

School Travel Plans Scrutiny Review –Draft Final Report

Background to School Travel Plans

1. Over the last 20 years the proportion of children being driven to school has been gradually increasing with commensurate impacts on congestion, pollution, health and impacts on the wider environment. It was against this back drop that in 2003 the government of the day stated that:

“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.”¹

2. **What is a School Travel Plan?**

A School Travel Plan (STP) is a written document that outlines a series of practical steps for improving children’s safety on the journey to and from school and for reducing car use while increasing active travel to school, particularly walking and cycling. As part of the process for developing a travel plan a school should invite parents/carers, pupils and staff to contribute by completing a survey, in order to identify if there are any aspects of the journey where children (and adults) feel unsafe and/or uncomfortable which may present a barrier to walking or cycling. The data gathered is considered in conjunction with mode of travel data and where possible, the resulting action plan should include activities which seek to address the concerns of those returning the completed surveys. Without the support of the Head Teacher and staff, any travel plan is likely to be ineffective.

3. **Statutory Duties**

Local authorities have certain statutory duties relating to sustainable travel to school. The Education and Inspections Bill 2006 placed a general duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school. The key responsibilities placed on local authorities by the Bill are broken down into four main elements:

- An assessment of the travel and transport needs of children, and young people;
- An audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions;

¹ (p48, Traveling to School – A good practice guide, 2003)

- A strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for
 - The promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions
4. The same Bill places a responsibility on Local Authorities to include 'Mode of Travel to school' in the school census as this is a mandatory indicator in Local Transport Plans. All schools with an approved travel plan are required to submit their mode of travel data for all their pupils. The data is collected in the Autumn term and submitted with the January Census data. In York this data is used to monitor existing travel patterns and help identify schools with a potential to reduce car usage.
 5. In August 2007 the Department for Transport (DfT) issued an updated Advice Note giving information on a newly developed national minimum standard as a means of ensuring as far as possible, that the content and quality of an STP would ensure longevity, encourage ownership by the school, assist with the delivery of each of its specified objectives and targets, and generally be as effective as possible in bringing about long term change. In addition to the National Healthy Schools Standard criteria and other developments, the Advice Note also took into account changing government policies and priorities, including 'Every Child Matters', Extended Schools, the 14-19 Agenda, and the requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. From September 2007 the criteria by which an STP was considered was made considerably more rigorous, requiring partnership working and ensuring long term sustainability of the travel plan. As an incentive for producing an STP, the DfT provided funding which the school could apply once their STP had been completed. This funding was made available up to the end of March 2010.
 6. **Why target the journey to school?**
Nationally, some 20% of the peak time traffic comes from the school run. In York some 30% of primary school children are driven to school. This has obvious impacts on congestion, carbon emissions and air quality within the City as a whole and the safety of roads around school entrances. Locally this has an impact on journey times within the City such as on bus route timetables. For example, bus route No 10 from Stamford Bridge allows 1 hr 26 mins in term time but only 1 hr 3 mins during school holidays (between 0730 and 1000), that is an extra bus on the road to maintain a half hourly schedule. During school holidays, traffic volumes are noticeably lower.
 7. At the same time as car use for school journeys has been increasing, obesity rates amongst the population, and notably amongst school children, have also been increasing. While there may not be direct links between the two, tackling the school run and encouraging children to travel actively to school rather than by car can help with improving the overall health of children and the families that travel with them on the school journey.

8. **Key Drivers in York**

City of York Council (CYC) has set a target to reduce carbon emissions by 40% by 2020 and 80% by 2050. As the 'school run' contributes 20% of the vehicles on the road during term time, it is clear that by encouraging more walking and cycling to school, active travel to school can play an important part in reducing carbon emissions through transport and contribute to a low carbon lifestyle.

9. At present some 30% of primary school children and 6.2% of secondary school pupils in York are driven to school. In a previous Local Transport Plan report, CYC stated it would like the proportion of primary and secondary school children travelling to school by car reduced from a total of 18.6% of all children in 2008 to 15% by March 2011 and cycling rates increased from 6.9% to 13.4%. Nationally cycling accounts for approximately 2% of journeys to school and In York cycling accounts for approximately 7.5% of journeys to school. York's cycle city target is to increase cycling rates to 15%. Walking rates are to stay broadly the same.
10. New development in schools often impacts on the number of vehicles visiting a school. Such is the priority that York gives to encouraging sustainable travel to school, if there is a likelihood that any proposed development will impact on vehicle movements, schools will usually have to have an effective STP in place, as one of the planning conditions, within a set period following the opening of the school. This policy has been effective in encouraging schools to write a new travel plan or review existing plans.

