

MAKING SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS WORK: EFFECTS, BENEFITS AND SUCCESS FACTORS AT ENGLISH SCHOOLS

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*This paper reports on study findings which are currently being finalised
in consultation with the UK Department for Transport.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In June 2003, the UK Department for Transport commissioned Transport 2000 Trust, in collaboration with University College London, Adrian Davis Associates, Sustrans, Cleary Hughes Associates and Transport for Quality of Life, to investigate English school travel planning.

The study aimed to identify what individual schools had achieved; what factors were important in determining achievement; and what constituted successful local authority strategy for promoting and supporting school travel work. This paper reports on the main findings about school achievements. The findings about local authority strategy, and the detailed evidence and references for the findings reported here, are given in full in Cairns and Newson (forthcoming).

This research also forms the basis for forthcoming good practice guidance for local authorities about how to work effectively with schools to promote more sustainable, safer and healthier patterns of travel. The new guidance will be entitled *Making school travel plans work*, and will replace *School Travel Strategies and Plans*, the previous UK Department for Transport guidance on the topic, issued in 1999. It will also complement other materials on school travel that are available in the UK.

As the title of this paper suggests, the findings reported here have largely been derived from experience in English schools. However, it seems probable that many of the factors identified as being relevant to achieving and supporting more sustainable travel to school would also be relevant in other contexts. Unfortunately, a full review of the international literature was beyond the scope of the project.

2. METHODOLOGY

In undertaking this study, information was obtained from a number of sources. These included:

- A review of UK literature
- A trawl for nominations of schools which had been involved in effective school travel work (145 recommendations received)

- A selection survey of nominated schools (111 replies received)
- A follow-up survey of 30 'pioneer' schools interviewed for previous UK Department for Transport guidance in 1999
- Information about individual schools supplied by the DfES

These sources were used to identify particular case studies, leading to:

- In-depth interviews with 30 case study schools, chosen to exemplify good practice in school travel work and to be as representative as possible of the range of English school types and catchment areas.
- In-depth interviews with the 23 local authorities associated with the case study schools.

In addition, the study was informed by:

- A chaired debate and survey of attendees at a UK LAST (Local Authorities School Travel forum) event investigating particular strategic issues.
- Further interviews with key strategic players involved in school travel.
- A desk assessment of funding sources available for school travel work.

The main research phase of the study was completed between the summers of 2003 and 2004.

3. CONTEXT

Issues about school travel were raised in the mid 1980s, generated by concerns about accident risk to children and curtailment of children's independent mobility. A successful project to address these issues in the Danish city of Odense led on to UK work on 'safe routes to schools' projects in the mid 1990s. In 1998, work on school travel became a mainstream part of UK transport policy. The concept of a 'school travel plan' became the focus, incorporating health and modal shift objectives as well as safety goals, and focusing on work within schools as well as infrastructure improvements. Many authorities started working on the issue. In September 2003, a major new initiative on school travel was launched jointly by the UK Departments for Transport and Education. This has included new funding for school travel work. It was accompanied by new legislation, and aims for all schools to introduce a travel plan before the end of the decade. Meanwhile, over the last 15 years, the proportion of children (aged 5-16) that travel to school by car has nearly doubled. Originally, the growth in car use was highest among secondary school children (aged 11-16), although, recently, car use growth has been more significant at primary level (pupils aged 5-10). There are some indications that the overall growth in car use is now stabilising. Work on attitudes has shown that both parents and pupils would often prefer not to drive, but do not always feel that they have an alternative, and that solutions will often need to be multi-faceted. Meanwhile, there is a growing body of evidence about the impacts of school travel initiatives on children's safety, modal choices and health, which mostly shows positive results.

4. SCHOOL TRAVEL ACHIEVEMENTS

4.1 Modal shift

The 30 case study schools were partly chosen because they had some data about children's travel habits, which was carefully audited during the research process. The results were as follows:

- At 28 schools with data about how total car use had changed over time, (representing 17,800 pupils), the weighted average reduction in car use was 23%. Half of these schools had reduced total car use by at least 20%, and there were 2 schools where total car use had more than halved.
- At 20 of the case study schools, walking had increased, with over 70% of pupils walking to 2 of the schools at the time of latest monitoring. At 5 schools, walking had increased by more than 50%.
- At 28 schools with data about how cycling had changed over time (representing 17,790 pupils) cycling had, on average, grown by over a quarter, such that 10% of all pupils were cycling to school. At one primary, nearly 40% of pupils were cycling whilst, at one secondary, as many as two-thirds of pupils had cycled to school at some point.
- Buses had been successfully promoted at both junior and secondary schools, and train use had increased at a number of secondaries. There were 2 secondaries where over 60% of pupils were coming by bus or train, and one where nearly a third of the pupils had been persuaded to start travelling in this way by school travel work.

