary	Mar-10	Road safety	First Travel Plan
Naburn CE Primary	Mar-10	Road safety	First Travel Plan
St Aelred's RC Primary VA	Mar-10	Road safety/Healthy Schools	First Travel Plan
Applefields School - Secondary	Mar-10	Road safety/Healthy Schools	First Travel Plan
Danesgate Community - Secondary	Mar-10	Road safety/Healthy Schools	First Travel Plan
Fulford School - Secondary	Mar-10	Healthy/Sustainable Schools	First Travel Plan
Manor CE School VA - Secondary	Mar-10	Grant - cycle parking	First Travel Plan
Clifton with Rawcliffe - Primary	Apr-10	Planning application	Framework Travel Plan
Bootham Junior - Independent	May-10	Planning	Written by Consultant employed by school in consultation with CP

4. These schools were approached by the STPCs and offered support to develop their travel plan. Members should note that an action plan needs to be in place at least two years before robust evidence of its success i.e. its benefits to the school, the school's population and the community, can be fully identified.
5. The Committee agreed to look at these 26 action plans in detail in order to try and gauge which elements within them had proved successful in addressing the challenges faced by schools, and which encouraged parents/carers and children to change their mode of transport to school – see copies at Annex A (*due to the size of this annex, it has not been included in the agenda for this meeting – a hard copy is available to view at CYC offices at the Guildhall, St Helens Square, York – contact Scrutiny Services for further information*).
6. As part of the process for developing a travel plan, a school invites parents and carers to contribute by completing a survey. The school is provided with a survey template by the STPC, which they can adapt to suit their individual needs – see example at Annex B. Some schools choose to only change the text shown in italics, others make more changes. The response data is analysed and a summary of the main points are incorporated into the school's travel plan. An extract from a travel plan showing an example of this analysis is attached at Annex C. The data gathered is considered in conjunction with mode of travel data and where possible, the resulting action plan includes activities which seek to address the concerns of those returning the completed surveys. It should be noted that schools usually need to offer incentives for the return of the surveys, and it is rare to get a high response rate.

7. **York Schools Without Travel Plans**

Only 4 York schools are currently without a travel plan:

- St Paul's Nursery School - Reason: Staff changes at the school and in the CYC Transport Planning Unit contributed to inaccurate record keeping in the past. Initially, records showed the school had a plan and this was the school staff's understanding but the document was inadequate by current standards. The intention is to work on the development of an updated plan in the coming academic year 2010/11
- Burnholme Community College - Reason: This has in the last 2 years successfully worked to avert its closure. The STPC respected the need for staff and pupils to prioritise this work and supported them in the developing their travel when they were able to prioritise their travel plan activity. The school has produced a first draft of the body of the plan and will work on surveys and the resultant action plan in the coming academic year 2010/11.
- Bootham Senior School - Reason: A travel plan is expected, as the school is planning building works which are likely to affect travel to the school. At this stage, it is not known when it will be submitted, but it is likely to be written by a consultant.
- Minster School - Reason: Since October 2009 a number of approaches have been made by phone and by e-mail to try and engage the school, without success. Contact has been temporarily suspended.

8. **School Travel Information Gathered From Recent Traffic Congestion Survey**

In early 2010, a city-wide residents survey was carried out as part of a scrutiny review on traffic congestion in York. 90,000 surveys were distributed and a total of 7292 completed surveys were returned - a response rate of 8%. A majority (6967) were completed and returned by post. The rest (325) were completed online. The data-processing was carried out by an independent research agency. A number of the key findings from that review are also relevant to this scrutiny review:

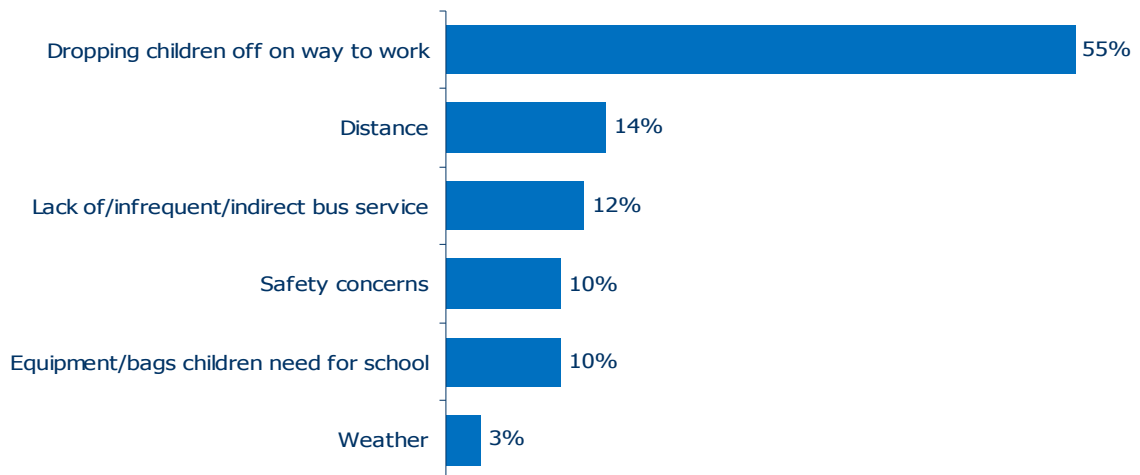
- Overall, the greatest proportion of respondents said the majority of their journey 'to work' was made by car
- Dropping children off on the way to work was overwhelming the most likely reason for respondents saying they travel by car for school/nursery journeys
- Car was the most likely form of transport used by residents to travel into and around York

- When looking at *just those who said they did not currently use buses* to travel into and around York, the top three specific reasons were cost, frequency of service and reliability
- When looking at *just those who said they did not currently use a bike* to travel into and around York, the top three specific reasons were not owning a bike, safety concerns and health problems/age
- When looking at *just those who said they did not currently travel on foot* to travel into and around York, the top three specific reasons were feeling it's too far to walk, it takes too long to walk and having to carry equipment/heavy bags

School & Nursery Journeys

- Out of all respondents, a minority of 8% said they regularly took children to school/nursery by car.
- Dropping children off on the way to work was overwhelming the most likely reason for respondents saying they travel by car for school/nursery journeys

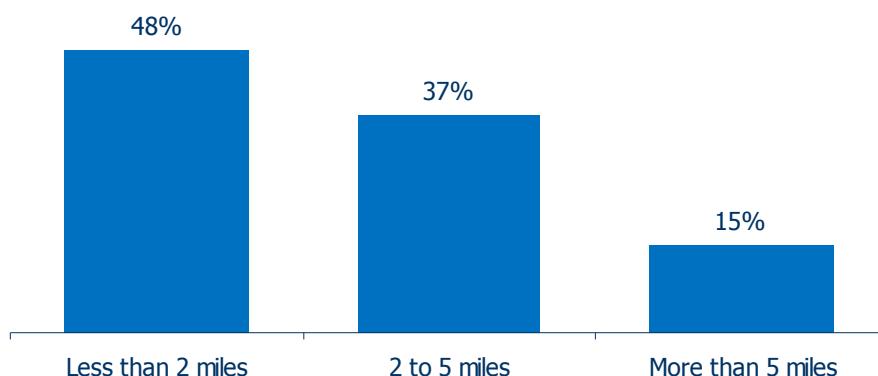
Q4a. Why do you travel by car for school/nursery journeys?



Base: 518 (respondents who regularly take children to school/nursery by car)

- Half (48%) of those that travel by car for school/nursery journeys have a journey of less than 2 miles to get there. Respondents were more likely to say they drive because they are dropping off children on the way to work than for any other reason.
- Those with longer journeys to school/nursery were more likely (more than 2 miles - 23% average) to say 'distance' was a reason for travelling by car than those with less than 2 miles to go (7%).

Q4a. And how far do you travel to school/nursery?



Base: 505 (respondents who regularly take children to school/nursery by car)

NB: Where responses did not add up to 100%, this was due to multiple coding (respondents could choose more than one option) or computer rounding.