Background to Scrutiny Review

11. In March 2010, Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) received a referral from the Economic & City Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ECDOS) in response to a scrutiny topic registered by Cllr Alexander. The referral raised concerns regarding the extent of the proposed topic and suggested that the topic should be more clearly defined and concentrated around the Safe Routes to School Programme and School Travel Plans (STP), with the suggestion that SMC establish a cross-cutting ad-hoc scrutiny committee to look at all the relevant issues.
12. Having received a presentation previously given to ECDOS, and information from officers on the work currently taking place with schools to address some of the ongoing issues, SMC agreed that a crosscutting ad-hoc scrutiny committee should be established to carry out the review.
13. In July 2010 this Committee met for the first time to receive a report on the current arrangements for school travel planning in York, and as a result agreed the following remit for the review:

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

- i. Understanding what works and what doesn't work in York, and best practice elsewhere.
- ii. Understanding the costs and challenges, in order to identify how the council, schools and their communities can do school travel planning better.
- iii. 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.
- iv. Identifying any key messages for wider travel planning in York.

Corporate Priorities

14. This scrutiny review supports a number of the themes within the Council's Corporate Strategy e.g. that the Council will make York a Healthy and more Sustainable City.

Options

15. Members can support all, some or none of the recommendations proposed as a result of this review, and shown at paragraphs 37, 56, 80 & 86 of this report, for submission to the Executive.

Consultation

16. In an effort to maximise the outcomes from this review, the Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee recognised they would need to work closely with others both inside and outside the authority. Officers from the council's Transport Planning Unit (TPU) provided support throughout the review and officers from Planning, Network Management and Development Control were consulted.
17. In addition, the Committee invited a representative from Sustrans² to attend a meeting to provide advice on national best practice, and members of the Committee visited a number of schools to meet with Head Teachers other members of staff responsible for school travel plans, and pupil representatives.

Objective (i) - Understanding what works and what doesn't work in York, and best practice elsewhere

Information Gathered

18. **National Initiatives & Best Practice**
In 2006, the Department for Transport commissioned a paper entitled 'Making School Travel Plans Work: Effects, Benefits and Success Factors at English Schools'. Many of the comments, observations and examples contained therein are still relevant – see Annex A.

² **Sustrans** - a leading UK charity working with families, communities, policy-makers and partner organisations to enable people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys they make every day. Their aim is to help people make healthier, cleaner and cheaper journeys, with better places and spaces to move through and live in.

19. The Regional School Travel Advisor also helped in identifying examples of national best practice across England, by using his network of regional contacts to draw together a paper entitled 'School Travel and Evidence data - Case Studies August 2010: A) Examples of LA wide mode shift improvements' – see Annex B.
20. The representative from Sustrans provided information on a range of national projects they have been behind e.g. the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, TravelSmart, Active Travel, Connect2 and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all of which were designed to change our world one mile at a time. Information on these and in particular, their 'Bike It' initiative (a national school cycling project which Teachers say has transformed their schools, making children more energised, alert and independent) can be found on their website at www.sustrans.org.uk
21. **Successful Initiatives & Best Practice In York**
The TPU looks for ways to encourage schools to develop active and sustainable travel initiatives. Those that prove most successful at encouraging sustainable travel to school are those in which the children themselves are motivated to take part.
22. In order to evidence successful initiatives undertaken by York schools, a cross sample of schools were contacted for more details of their activities. Information on a range of successful initiatives is detailed below:
23. **End to End – Virtual Race March 2010** - A virtual race organised by the Schools Group as part of the Cycle City project and in conjunction with the 'Bike It' officer. Of the 56 primary schools in York, 22 registered to compete in the virtual race, and of those 19 submitted regular cycle counts.
24. The competition started on 1st March 2010 and ran officially for two weeks. The first school to reach the finish line took eight school days. Some schools were still submitting cycle counts at 20 school days, showing that cycling numbers were still raised over the normal level once the competition had ceased. During the race the key points arising were:
 - the average daily cycling rate was 19.8% and the maximum daily cycling rate was 62.5% for the schools taking part
 - a total of 9,737 cycle journeys were made by pupils and staff at participating schools
 - the race generated an average of 532 new cycle journeys per day across all schools, over the 10 days of the event this amounts to approximately 5300 new cycle journeys.
 - The mean daily cycle count across all schools during the event showed an average 395% increase over pre-event cycle counts.
25. **Car Free Day** – This year Car Free Day took place on 13 October 2010. Unfortunately it rained heavily on the day but the take-up of free bus tickets was encouraging. A number of schools took part e.g. Fishergate Primary School and St George's Primary School ran cycle try out sessions which proved very successful. In addition, pupils watched a play entitled "What Happens when it Rains?" and pledge cards were issued.