The results from the case study schools complemented information received from local authorities about the impacts of their work, which related to schools at varying stages of developing school travel initiatives. These data showed that, when local authorities engage with schools that are happy to be involved, not all schools will reduce car use. However, a high proportion (60-90%) will, and a significant percentage (15-40%) can be expected to reduce car use by more than 20%. This implies that the overall effect of local authority work with schools is likely to be reduction in school run car use in the order of 8-15% (assuming that there are no countervailing influences like changes in bus provision). Higher performing schools tend to be those engaged in more intensive and/or extensive travel work. There were also available data suggesting that promotional programmes aiming to involve large numbers of schools (such as walking incentive schemes or Walk to School week) can have significant effects on travel habits. Some local authorities were starting to address school and commuting travel jointly, given the links between school and work travel. In the past, local authority monitoring of travel habits has been variable, although new Government requirements should result in more consistent data collection.

The findings reported above are consistent with the literature, which also highlights that, for positive modal shift, school travel initiatives need to have been in place for a sufficiently long time, properly marketed and intended to reduce car use. Specifically identifying the key factors which determine the impacts of school travel work on modal shift was one of the main aims of this research work, and the overall findings are discussed in subsequent sections.

4.2 Safety improvements

Although improving safety is often a key motivation for undertaking school travel work, safety benefits can be relatively difficult to measure. Several schools felt that maintaining their existing 'zero accidents' record constituted success. At the majority of the case study schools, interviewees felt that parents perceived travel to school had become safer since the start of work, and conditions for children walking from within one mile had usually objectively improved. Several schools also mentioned that pupils' road safety skills had increased as a result of school travel initiatives.

Local authorities also reported data about safety improvements. At Wilbury Junior School in Hertfordshire, the number of the injury accidents occurring around the school had reduced from 7 to 0 (comparing accident records three years before and after work). In York, a programme of building school safety zones around primary schools had halved the number of accidents that Year 5/6 pupils reported they were involved in. Both Hertfordshire and Greater Nottingham reported substantial accident reductions on the school journey (respectively, a 25% reduction in all child casualties and a 31% reduction in child pedestrian casualties) which may partly be due to their school travel work. Analysis in Surrey showed that 50% of their child casualties occurred at school journey times during term time and 21% occurred within 200m of a school gate, providing a mandate for their work in this area. Meanwhile, literature about projects in Leicester, Hull and Gloucester has reported on evidence demonstrating that safer infrastructure can have significant effects on child safety.

4.3 Health benefits

Over a third of the case study schools mentioned health and fitness gains from travel work, including raising awareness of these issues, exercise benefits from walking and cycling and the potential to address weight and obesity problems. At one school, Kesgrave High, high levels of cycling were considered to be linked with high levels of sporting success. Hertfordshire had been involved in a major research study showing that a typical walking trip to school used over twice as many calories as a typical school car journey (48 versus 18 calories) and that, on average, children used more calories travelling to and from school per week than they used in 2 hours of PE.

4.4 Other benefits

Other benefits reported from school travel work were as follows.

- **Reduced congestion at the school gate:** 25 schools reported that there had been a reduction in congestion outside the school gates, and this was often associated with safety improvements, encouraging modal shift and better relations with local residents.
- **Improvements in attendance and punctuality:** At one school, Park Brow Community Primary, the number of children arriving late had dropped from 40-50 to about 10 per day, following the introduction of walking buses, and

significant improvements had been observed in at least 3 children with major behaviour problems.