9. Staff Travel

When developing a travel plan, schools are encouraged to survey their staff too – see example survey at Annex D. The surveying of school staff regarding travel to and from school (their work-place) is considered desirable rather than essential within the Department for Transport / Department of Education guidance (2007). However, where a plan is being submitted for planning purposes, a greater emphasis is placed on staff sustainable travel targets by council officers responsible for Development Control. Of the schools that the STPCs have worked with in the last 2.5 years, not all that surveyed parent/carers also surveyed their staff.

10. In support of the fourth objective of this review – ‘*Identifying any key messages for wider travel planning in York*’ - the Committee may wish to explore the issues pertaining to staff travel, by providing an opportunity for input by members of school staff and other significant adults. For example, some York schools have a School Travel Plan Working Group made up of parents, school crossing patrol personnel, designated school bus drivers and other members of staff. The Committee could choose to survey those members to find out :

- what has been their involvement since their school’s initial travel plan document was written?
- Are they actively involved in the delivery of the activities identified by their action plan?
- Are they happy with their current level of involvement?

11. Visits to Schools

As part of this review the Committee have agreed to carry out a number of site visits to schools selected from the list shown at paragraph 3. It was agreed to carry out 3 visits to schools with high performing travel plans and 3 visits to schools struggling

to achieve the actions within their travel plan. Officers from the Travel Planning Unit will be present at the meeting to assist members with identifying these.

12. Having identified which schools to visit, the Committee will need to allocate committee members to carry out each visit – two members per visit. On this basis, each member will be required to participate in two visits between Monday 18th and Thursday 21st October (Friday 22nd October is the last day before the half term break). The intention of these visits is to meet with those leading on the school's travel plan and to carry out a survey of parents/carers at the end of the school day. To support these visits, a letter for the chosen schools and a parent/carer survey have been drafted for Members consideration - see Annex E.
13. Secondary Schools
The issues faced by secondary schools developing travel plans are different from primary schools. Based on the proportion of secondary schools to primary schools in York (and the number of secondary school in the list at paragraph 3), it is suggested that at least 2 of the school visits be to secondary schools. It is recognised that this would present some difficulties for Members carrying out the survey part of the visit, as on the whole parents who collect their children from secondary schools do so from outside the school premises.
14. Taking this into consideration, and the fact that the approach suggested above will be compromised by the fact that not all parent/carers will be in attendance on the day of the planned visits, an alternative way forward would be to arrange with the nominated schools to send out/collect in the parent/carer survey in advance of the school visit by members of the committee. This will increase the chances of those parents/carers who would like to respond to the survey being able to do so. It would also have the advantage of giving members some information from parents/carers prior to visiting the school.
15. If a decision is taken to proceed with this alternative approach, the draft letter will need amending accordingly. It may also be more productive to coincide the visit to a secondary school with another timetabled school event that involves parents, in order to maximise the opportunity to gather evidence.

Options

16. Having considered the information within this report and its associated annexes, Members may choose to:
 - explore the issues pertaining to staff travel (as outlined in paragraph 10 above)
 - amend their agreed approach to carrying out the survey of parents/carers (in line with the alternative approach outlined in paragraph 14)
 - amend the draft letter to schools and draft parent/carer survey (shown at Annex E), in order that they can be sent issued

Recommendation

17. In light of the above options, Members are recommended to agree:

- i. The schools to be visited
- ii. Which Members will visit the chosen schools, and the date of each visit
- iii. Any amendments to the draft school letter and parent/carer survey
- iv. Any additional information required in support of the review for the meeting on 13 October 2010 (outside of that detailed in the workplan at paragraph 2)

Reason: To progress this review in line with scrutiny procedures and protocols

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Interim Report Approved



Date 26 August 2010

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes

Annex A – Actions Plans from most recent school travel plans

(due to the size of this annex, it has not been included in the agenda for this meeting – a hard copy is available to view at CYC offices at the Guildhall, St Helens Square, York – contact Scrutiny Services for further information.)

Annex B – Template of Travel Plan Parent/Carer Survey

Annex C – Extract from travel plan showing example of analysis

Annex D – Example of school staff survey

Annex E – Draft letter to school and draft parent/carer scrutiny survey