26. **Jack Archer Award** - In the past, the award has been run as part of 'Walk to School Week' where schools encouraged their children to travel actively to school for the whole week. In October 2008, 23 schools took part in the Jack Archer Award and 17 in Walk to School Week. In 2009, of the 34 schools that registered to take part in Walk to School week, 17 took part in the Jack Archer Award.
27. The Award is now in its 7th year and this year it ran in the form of a virtual race from Eboracum via Rome and back to Eboracum via a number of key Roman sites. The intention of the race was to encourage schools to achieve very high levels of walking, cycling and scooting to school, with totals in excess of 80% or 90% (maximum 97%). The race took place between 27 September – 15 October 2010 and 20 schools registered to compete. Of those schools, 18 submitted regular walking, cycling, scooting or going by bus counts.
28. **Beauty and the Bike** - It is known that the numbers of girls cycling to Secondary school drops dramatically compared to those cycling to Primary school. In an effort to address this, a Sustrans led course (developed as part of the Cycling City programme) worked with 14 groups of years 6 and 7 girls (groups of 10) from around 10 schools. Three sessions explored the girls' attitudes to cycling, and their perceived barriers to cycling. It then moved on to building their confidence and overcoming those barriers, before helping them plan a route into the centre of York and then cycling it (accompanied by suitably trained adults). Feedback from the course was positive with girls saying that they are cycling more in their daily lives.
29. **Walking Buses** - A number of schools have tried to set up walking buses e.g.
- Woodthorpe has one, but they noted that once the original volunteers moved on it was difficult to recruit new, and those parents enthusiastic for a walking bus to start were not keen to actually help with the walking bus. The school now pays people to keep the walking bus running and has 10 children regularly using it.
 - St Lawrence's used to pay two people to run the walking bus as the school found that the bus helped attendance at school, but it discontinued some time ago as the school could no longer fund it.
 - Carr Junior School recently identified sufficient volunteers to run a walking bus, and they received appropriate training from CYC's Road Safety Team. The school is currently in the process of setting up a bus having identified pupils who would like to participate.
30. **Park and Stride** - Park and stride sites can be useful to encourage those who do drive to school to park away from the school, potentially making the road outside the school safer e.g.
- Our Lady's has had two sites - originally the school used Edmund Wilson baths but that closed. The school now uses the car parks at Acomb Rugby Club and the Acorn Pub. The school finds the sites generally work well apart from when the weather is bad.
 - Ralph Butterfield School set up a Park and Stride at Ethel Ward playing fields in Haxby. The site is working well and the school is monitoring its use.

31. **Cycle Ownership** - Members received information on a recent ward-funded project that had enabled young people to construct their own cycles and had taught them about cycle maintenance and road safety awareness. The project was supported by the Police and it was hoped that it would have benefits in terms of reducing anti-social behaviour. Recent statistics showed lower bicycle ownership levels than expected among children and adults.
32. **Car Sharing** - To enable schools to encourage car sharing, the TPU can carry out postcode plotting to show the areas from which pupils and staff are travelling. The different start and finishing times for primary and secondary schools mean that it is often more difficult to extend car sharing between the two phases, but such problems can be addressed through the provision of after-school clubs. Previously, a page had been funded on CarShare York by York's independent schools for their use but this ceased for financial reasons and because the level of use was low.

Issues Arising

33. Feedback from the schools visited as part of the work on this review, evidenced the benefits of participating in the initiatives supported by the Transport Planning Unit. The overall cost of carrying out the initiatives carried out this financial year and detailed in this report was £24,255, with £7,600 of that sum being provided by the council (includes one-off set up cost for 'Walk with Wilf' event of £3,800) and £16,655 from external sources such as Cycle City. The cost to council of carrying out the same initiatives in future years would therefore be £3,800. The ad-hoc scrutiny committee agreed that the benefits to the those schools and children choosing to participate in those initiatives far outweighed the minimal cost to the council.
34. **Staggered School Leaving Times** - Members considered the benefits of staggering school leaving times linked to a hierarchy of transport e.g. those that walk leave first, then cyclists, followed by those traveling by car. The Regional Transport Advisor has confirmed that he is unaware of any schools in this region using this approach and York's STPCs raised concerns that it was likely to prove unpopular as it could potentially be disruptive and difficult to police. However, elsewhere in the country variations on of this have been introduced but generally for safety reasons rather than rewarding sustainable travel choices e.g. Shropshire's largest high school in Oswestry introduced some improved cycle parking, and set up a bike permit/policy which allowed cyclists to leave the school first. This helped avoid conflict with moving cars as they left the school and onto the road.
35. **Forward Planning For Schools** – Although many schools have taken part in the various initiatives, they regularly comment that given sufficient notice of future initiatives (e.g. half a term before the initiative is to be run) it would enable them to build them into the curriculum planning thereby encouraging more pupils to participate. For this to happen it would require the involvement of all the relevant CYC Services at an earlier stage than currently happens and for the associated decisions to be taken sooner e.g. seeking permission for road closures etc.

36. **Transition from Primary to Secondary School** – It was noted that many of the initiatives were targeted at primary schools and that different strategies were needed at secondary age level. Also, the distances from home to secondary school were often further than to primary school and that journeys were likely to be disparate. The introduction of diplomas would also result in some pupils attending a different school for some subjects and hence consideration would need to be given to their travel arrangements. Members queried whether more could be done in respect of the transition from primary to secondary school for example by instigating tutor-led cycling routes or encouraging pupils to cycle or walk on the induction days that were held.