- **General educational gains:** Teachers reported the children were more alert and ready to learn when they did not come to school by car, which was partly attributed to opportunities to burn off excess energy and talk to friends on their journey. At some schools, travel work had been commended by OFSTED, the schools inspection body. In Bradford, school travel work was seen as closely linked with achieving educational goals.
- **Personal development gains:** Children were reported to benefit from school travel work in terms of increased independence; improved self-esteem, (partly because of the chance to take part in learning activities with practical and applied outcomes); opportunities to make and maintain friendships on the journey to and from school; enjoyment from participating in initiatives such as walking buses; and improved knowledge of environmental and citizenship issues. Devon County Council had undertaken a specific project aiming to increase the self-esteem of vulnerable children via school travel work which was considered to have been very successful.
- **Wider community benefits:** School travel work was often used to forge stronger links with the community, and to provide infrastructure improvements over a wide area. In Knowsley, the local authority commented that schemes were acting as a catalyst to engage unemployed young mothers, who were traditionally disenfranchised from community activity.
- **Increased awareness and appreciation of alternatives to the car:** Many interviewees highlighted that school travel work has the potential to affect long term attitudes to the car and other forms of travel.

5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BACKGROUND FACTORS

The case study schools were chosen with the aim of representing the full range of English school types and catchment areas. In general, the research found that it was possible to make a significant difference to travel habits at all types of schools, regardless of size, status (state/independent), location, wealth, initial level of car use, pupil age or catchment size. (The only caveat was that 2 schools with very low initial levels of car use – 8% at a secondary and 20% at a middle school - had experienced some increases in car use, although this may also reflect some weaknesses in their travel strategies rather than the ‘impossibility’ of maintaining such low levels).

However, inevitably, different schools have different issues which need addressing. Typically, schools in poorer catchments are able to achieve lower levels of car use, although they often have relatively dangerous catchments, with road safety issues which need solving in order to maintain such travel patterns. Independent schools typically have larger catchments, requiring more motorised solutions, although there may still be a significant proportion of pupils that live within walking distance who should not be overlooked. Infant schools and sixth form colleges have a high turnover of pupils, making induction procedures particularly important. There was some evidence that schools in urban locations had, *on average*, achieved higher levels of change,

perhaps because they had more opportunities to build on, such as more local bus services (although, at the same time, some of the highest achieving schools had predominantly rural catchments, indicating that location is not necessarily a constraint on what can be achieved).

Compared with primary schools, secondary schools often face significantly different challenges. The proportion of children travelling independently is much higher and travel distances are typically greater. The proportion walking to school typically falls (particularly if there is no attempt to promote walking), although car use also typically declines, with increases in cycling, bus or train use. The study also found that there was a very significant difference between travel plan processes at primary and secondary level. Secondary schools are larger and run more like businesses. There does not tend to be a culture of volunteer or parental involvement, although pupil involvement in travel work is often much greater. Initiatives to address travel, and local authority strategies for effective engagement are also very different at secondary level, compared to primary, although successful outcomes are possible at both. There was some indication that secondary schools which can be persuaded to engage in travel work have more consistent success.

In brief then, it seems that all types of school can be successful in promoting and supporting more sustainable travel patterns, although different situations generate different issues. It was notable that every one of the case study schools identified a slightly different set of initiatives as having been critical to their work, highlighting that each school needs to introduce a very carefully tailored set of solutions that meets its own, individual needs and concerns, and builds on the specific interests and capacities of those involved.

6. GENERAL INITIATIVES THAT LEAD TO LOWER CAR USE

A number of different initiatives which schools had put in place to support and promote more sustainable travel were analysed. In general, schools which had undertaken a variety of initiatives had been more successful than those where work was relatively narrowly focused. However, at the same time, it was clearly not necessary to 'do everything' to achieve change.

Initiatives relating to particular modes are discussed in the following sections. Meanwhile, there were a number of general measures which appeared to be associated with achieving greater success. These included involving pupils in developing travel work; parking restrictions; school travel safety measures; and awareness raising measures.

Children's involvement in decision-making was linked with more successful outcomes. At primary schools, the involvement of the school council was associated with achieving greater changes in car use, possibly because this indicated greater pupil ownership of the travel work and empowerment within the school. At secondary level, the involvement of students in developing travel work, and the inclusion of travel work in the curriculum, were associated with achieving greater change, and may have been particularly important for increasing walking.

