

MEETING:	ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE:	28 JUNE 2010
TITLE OF REPORT:	SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO MEETING ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS
PORTFOLIO AREA:	HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To provide the committee with an overview of progress on Herefordshire School Travel Plans highlighting the contribution that reducing travel to school by car makes to the reduction in carbon emissions.

Recommendation

THAT: the contents of the report are noted.

Key Points Summary

- Encouraging more sustainable journeys on the school run is one of the key aims of the Council's Local Transport Plan, and forms an important part of our strategy to reduce congestion and reduce carbon emissions.
- 97% of Herefordshire schools now have travel plans in place.
- The number of solo car journeys on the school run has been halted and is declining.
- The school travel strategy also encourages healthier lifestyles amongst children and their parents and hence, supports the Council and PCT's health based objectives.
- The Council's School Travel Advisor is targeting those schools without travel plans to support their development in 2010/11 to secure 100% coverage in line with government target.

Alternative Options

2. Reducing dependence on the car for school travel will continue to be a key focus for transport strategy developed through the third Local Transport Plan. School travel plans will be a primary focus for delivery of the strategy. In reviewing the local transport plan strategy the Transportation team will re-assess the role and effectiveness of travel plans, working closely with a range of partners including the Children and Young Persons Directorate. The draft Local Transport Plan Strategy will be consulted on later in the summer and will be the subject

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Linda Sinker, School Travel Adviser, 01432 260262

of a future Environment Scrutiny Committee report is programmed for September 2010.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. Not applicable

Introduction and Background

4. Government has demonstrated support for tackling the problems created by school travel and set out its proposals in the national School Travel Policy in 2003. The Dept for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) and the Dept for Transport (DfT) have jointly implemented a **Travelling to School Initiative (TTSI)** to “bring about a step change in home to school travel patterns to cut congestion and pollution but also to allow many more pupils to take regular exercise”. School Travel Plans are an integral part of this TTSI.
5. Under the Travelling to School Initiative schools which develop an STP which is approved by the Council are eligible for direct grant funding from government. The grant is £3750 plus £5 per pupil to schools which means that primary schools receive, typically, £5000 and high schools £10,000. The grant is a capital sum which must be spent on improvements within the school or its grounds - for example on a cycle shelter or a parents' shelter. It cannot be spent on staff costs or equipment.
6. The Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) sets out the strategy for reducing car travel and congestion, promoting sustainable transport and improving road safety. The LTP has an important role to play in helping reduce transport related carbon emissions and supporting the Council's environmental targets. The school journey and commuting trips are the main contributors to peak hour congestion. The LTP takes national policy into account and includes a school travel strategy guided by the following objective:

A general shift towards more sustainable and healthy modes of travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport, and away from single occupancy car use.

7. The school travel strategy brings together a number of measures to help achieve this objective:
 - School travel plans, developed by schools (with support of the Transportation Team) and requiring the school to assess and take responsibility of its own travel impacts;
 - Safer Routes to School which help support the travel plan through the provision of new sustainable transport infrastructure; and
 - Cycle training and road safety education support provided to all schools.
8. Within this range of measures the school travel plan, produced by the school, has a vital role setting out its proposals and targets to support sustainable modes and identifying how it will seek to achieve the targets. The school travel plan in important role in the prioritization of infrastructure schemes included in the safer routes to school programme. Typically, schemes include: new cycle routes and shelters to encourage more cycling; improved footways new crossings and waiting areas for parents to improve pedestrian access; and speed reductions and 20mph zones to improve safety in the vicinity of the school for all vulnerable road users.
9. Progress on delivering the LTP strategy is monitored through a range of indicators and these include indicators for school travel which help chart progress on school travel plans and safer routes to school. Further details are provided below on the targets and performance.

Key Considerations

School Travel in Herefordshire

10. There are a number of challenges in seeking to reduce car use on the journey to school in Herefordshire. Many primary schools are located in relatively isolated rural locations with large catchment areas. Many of these schools have limited or no safe pedestrian and cycle access and hence promoting a mode shift at these schools focuses on car sharing as the most realistic sustainable alternative to solo car trips. Often, the issues raised by these schools in their travel plans focus on reducing conflict between cars and pedestrians in the vicinity of the school gate and managing conflicts with neighbouring residents rather than seeking to achieve significant modal shift.
11. The introduction of parental choice has resulted in pupils travelling further to school and increased reliance on the private car as main mode of travel. The current admission figures for Herefordshire indicate that only 65% of high school pupils and 54% of primary school pupils attend their local school. This adds significantly to the challenge of encouraging and supporting sustainable travel to school.

Progress in Supporting School Travel Plans and Reducing Car Use for the Journey to School

12. The government's stated aim was for all schools to have a travel plan in place by March 2010. Between 2004 and March 2010 STPs have been prepared, approved and implemented at 102 of the 103 state schools in Herefordshire. This has attracted over £550,000 of government funding in capital grants for those schools. The government target is for 100% of schools to have STPs by 2010, including independent schools. In Herefordshire we have achieved 97% by 2009/10. We currently only have figures for West Midlands (95%) and East Midlands (91%) and the national figure is thought to be in the low 90%'s. We will be targeting the remaining 6 schools without Travel Plans this year. However, all but one of these schools are independents with a high percentage of boarders.
13. Mode of travel data is collected annually at all state schools as part of the January School Census. This data is used by the DfT to monitor the success of STPs both county-wide and nationally. Schools also use the data to review their STPs and the success of their policies. Table 1 summarises the journey to school data from 2007 (when the census was introduced) to 2010 for Herefordshire Schools.
14. In setting the targets for school travel, the Council has acknowledged that there will be limited modal shift. National figures show that between 2006 and 2009 single car occupancy on the school run dropped by only 1.6% mainly due to an increase in the use of public transport. In Herefordshire we have largely achieved our targets of a 4% drop in single car occupancy by 2010.