Proposed Review Recommendations

37. Having considered all the issues relating to objective (i), Members identified the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1	Improve collaborative working across service areas and Directorates to allow for improved forward planning in Schools
Recommendation 2	Include in best practice guide for schools - 'encourage year 6 pupils to cycle/walk to secondary schools on induction days to build pupil/parent confidence, in time for starting at secondary school' (Linked to recommendation 10)
Recommendation 3	Instruct officers to investigate sources of sustainable funding for initiatives and incentives for future financial years

Objective (ii) - Understanding the costs and challenges, in order to identify how the council, schools and their communities can do school travel planning better

Information Gathered

38. **Cost of Delivering School Travel Plans**
 Since 2004 the Government has financed the initiative to deliver STPs in all of the nation's schools, and a target was set for all Local Authorities (LAs) that 100% of schools should have an STP by March 2010. During that time, the onus has been on LAs to deliver and promote STPs, not on the schools themselves which is why some schools still do not have one. In York this money has funded one full time equivalent member of staff (usually, as at present, two members of staff on a job-share basis).
39. For 2010/11, the area based grant was reduced by 25%. Government funding is set to continue until March 2011 but for 2011/12 the Council currently has no indication as to whether central government will continue to fund this area of work.

Following the Comprehensive Spending Review, it is anticipated that York's area based grant will be reduced but it will not be possible to ascertain the final position until the Local Government Settlement is received in early December 2010.

40. **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 surveys were returned - a response rate of 8%. The information gathered showed that:

- a minority of 8% said they regularly took children to school/nursery by car.
- Half (48%) of those that travelled by car for school/nursery journeys had a journey of less than 2 miles to get there.
- Those with longer journeys to school/nursery (more than 2 miles - 23% average) were more likely to say 'distance' was a reason for travelling by car than those with less than 2 miles to go (7%).
- The lack of buses, or indirect bus routes, had some influence on respondents' decisions to drive to schools/nurseries.
- Dropping children off on the way to work was overwhelmingly the most likely reason for taking children to school/nursery by car (55%)
- Those respondents who said they drop children off at school or nursery on their way to work were generally travelling a longer distance to work, particularly across York.

Distance travelling to work for those respondents who drop children off at school or nursery on their way to work	
Into York city centre (less than 2 miles from home)	9 %
Into York city centre (2 to 5 miles from home)	27 %
Into York city centre (more than 5 miles from home)	12 %
Across York (less than 2 miles from home)	6 %
Across York (2 to 5 miles from home)	21 %
Across York (more than 5 mile from home)	25 %

41. **Parking Enforcement Around Schools**

City Strategy Directorate is responsible for the establishment of relevant parking policies and Network Management draw up and implement the necessary Traffic Management Orders relating to those policies.

42. Communities & Neighbourhoods Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) undertake the enforcement of parking restrictions throughout the city, including outside schools where enforceable parking restrictions have been made.
43. Parking restrictions are applicable to 38 schools in the local authority area - 7 of these relate to yellow lines only and 31 relate to restricted parking signs/zigzags. Many of the complaints relating to parking outside of schools come from neighbours. Others reflect the concerns of parents and pupils who are worried about their personal safety outside schools as pedestrians/cyclists. Many schools have made considerable efforts to address these issues. In some cases the

introduction of yellow lines has resulted in the problems occurring further away from the school.

44. Specific scheduled schools patrols are carried out in relation to the 38 schools. These are scheduled at 2 patrols per week given current resources and duties of CEOs. Additional enforcement patrols and responses to parking hotline calls relating to particular problems are also carried out. In 2009/10 the average number of specific school patrols was between 3 and 4 per week.
45. There are 22 CEOs who cover the city between 7.45 am and 9.30 pm (7 days a week) working in shifts to cover those hours. In effect this means that Monday to Friday, the early shift will be comprised of a maximum of 8-10 CEOs and the late shift a maximum of 6 CEOs at anyone time. Any increase in the number of schools with enforceable parking restrictions could not be accommodated in terms of current enforcement resources and duties. Civil Enforcement Officers are required to wear a uniform and hence their presence also acts as a deterrent.
46. The allocation of resources is operated on a risk management basis. The hot-line telephone number has been publicised and a rapid response is possible using the motorbike team. Last year 30 Penalty Charge Notices were issued around York schools which is a higher number than some other authorities. Other strategies had proved effective in other parts of the country. For example, Bournemouth and Medway had invested in vehicles using CCTV recording equipment. The cost of providing a CCTV vehicle and the necessary staffing is between £50,000 and £100,000.
47. **Planning & Development Control**
Schools will often submit their STP in support of a planning application depending on the scale of the project and the resulting increase to the numbers visiting the school site e.g. the addition of a Nursery or a Children's Centre. In York, when a travel plan is submitted as part of a planning application for a new school e.g. Joseph Rowntree Secondary School, the planning officer would normally forward it to the Council's highways officers for comment before accepting it as fit for purpose. In some cases revisions are required to satisfy the highway requirements. This would not involve the planner judging the acceptability of the travel plan or checking it against any government criteria, but relying on the highway team to do so. In many cases, the highway team will also consult with the Transport Planning Unit. In some cases e.g. English Martyrs, a travel plan was submitted with their planning application and this resulted in adherence to the plan becoming a condition of the planning consent.
48. In support of the planning application for the new build at Joseph Rowntrees School a Framework Travel Plan document was produced, based on the future predicted requirements of the school and community. Planning consent was granted with a condition that following the opening of the new school, a full Travel Plan would be produced following full consultation with the new school community and all the relevant parties. This approach worked well due to the collaborative efforts of the education planning team and the TPU.
49. In the case of both schools given as examples in paragraph 46 above, their STPs were developed in conjunction with a School Travel Plan Coordinator. This is not always the case. In other instances work on an STP has commenced in support

of a planning application, but having had planning permission granted (with a condition that the travel plan be completed and implemented) work on the travel plan has ceased and the condition has not been enforced.