Parking restrictions were linked to lower levels of driving to school, and schools which continued to let parents or students use the school car park, or drop off and pick up children immediately outside the school, had generally found it harder to reduce car use. Among the case studies, schools had addressed parking issues in a number of different ways, including introducing new or upgraded parking restrictions; undertaking awareness raising about parking problems; encouraging greater police enforcement of restrictions; or putting in place strategies to limit sixth form parking. In Nottingham, the city council had introduced an area-wide initiative to make all school entrance 'keep clear' zig-zag markings mandatory. At one school, The Royal School in Hampstead, the promotion of car-sharing had also proved an effective method of managing car-use.

Improving safety on the school journey had also played a crucial role in encouraging more sustainable travel habits. Extensive road safety improvements in the surrounding area were associated with higher levels of walking and cycling. At secondary level, when more children were making independent journeys, highways safety measures appeared to directly contribute to increasing active travel, whilst at primary level, road safety measures often provided an important underpinning for other initiatives. The most commonly introduced safety improvements were safer crossings and new, shared pedestrian and cycle paths. Schools were also building personal safety considerations into almost all of their initiatives (including criminal record checking of volunteers, adult supervision arrangements, improved lighting and encouraging children to travel together). Increasing the number of adults and children on the street was also seen as contributing to a safer environment.

Schools with little travel awareness work had achieved lower levels of change, and almost all schools emphasised that ongoing publicity and information were critical for successful travel work. This was promulgated via newsletters, assemblies, curriculum work, travelling theatre productions, themed occasions like Walk to School week and special events, including launch events for travel work. Including school travel policy statements in mainstream school documents and activities (including the school prospectus, materials for new parents, induction events at the school, the school development or improvement plan or the home-school agreement) was specifically associated with achieving greater change in travel behaviour. This could be because the inclusion of such statements reflected that travel work had become part of the ethos of the school, or because such policies have directly helped to prioritise more sustainable travel and maintain its priority over time.

7. SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING WALKING

Most schools had some potential to increase walking, although this was sometimes overlooked, particularly at secondary level. The experience of the case study schools highlighted that walking levels are not automatically dictated by the surroundings, but can be dramatically increased by appropriate initiatives.

Many of the general measures for promoting sustainable travel, including parking restraint, pupil involvement, travel awareness work and safety improvements, had contributed to promoting walking.

At secondary level, where more children were making independent journeys, highways safety measures, and parental perceptions that safety had improved seemed to be particularly important for encouraging walking. Walking had also been promoted by improving school facilities and arrangements, including introducing new entrances for pedestrians to match desire lines or separate them from traffic; upgrading on-site footpaths or lighting; providing lockers or other storage arrangements for books and wet clothing; and providing staff supervision for students arriving or leaving. Involving pupils in consultation and curriculum work also seemed to act as a particularly effective (non-didactic) form of walking promotion.

At primary level, some schools had primarily achieved increases in walking via road safety improvements. However, even without safety measures, some had achieved major increases in walking by focusing on specific walking initiatives, including Walk to School week, walking buses, walking incentive schemes, park and walk arrangements and pedestrian training, often coupled with small-scale measures such as cleaning up dog mess on footpaths, or introducing 'wet weather' shelters. However, schools with road safety concerns highlighted that these would need to be addressed at some point, in order to sustain increases in walking in the longer term.

Secondary school involvement in specific walking initiatives was relatively limited. However, there is potential for this situation to change. In particular, park and walk schemes, where parents are asked to drop their children at some distance from the school (sometimes at designated drop-off points like a pub car park), can help to clear cars away from the school entrance, providing both safety benefits and a powerful psychological message. Walking incentive schemes, where walking pupils collect points in order to gain individual prizes or class awards, seem to be effective at motivating students, and initiatives like Surrey's Golden Boot Challenge demonstrate that local authorities can successfully take the lead in delivering such schemes, reducing the input required from the schools. Walking buses are clearly a primary school initiative, and often suffer difficulties with volunteer recruitment, administration and bureaucracy. However, they had been a vital catalyst for encouraging walking at some of the case studies, with walking buses running for over 4 years at Holmesdale Infant School, and involving at least 60 children on a daily basis at St Sebastians Catholic Primary School.

8. SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING CYCLING

The presence of off-road cycle lanes and cycle parking at the school appeared critical for achieving high levels of cycling at both primary and secondary level. The 7 schools with the highest levels of cycling all had cycle parking and were served by off-road cycle paths. In some cases, these were complemented by traffic calming, lower speeds and, at secondary level, on-road provision for cycling.

New off-road cycle paths were typically introduced as combined facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Often, they acted as an important connection to a wider network of local routes. For new cycle parking, key issues included shelter, location, mechanisms for reducing theft and access to the parking once on the school site. Many of the case study schools had introduced new cycle parking, spending an average of £20,000 on these facilities.

Other important factors for promoting cycling appeared to be on-road cycle training (particularly at primary level); the school taking a positive attitude to cycling (a factor not always determined by external conditions); promoting cycling to the whole family rather than just the pupils; and being able to build on a 'critical mass' of existing cyclists, (although the experience of Hillside Avenue Primary School, which increased cycling from 1% to 12% of pupils, shows that it is also possible to promote cycling from very low levels).

Other ways in which schools had promoted or supported cycling included:

- Cycle trains (with a particularly successful scheme at Watchfield Primary School).
- Cycle maintenance and security coding schemes (often involving the police).
- Loaning trailer bikes, child seats, helmets, fluorescent jackets, bicycles for cycle training and other equipment.
- Having policies to regulate cyclist behaviour and/or requiring children to obtain a permit in order to cycle.
- Promotion work, including holding cycle events, and developing information resources like cycle maps.
- Mainstreaming cycling, by making it part of school trips or sports facility access.
- Altering school facilities and arrangements - for example, Kesgrave High School was supervising the daily arrival and departure of cyclists, and had reduced the amount that pupils needed to carry by reorganising the school day into three shifts and providing all pupils with lockers.
- Providing funding assistance – for example, changes to Cambridgeshire's rules about post-16 student travel assistance had enabled more cyclists to claim for the costs of running a bicycle.

9. SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING BUS AND TRAIN USE

Bus use had been successfully promoted at most types of school, (with the exception of schools where most pupils were living within 1 mile). However, although there were several primary schools where buses were considered critical to the success of their travel work, buses were primarily a secondary school mode, with particularly high levels of use where catchments were more dispersed. Schools often reported problems dealing with bus operators, and this was one area where local authority help was particularly appreciated. (At All Saints RC Secondary School, it was notable that independent changes to York City's bus network had been particularly important in boosting bus use to school).

Schools with high levels of bus use generally had new or improved services in place, and either relatively low fares or fare reduction schemes. Both dedicated and public services were successful in attracting pupils, and some schools had also boosted bus use by providing dedicated minibuses. Developing services that served more than one school had often helped to justify their introduction. Service improvements included adding bus stops, increasing the frequency of services, altering routes to stop closer to the school or altering service times to fit better with school hours. High fares seemed to be sufficient, on their own, to deter bus use, regardless of service quality. It was also important to have appropriate access arrangements, including off-road bus laybys and/or turning facilities, in order to avoid jeopardising services.

The 3 primary schools with the highest levels of bus use (and some of the secondaries) had also put various arrangements in place, at the school and on the buses, to make the services more child-friendly. These included waiting arrangements (sometimes with teacher supervision); seatbelts and designated seats for pupils; consistency of drivers; giving parents a contact at the bus company; providing a breakfast club for children arriving early; adult escorts on buses; pupil prefects on buses with mobile phones to report problems; the school taking responsibility for contacting parents about service problems; or the bus waiting for children at the end of the school day.

Promotion work (including information provision) was another important component of encouraging bus use, particularly at secondary level. At primary level, it was often linked with educating pupils how to use services and attempting to discourage inappropriate behaviour. Some schools had taken on responsibility for dealing with pupils who were reported to have misbehaved.

At the 5 secondary schools with the highest levels of children coming by bus or rail, a significant proportion of journeys were being made by train. Methods of encouraging train use included promotion work; information provision; fare subsidies; policy statements in favour of public transport; familiarisation sessions at local stations; changes to timetables; and providing a minibus service between the school and the local station.

10. ADDRESSING STAFF TRAVEL

Initiatives to address staff travel were relatively limited, although it was notable that many of the case study schools were starting to consider the issue. A total of 9 of the case study schools (i.e nearly a third) had objectives or targets to achieve changes in staff travel (as well as pupil travel), and staff were often leading by example. For example, at 4 of the schools with high levels of cycling, the head teacher sometimes, or frequently, cycled to school themselves. At one of the primary schools (St Sebastian's Catholic Primary), the school held regular park-away days, where staff were expected to park at some distance from the school as well as pupils, (thereby creating a 'car-free' environment at the school entrance).