Issues Arising

50. **Achieving A Modal Shift In Transport to School** – Members recognised that pressures on time may be a key factor for parents in deciding whether to take their child to school by car as part of their journey to work. They agreed that efforts should be focussed on achieving a modal shift in those parents who were travelling less than 2 miles for walking from home to work, and 5 miles for cycling.
51. Members also recognised that cycle ownership may be an important factor and that when some children outgrew the cycle they used at primary school they may not have access to an adult size cycle. It was suggested that consideration could be given to offering a cycling allowance to pupils who were eligible for free transport to schools. This option has recently been pursued by Hull City Council, who have agreed a pilot voucher cycle scheme for the purchase of cycle; helmet; front and rear lights; set of batteries for lights; high visibility vest; cycle pump (voucher value - £270). They have made the purchase of those safety accessories compulsory and have informed retailers, accordingly. They have also made it compulsory that each child taking part in the scheme must be cycle trained to national standard cycle training level 3. – see further information at Annex C.
52. **Parking Enforcement** – Members queried whether the amount of time allocated to the enforcement of traffic/parking regulations by the CEOs outside schools was sufficient. They also queried whether other authorities near York were using CCTV vehicles and if they could be shared or, if it there was a possibility of hiring a vehicle for a period of time, preferably at the beginning of a new school year to discourage parents from using their cars.
53. **Development Control** - Members raised concerns that some of the STPs used in support of planning applications may not meet the DfT's national minimum standards. Meeting this criteria had previously allowed schools to access funding (up to March 2010), however as this funding is no longer available there is no longer the incentive on schools to have their travel plan adhere to that criteria. The committee suggested that in order to achieve an acceptable standard in school travel planning across the city, that same criteria could be set as the minimum standard required in York for a travel plan used in support of a planning application.
54. **Planning Enforcement** - Members recognised that the monitoring of the implementation of conditions relating to STPs is an issue and expressed concern that schools were not subject to the same enforcement procedures as private individuals or businesses. Members agreed that whilst it was appropriate for the council to seek to resolve travel plan issues directly with schools, it was also important that enforcement measures were implemented if necessary. However, advice from Legal Services suggested that the council could not enforce against itself and therefore this was a clear management issue. Where there are issues between departments then dialogue between senior management of the respective sections should take place before formal enforcement becomes necessary. The committee were informed of some planning cases, where

breaches of control on Council owned property had been resolved within the Authority through discussion between the relevant Directorates.

55. **School Crossing Patrol Officers** – Members noted the difficulties that arose in recruiting school crossing patrol officers. They were pleased to see there had recently been some success in recruitment, but recognised that staff turnover meant that the issues in respect of recruitment were ongoing.

Proposed Review Recommendations

56. Having considered all the issues relating to objective (ii), Members identified the following recommendations:

Recommendation 4	Instruct officers to investigate the introduction of a 'one-off' cycle allowance for use in purchasing a bicycle and equipment and/or a loan scheme for bicycles and equipment, in place of free bus travel for those that want it and are eligible
Recommendation 5	Reprioritise the work of Civil Enforcement Officers to allow for an increase in the amount of time they can spend enforcing the parking restrictions outside schools
Recommendation 6	Instruct Communities & Neighbourhoods Parking Services to investigate and provide future report to the Executive on the use of a CCTV car and sharing the costs with other local authorities and/or public agencies
Recommendation 7	Investigate the wording of planning conditions used to secure School Travel Plans (STPs) to ensure that it is as effective as possible including a requirement that the submitted Travel Plan should be in line with the relevant government office guidance in force at the time, as a minimum standard
Recommendation 8	Identify a clear strategy for resolving inter-directorate issues to ensure enforcement of conditions of planning consent relating to STPs

Objective (iii) - 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.

Information Gathered

57. **Introduction of STPs in York**

Prior to the introduction of the DfT's national minimum standards in September 2007, 53 York schools (69.7% of York's 76 maintained and Independent schools) delivered travel plans. Since that time, 19 schools (25%) have delivered to the new standards.

58. A travel plan tends to have a lifespan of around 3 – 4 years and it takes approximately two years to ascertain if the long term benefits to the school, its population and the community are being sustained. That is not to say that the impact of a travel plan is not evident much sooner e.g. at York High School there was a visible decrease in car use following the introduction of their plan. In some cases the initial success eventually plateaus, hence it is important to maintain the momentum.