Measures introduced by schools to address staff travel included dedicated cycle parking for staff; pool bikes for staff to enable them to travel between different school sites; a car sharing scheme; and a minibus service to enable staff to get to the school from the local train station. One school (Long Road Sixth Form College) was involved in the local authority's workplace travel plan programme. Given that, as already mentioned, some authorities are now starting to jointly plan school and workplace travel initiatives, the opportunities for school staff to be involved in travel initiatives may increase.

11. EFFECTIVE TRAVEL PLAN PROCESSES

11.1 Why schools get involved in travel work

The most common reason that the case study schools had got involved in travel work was congestion at the school gates, which was often linked with residential complaints, inappropriate parking, aggressive driving behaviour and associated safety problems. More general concerns about safety and traffic had also motivated schools. In a number of cases, links with Healthy Schools or Eco-schools had acted as the stimulus for work, and there was some indication that, at secondary level, undertaking work for health reasons was associated with achieving greater success. Work had also been triggered by the involvement of the local authority or the planning system, and it seemed that having an external stimulus was particularly important for *starting* work at secondary level. The 7 case study schools where the planning system had been involved showed that travel work triggered by the planning system could be just as effective (if not more so) as work triggered by other factors.

The impetus to start school travel work often came from a variety of people, including parents. It was notable that those raising issues were not always those who became the school travel champion. Often, the coincidence of 2 factors had led to work starting - for example, a new and enthusiastic Healthy Schools coordinator being appointed at the same time as a parent raising concerns about safety. Site changes or increases in pupil numbers had also acted as the trigger for work. Some local authorities highlighted that making funding available for school travel work had acted as a catalyst for generating interest from schools.

11.2 Management arrangements

Almost all the case studies schools had benefited from:

- A positive relationship with the local authority
- A head teacher that was supportive or very supportive of the travel work
- Leadership from a champion and/or working group.

In many cases, one individual had clearly provided critical leadership for the school's travel work. However, at the same time, it was evident that school travel work cannot be done by one person alone. Many schools and local authorities felt that having a working group was vital in order to 'spread the load'. A formal working group seemed to be particularly important at secondary level, given the complexity of schools and their arrangements. Key

leadership tasks included promoting the work; managing particular initiatives; liaising with others; and conducting monitoring and survey analysis. School travel work had been successfully led by a variety of people, although at 24 schools (including all of the secondaries), a member of school staff had led the work, and a number of interviewees felt that school staff involvement was critical to success.

Different players clearly brought different strengths to school travel work, as follows.

- **Head teacher:** Although direct head teacher leadership of school travel work was not associated with greater success (and head teachers often had to delegate responsibility for school travel work due to other commitments), support from the head teacher did appear to be essential. In some cases, head teachers were leading by example; in some cases, they were involved in major decisions or specific activities; and in some cases, their main contribution was to provide unwavering back-up for others leading the work.
- **Other school staff:** Site management staff were often involved in decisions about site access. Teachers were often key to getting pupils involved via classroom work, and other support staff had also participated in initiatives. Healthy Schools and Eco-schools contacts were frequently mentioned.
- **Parents:** Most primary schools had involved individual parents in developing their travel work, and often felt that such involvement was very important, partly as a way of influencing other parents. However, few of the secondary schools had done so. Some schools (both primary and secondary) were piloting new systems of parent class representatives, as a way of increasing general parental engagement with the school, (and thereby generating more opportunities to involve parents in travel issues).
- **Local authorities:** All schools reported a positive working relationship with their local authority, and were often very enthusiastic about the support they had received. (The nature of support provided is discussed further in section 16).
- **Governors:** School governors had had some involvement at over two-thirds of the schools. Their roles included approving travel work and congratulating those involved; developing links with other initiatives and organisations; and providing input relating to finance, school policy, health and safety issues.
- **Other schools:** A number of schools emphasised the importance of working with other schools, as part of boosting motivation, guiding the work, getting new ideas, addressing issues on a wider basis and getting initiatives in place that would not be funded for one school alone. It was felt that local authorities could play an important role in building support networks of local schools.

Other members of school travel working groups included local councillors (including parish councillors), local residents, police, school crossing patrols, and, in one case, a health promotion officer.

As already highlighted, involving pupils in school travel work development was also common, and was linked with more successful travel work. It was noted that pupils represented the school's captive audience, had the best understanding of their own needs and travel problems, and could pester both parents and staff about travel. There were a considerable number of schools where pupil involvement in school travel work was increasing, linked with more general increases in pupil empowerment, including the setting up of pupil forums such as school councils or eco-councils.

11.3 Resources

The amount spent on measures related to travel work for an individual school varied greatly from zero, to over £400,000 in situations where the case study school was part of a project to benefit a number of schools or the wider community. The average was about £35,000 for a primary school and £67,000 for a secondary school. Apart from staff time, the most substantial costs related to the provision of safer infrastructure, cycle parking and/or bus measures.

The majority of funding for travel plans had usually come from the local authority – via either the Highways Department or the Road Safety Department. Other funding sources included local businesses; local bus companies; the Department for Health 'Safe and Sound' initiative; the Department for Transport cycle fund; the Department for Education and Skills 'Education Action Zone' money; New Deal for Communities regeneration funding; the Countryside Agency; the Defence Academy; Sustrans; the RAC award scheme; and the Diocese of Southwell.

School travel work typically involved regular inputs from the school community (often on a weekly basis) and at least one day of input per month from the local authority (with more input at secondary level), although time spent at individual schools was highly variable, depending on their needs. School staff reported that finding time for work was often problematic, particularly over a long period. Both schools and local authorities had sometimes attempted to address this by paying for supply cover to free up staff involved in travel work, or by getting external consultants involved (including charities) who could provide support to schools. Many felt that professional recognition for the role of a school travel co-ordinator within the school would be helpful.

11.4 Consultation

Most of the case study schools had undertaken some consultation work in relation to their school travel strategy, and at secondary level, having an extensive and high-quality consultation process was linked with greater success. Some schools highlighted that consultation could be very time-consuming, and, without proper management, could become a focus for conflict, raise unrealistic expectations or result in action paralysis. However, the majority of schools were generally very positive about consultation, reporting that it had helped with endorsing their proposed actions; raised awareness of travel issues; provided an effective and socially acceptable way

of engaging with key actors about travel; and led to finding out things that they did not know.

Consultation was often appropriate at different stages of travel work, including initially raising awareness of issues, asking consultees to propose solutions, and asking consultees to comment on proposed solutions. Many schools stressed the importance of giving feedback about the results of consultation to those consulted.

Interviewees warned that there would always be people who were not interested in travel work, or who opposed proposals, and that those undertaking consultation needed to be prepared for this. They advised that it was important to avoid being too judgemental; to be sensitive to individual needs; and to have a proper, open discussion. Several schools also highlighted the need to appeal to a rationale that parents or residents could buy into, when promoting new ideas.

Consultation varied in formality, from surveys of parents, pupils or residents, through to informal discussions at the school gate. It was also common for schools to hold meetings or events, in some cases, having different events for different parts of the catchment. Mapping exercises were also frequently used to find out where pupils were coming from, or to identify particular hazards on the journey. Local authorities had often assisted in consultation work. A number of schools mentioned that consultation was an ongoing process, and were continuing to use school newsletters and pupil forums to gain feedback on new ideas.

11.5 Formalising work

Formalising the aims of school travel work in travel plan documentation, written objectives and clear targets was associated with achieving greater success. Moreover, despite local authority concerns, none of the case study schools reported that developing such a 'travel plan' had, or would be, unduly onerous and some of those without plans were keen to do so. However, it should be noted that about a third of the case study schools did not have completed travel plans in place, showing that it is not essential to have a travel plan in order to undertake successful travel work. Moreover, all of the case study schools had been engaged in travel work for at least 2 years, indicating that developing a travel plan is not necessarily the most useful starting point for school travel work. Local authorities also stressed that a travel plan needs to be an evolving 'living document', helping to guide a school's work, rather than becoming a 'lip service' paper exercise.

Schools often gave a long list of aims for their travel work, although these were not always translated into specific objectives and targets. In particular, safety concerns were not always reflected in safety related objectives or targets, perhaps because schools felt that they would be unable to measure progress. This is a cause for concern if it affects priorities for work. Notably, as well as targets relating to desired outcomes, some schools had objectives relating to process, for example, 'to introduce travel work onto the curriculum'.