59. Of the 8 schools who completed their first travel plan in 2009, the 2010 Annual Census showed that 5 had increases in walking of between 3% and 9% and decreases in car use between 2% and 5%, and one school showed a very slight shift to sustainable travel. Two schools showed increases in car use of around 2%, one of which re-engaged to actively promote sustainable travel. However, those statistics must be placed within the context of the varying school sizes i.e. a shift of 2% within a school of 120 children accounts for 2-3 children.

60. There are currently 4 York schools without travel plans as shown below, all of which are expected to deliver by March 2011:

- **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.
- **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.

61. **Role of School Travel Plan Coordinator**

A School Travel Plan Coordinator (STPC) works with schools to identify their main

school travel related issues. While some issues will be unique to a particular school, others are common to many. The STPC will:

- Help a school to establish a School Travel Plan Working Group comprising of representatives from the school community
 - provide advice and guidance to working groups with the aim of drawing up an action plan that identifies solutions to the key issues
 - support them in analysing the travel to school data so that realistic mode of travel targets accompany the action plan
 - Act as a key link between schools and various Council departments to ensure new school developments have a suitable School Travel Plan in place e.g. with Planning, School Transport/Education Access teams, Parking Services and Road Safety - this role is likely to be more important if there is an increase in the number of 'Academy' schools where the level of contact between the Council and schools could be reduced.
 - work with the council's Engineering Consultancy to develop 'Safe Routes to School' schemes which help improve conditions on the main walking and cycling routes to school e.g. cutting back vegetation to improve visibility or identifying improvements to footways, provision of crossing facilities or traffic calming to improve road safety
62. An STPC also works to demonstrate how sustainable and active travel to school relates to the delivery of a number of other initiatives that schools are involved in e.g. the 'Healthy Schools' agenda, the 'Sustainable Schools' agenda and a number of other initiatives as follows:
63. **Healthy Schools** - specifically tackling childhood (and family) obesity. In York, over 80% of schools have now achieved 'Healthy School' status. To gain that award schools must satisfy a huge range of criteria, including having an up to date school travel plan. When a school is under review for the Award, the Healthy Schools coordinator will advise if they think the school's travel plan needs updating. Collaborative working means that schools needing their travel plans updating are identified and supported in a timely manner.
64. **Sustainable Schools** - A Sustainable School is one that puts sustainability at the heart of the school culture. As outlined in the Department for Children, Schools and Families 'Sustainable Schools Initiative'; there are eight 'doorways' which allow schools to take an holistic approach to minimising their carbon emissions and reducing their environmental impact. These doorways look at such topics as waste, energy and water, and travel and traffic. Health is taken seriously and pupils are encouraged to travel in a sustainable manner to school. Therefore for a school to be a Sustainable School, it should have a recent and active STP.
65. Finally, an STPC will work with schools to help them identify future travel planning priorities and work with others both inside and outside the authority, to strengthen current partnerships and develop new strategic alliances.
66. **Monitoring/Reviewing STPs**
Until March 2010, the work of York's STPCs was focussed on encouraging schools without a travel plan to write one. Since the current post holders have been in place, they have supported the production of 26 school travel plans (each containing an action plan), and 95% of York schools now have an STP in place.

As York has only 1 FTE this has left little opportunity for more formal reviews of travel plans other than for planning purposes or at the school's request. For a period spanning 2006 – Jan 2008 the role was either staffed by 0.5 FTE or not at all.

67. In order to allow schools to adapt to the changing environment in which they function, the travel planning process needs revisiting on a regular basis. And, taking into account that a travel plan needs to have been reviewed in the last 3 years to meet the requirements of the Healthy Schools annual review, those produced pre 2007 are now in need of updating.
68. In an effort to gauge which elements had proved successful and to determine the specific impact the school travel plans (in isolation from other measures) have had on encouraging a shift to sustainable modes, the committee decided to look at the 26 most recent action plans in detail. Feedback from those schools identifying best practice is shown at Annex D.
69. **Visits to Schools**
To understand what is working in York schools, members of the Committee agreed to carry out visits to 3 schools with high performing travel plans and 3 schools struggling to achieve the actions within their travel plan. A cross section of schools to include Primary, Secondary and Faith schools were visited and Members went armed with a number of agreed questions for the Head Teacher, staff member (and/or Governor) leading on their action plan, and pupil representatives. The findings from these visits (carried out between 18 October and 4 November 2010) are shown at Annex E.
70. **Future of STPCs In York**
In common with all other local authorities, York is proceeding with the design of its third local transport plan to be implemented from April 2011. The plan is intended to shape transport policy for the next twenty years with an action plan which will set specific, deliverable, objectives for 2011-2014/16. All current indications suggest that this delivery will be within the context of a greatly reduced Capital budget, meaning there will be reduced funding for infrastructural schemes.
71. All of the problems facing our schools and communities: congestion, parking, obesity, etc, will still need to be addressed, and 'Influencing Travel Behaviour' is likely to be high up the coalition government's agenda as it looks for low cost schemes and initiatives demonstrating value for money.
72. If the Council is committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 40% by 2020 (per the pledge made in its Carbon Action Plan), it is difficult to see how this will be achieved without the necessary partnerships with schools and businesses required to influence travel behaviour.
73. **Information Made Available On Council Website**
The Transport Planning Unit currently provide the following information on the council's website:
 - An introduction to travel plans and the council's draft Sustainable Travel to Schools Strategy
 - Information on Walking Buses

- Instructions on how to write a school travel plan and template
 - Links to external resources
 - Contact details for the Transport Planning Unit
74. In addition, The Adults, Children & Education Directorate are currently developing a portal for schools which will contain not only the current school travel information on the council's website, but more comprehensive information including material from the council's Road Safety Team. The aim is to provide a full package of information so that should the role of School Travel Plan Coordinators be lost due to lack of funding or re-organisation, then schools will still have a readily accessible source to help them with sustainable and healthy travel to school.

Issues Arising

75. **Feedback From School Visits** – Members were generally encouraged by the feedback from their visits to schools. However, they recognised that schools continue to need the level of support and encouragement currently being received from the STPCs to ensure their involvement in initiatives, and the continuation of their implementation of their travel plans - particularly as not all schools have an individual (Travel Plan Champion) who is committed to keeping the momentum going.
76. **Retaining & Widening the Role of STPCs** – In recognising that the current area based grant used to fund the STPC post will cease at the end of March 2011, and at a time when resources are become increasingly scarce, the Committee recognised that the future of York's STPCs may well be in question. However they also recognised the knowledge, skills and expertise of the post holders and that there was still a central need for retaining the post in order that schools continue to receive encouragement and support to develop, review and progress their School Travel Plans. The fact that many of York's STPs are ready for renewal, indicates there is still sufficient work for the post holders to warrant the funding of the post for another financial year (see paragraphs 36 & 37). During which time, their work could focus on identifying a framework for schools to review and monitor their own STP and supporting the first schools through that process. The Committee also agreed it may be possible to widen the STPC role to work with schools within the context of the wider community, for instance working with local businesses to understand how parents can walk their children to school then continue to walk, cycle or take the bus to their place of work.
77. **Quality of STPs** - Overall, the Committee recognised the lack of consistency in York's STPs, and that regardless of how good a travel plan is when written, it's success can usually be attributed to the enthusiasm of a particular member of staff, who backed by a supportive Head Teacher, is prepared to put in significant effort to encourage walking and cycling to school and work with a school travel adviser where appropriate to achieve results. The School Travel Plan Coordinators usually become aware of these individuals (Travel Plan Champions) when they contact the Transport Planning Unit for support and ideas.
78. In considering the 26 action plans in detail, Members noted they were variable in quality, and suggested a standard template may assist schools in this regard.

79. In addition, although some schools had involved their Governors in the drawing up and implementation of their travel plans, this was not the case in the majority of schools. The Committee felt this approach should be encouraged.

Proposed Review Recommendations

80. Having considered all the issues relating to objective (iii), Members identified the following recommendations:

Recommendation 9	Include in best practice guide for school 'that a Travel Plan Champion be identified within the school' (Linked to recommendation 10)
Recommendation 10	<p>Transport Planning Unit to develop and issue a best practice guide for York schools, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a toolbox of measures for schools to pick and choose from when producing/revising their STP • promotion of the involvement of all relevant parties i.e. governors, parents, children and staff champions • Information on what has previously proved successful in York and what has not, to inform school's choices (in support of objective (i)) • a school travel plan template
Recommendation 11	<p>To support the work of the Transport Planning Unit, the following to be made available online via the forthcoming schools portal (referred to in paragraph 73 above):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Practice Guide (see Recommendation 10) • exemplar School Travel Plan
Recommendation 12	Identify framework for reviewing and monitoring STPs
Recommendation 13	Recognise the value of the work and transferable skills of STPCs through the forthcoming budget process to ensure the continuation of the post for the year 2011/12

Objective (iv) - Identifying any key messages for wider travel planning in York

Information Gathered

81. Staff Travel

In support of the fourth objective of this review, the Committee considered the issue of staff travel. When developing a travel plan, schools are encouraged to survey their staff too even though the surveying of school staff regarding travel to and from school (their work-place) is only considered desirable rather than essential within the Department of 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.

82. Contribution to Childhood Health and Obesity Levels

In York, health, and in particular obesity, has been targeted in its Local Area Agreement as an area for action. In particular, NI 56 targets children in year 6, with some 15% of York 10/11yr old children currently classed as obese. The same document highlights that adults over 16 years old should be taking 30 minutes exercise 5 times weekly and that children should be taking at least 60 minutes moderate activity each day.