Schools had set targets on the advice of their local authority, by examining travel surveys or by consulting with relevant groups, often using a combination of these methods. However, some were concerned about the validity of setting targets, or that failure to meet targets might undermine morale.

11.6 Sustaining work

All of the case study schools had been involved in school travel work for at least two years, highlighting that changing travel behaviour is a long term process, and that sustaining the momentum of initiatives over time is essential to achieving success.

Seven issues were identified as being critical to sustaining momentum:

- **Staffing:** It was clear that the arrival of new, enthusiastic staff could boost travel work, while a loss of staff, or a lack of time by those responsible for travel work, could lead to a decrease in activity. In this context, the importance of 'spreading the load' was mentioned as important. Several schools also highlighted the importance of succession planning, i.e. identifying a new person prepared to take over from an existing travel champion when necessary.
- **Formalising and embedding school travel work within the school framework:** As discussed in section 6, including travel policy statements in mainstream school documents and induction activities was associated with achieving greater success. Introducing initiatives that could be run on a regular basis as part of the school calendar (such as annual cycle training) and forming links with Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools had also helped to make sustainable travel a mainstream part of school culture.
- **External recognition:** At primary level, receiving media coverage for the school's work was associated with achieving greater success, and most schools reported that any external recognition for work helped in enhancing motivation, raising travel awareness, triggering new activities and sustaining interest. As well as media coverage, such recognition could be provided by award schemes (often run by local authorities) or positive reports from OFSTED about work. Schools also mentioned the importance of recognising and rewarding the efforts of volunteers.
- **A sense of purpose and achievement:** To drive work forward, schools stressed that it was important for those involved to see benefits from the work, and to have a shared vision about what they were trying to achieve. In this context, schools mentioned the value of 'quick wins', receiving funding and getting particular measures implemented. Conversely, delays in getting particular measures in place could jeopardise momentum.
- **Underpinning the work with appropriate infrastructure:** Road safety measures, parking restrictions, lockers and cycle parking had helped to maintain school travel work. Several schools mentioned that new infrastructure acted as a permanent reminder of the travel work. Meanwhile, a lack of appropriate infrastructure was seen as detrimental to trying to sustain enthusiasm.
- **New measures, new ideas and making it fun:** It was reported that travel work often needed 'pepping up' with new ideas, including re-launching existing initiatives, introducing new ones and making activities 'more fun'

for pupils. Some also mentioned the importance of making activities enjoyable and sociable for volunteers. Working with local authorities and other schools were highlighted as important ways of getting new ideas.

- **Ongoing publicity and information:** The majority of case study schools emphasised that constant reiteration and promotion of ideas was vital to sustain travel work. Newsletters, induction activities and assemblies were all seen as key to this process, together with publicity boosts from receiving external recognition.

12. CONCLUSION

The study results demonstrated that school travel work can be extremely effective in delivering a number of socially desirable goals, including traffic and congestion reduction, improvements in child road safety and a range of health gains. Moreover, it seems possible to achieve significant changes in travel behaviour at all types of school, and in all types of location, although different strategies are likely to be needed for different circumstances.

In general, schools which had involved pupils in developing travel work, which had parking restrictions in place, which had introduced safety measures around the school and which had undertaken considerable awareness-raising had achieved the greatest success. There were also particular lessons that emerged in relation to individual modes. For example, walking initiatives often constituted a 'quick win'. Cycle parking and off-road cycle tracks seemed key to promoting cycling. High bus fares seemed to deter bus use, regardless of the quality of bus services.

Meanwhile, schools clearly needed appropriate structures to implement good school travel work, including the support of the head teacher, a working group and/or school champion, and the involvement of school staff in ways which did not overburden them. Building travel statements into policy documents and induction materials had helped achieve success. School travel work also needs sustaining over time – and external recognition had been extremely important in maintaining enthusiasm.

Other findings from the study included recommendations for both local authorities and national government about ways in which successful school travel work should be promoted in the future.

Main reference

Cairns S and Newson C (forthcoming) *Making school travel plans work: Research Report*. Report to the UK Department for Transport, undertaken by Transport 2000 Trust, University College London, Adrian Davis Associates, Sustrans, Cleary Hughes Associates and Transport for Quality of Life.