83. Many parents of primary school age accompany their children to school. A not insignificant number will drive their children to school thinking that it is quicker when often it is just as quick to walk or cycle without the added inconvenience of finding a parking spot. The easiest way of getting exercise is widely recognised as by building it into the daily routine. By walking or cycling with their children to school, the accompanying adults will be able to get some or even all of their daily recommended exercise from the journey to school. In addition children will be getting some of their 60 minutes activity time, again as part of their daily routine. When children were surveyed for the 2009 school census, we found that many of the primary school children who are driven to school would actually prefer to walk or cycle. It tends to be the common assumption that those who travel actively are fitter, healthier and leaner than those who travel by mechanised transport. A survey of a number of scientific journeys showed that:

- Children who cycled were fitter than those who walked or went by car or bus;
- Car users were the least fit, less than bus users;
- Children who travel actively to school:
 - Had higher weekly levels of activity than those who did not
 - Were more likely to be active in other aspects of their lives
 - May have a lower BMI

Issues Arising

84. The Committee noted that of the schools that the STPCs have worked with in the last 2.5 years, not all that had surveyed parent/carers had also surveyed their staff. The Committee agreed that all schools should be encouraged to do so, in an effort to address the city's wider travel planning issues. Also, more could be done to encourage schools to enable input by members of school staff and other significant adults e.g. 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.

85. To reduce parents perceptions of the dangers associated with walking and cycling, Members recognised the benefits of promoting 'safe routes to school' and queried whether parents and schools could be given access via the council's website to information on safe routes or links to external sites providing that information. It was suggested that this could be done via the new Education portal by either allowing parents to submit an online request for the information or by accessing the relevant software direct (GIS mapping system used in support of school admissions). It was recognised that the software may need to be adapted to make it fit for purpose.

Proposed Review Recommendations

86. Having considered all the issues relating to objective (iv), Members identified the following recommendations:

Recommendation 14	Promote safe routes to school through schools and Best Practice Guide (see Recommendation10)
Recommendation 15	Provide access to information on safe routes to school (or links to external sites providing that information) via the new Education Portal
Recommendation 16	Increase publicity by emphasising within existing/future schemes the health benefits of walking and cycling

Implications Associated with Review Recommendations

87. **Human Resources (HR)** – Producing a Best Practice Guide, developing a framework for reviewing and monitoring STPs, and feeding into the Transport Planning Unit content for the new Education portal will have an effect on the existing workload of the STPCs (see Recommendations 10, 11 & 12).
88. **Financial** - There will be a cost to the council associated with Recommendations 3 & 13. In regard to Recommendation 3, small amounts of budget have been identified from elsewhere to finance incentives for previous initiatives and the recommendation is that this needs now to be done on a more formal footing.
89. In regard to Recommendation 4, the idea of moving pupils from buses to bikes is something that the Access & Community Transport Team would support in principle and there are good examples of where this type of approach could be trialed. However, the current position in York (based on 09/10 data) is that 1632 pupils are transported by dedicated contracted home to school bus/coaches. This means the Access & Community Transport Team do not purchase individual passes but contract a number of vehicles to transport these pupils on a day to day basis. Moving these pupils to bicycles would mean the Access & Community Transport Team purchasing a bicycle voucher but not necessarily reducing the

number of contracted vehicles. So this may mean rather than reducing costs it could result in an increase in costs.

90. Potential savings could be made for the 411 pupils that the Access & Community Transport Team currently buy bus passes for (from the likes of First, & Pullman etc). By moving these pupils to bicycles, it would reduce the cost as a bicycle voucher would be cheaper than a bus pass. We currently spend about £151k a year on bus passes. (The average cost per child per year of being transported on a dedicated home to school transport bus or being provided with a bus pass to travel on a public service route to a mainstream school is £495).
91. To make it financially viable to the council, there may need to be a minimum period set before pupils could go back to a bus pass, say 12 months or 24 months. There may also be a financial impact in regard to the administration of any scheme and staff training, and this would need to be identified as part of the investigation work, should the recommendation be approved.
92. In summary, in recognising that any modal shift to cycling could generate savings over several years, the Access & Community Transport Team have confirmed they would welcome the opportunity to investigate the proposal further..
93. **Equalities** – A mechanism will need to be identified that enables individuals to request information provided by the Transport Planning Unit via the Education Portal, in alternative formats subject to their individual needs. The information provided by the Transport Planning Unit will also need to be made accessible for parents who have no access to the internet.
94. **Legal** – Any legal issues related to the introduction of a Bicycle Voucher/Loan scheme would be identified as part of the investigative work undertaken, should Recommendation 4 be approved.

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Interim Report Approved



Date

25 October 2010

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annexes

Annex A – DfT Paper - 'Making School Travel Plans Work: Effects, Benefits and Success Factors at English Schools'

Annex B – 'School Travel and Evidence data - Case Studies August 2010: A) Examples of LA wide mode shift improvements'

Annex C – Information on Pilot Cycle Voucher Scheme from Hull City Council

Annex D – Examples of Best Practice in York

Annex E – Feedback from School Visits

Ad-hoc Scrutiny Committee Members

Councillor R. Potter (Chair)

Councillor K. Aspden

Councillor J. Brooks

Councillor A. D'Agorne

Councillor P. Firth

Councillor D. Merrett