Table 1: Performance on Mode of Travel to School (NI 198)

Mode of Travel	2006/07 Baseline	2007/08 Outturn	2008/09 Outturn	2009/10 Outturn	2010/11 Target
Car	36%	34%	33%	32%	32%
Car Share	3%	4%	5%	6%	3%
School/Public Transport	22%	24%	23%	23%	24%
Walk	37%	36%	37%	38%	39%
Cycle	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%

- 15 The table provides a robust picture of the changes in travel modes on the journey to school in recent years. Significantly, it shows that there has been a continuing reduction in the number of solo pupil car journeys from 36% to 32%. This has been achieved through an equivalent increase in car sharing whilst the other modes have remained largely unchanged. We regard this as a modest success as trends from the period of the first Local Transport Plan showed increasing proportion of solo car trips.
- 16 The cycling figures are disappointing and we are currently working within secondary schools to carry out more cycle training and install cycle shelters to encourage more teenagers to cycle safely to school. Bus and taxi figures are largely unchanged and reflect the large numbers of pupils in Herefordshire who are entitled to free transport to school due to the rural nature of the county. Whilst there has been a modest increase in walking there has been a slight decline in secondary schools balanced by an increase in primary schools.

Adding Value to STPs and Coordination with Other Initiatives

- 17 Whilst the STP is an important policy document, developed and owned by the school, the Transportation Team has worked hard to set it within a wider group of initiatives and services offered by the Council and partners. Key to the success of the STP in any given school is that it relates to a wider set of objectives; experience has indicated that schools which are enthusiastically following programmes to increase health of pupils and environmental awareness also make good progress on promoting sustainable travel. The following is a summary of the supporting and related initiatives which are promoted with STPs:
- 18 Health Schools and Eco Schools. In addition to assisting with sustainability objectives, STPs can also help to reduce obesity levels, reduce road safety problems that are partly generated by school-run traffic, and increase independence and road sense for children through walking to school or using public transport. STPs consequently have strong links with the National Healthy Schools Scheme and other initiatives such as Eco Schools and the Change4Life agenda. Schools working towards Healthy Schools are expected to have an up-to-date Travel Plan in place. Transport and Travel is one of the eight “doorways” in the Sustainable Schools framework. All Herefordshire schools are currently involved in the Healthy Schools process and all but 19 have achieved full Healthy Schools status
- 19 Safer Routes to School. All schools with School Travel Plans in place are now ranked each year on the Safer Routes to School priority list. The prioritisation takes into account factors such as accidents to schoolchildren over the past 3 years, number of children on roll and how many walk to school, the school's involvement in travel issues and whether there are specific measures requested in the Travel Plan or the latest Review. Engineering measures to minimise risk have been carried out in all high priority schools.

- 20 Cycle training. Bikeability cycle training is now delivered free in primary and secondary schools by a team of qualified cycle trainers. Older children are taught how to cycle on the road and how to cycle to school if appropriate. Herefordshire Council has installed cycle parking in 38 schools to date and cycling is promoted for journeys to Herefordshire primary and high schools where the head teacher believes it is safe to do so.
- 21 School Travel Achievement awards. An important part of a school travel plan is to review and monitor actions and targets annually. To encourage schools to do this, achievement awards are available. Almost 50 schools have won at least one school travel achievement award for successful travel plans. To get the award, which comes with a grant of up to £500 from Herefordshire Council's Safer Routes to School budget, schools must demonstrate that they are achieving targets and implementing their action plans. Many of these schools are able to show significant modal shift. To receive the award, schools must also show that they monitor and review their travel plan regularly.
- 22 Sustainable Schools Update. In recognition of this joined up working, the Transportation Team now coordinates the Sustainable Schools Update which provides information on a range of activities including those summarised above. A copy of the latest update is attached to this report.

Best Practice Examples of School Travel Plans

- 23 **Whitchurch Primary**: The school travel plan has been in place since 2006. A number of safer routes to school improvements have been introduced including traffic calming, new pedestrian crossing, a cycle shelter and storage facilities for clothes for walkers and cyclists. PAWS, the after school club, encourages children to bring their bikes to school so that they can join in supervised cycle rides after school.
- 24 Walking has increased from 8% at the start of the Travel Plan in 2006 to 22% now. Car sharing increased from 6% to 35% and cycling from 0% to 2%. This has resulted in a reduction in the use of individual cars on the school run from 80% to 35% over 4 years.
- 25 **Shobdon Primary School**. The school has had a travel plan for 6 years. Staff and pupils are very pro-active in publicising the Travel Plan and promoting sustainable travel in the school. Additional funding has been secured from the Kingspan Trust for a parking area away from the school and a "Park and Stride" link to the school. Safer routes to school contribution has been provided for a new zebra crossing.
- 26 The school has managed to maintain high level of pupils walking to school at between 56% and 53% over the past six years since the original Travel Plan was developed. In addition it has increased the proportion of pupils car-sharing from 14% to 22%.
- 27 **Ashfield Park in Ross**. Walking has increased from 46 to 57% and car use has decreased from 50% to 41% over the period 2007 to 2010.
- 28 **St Martins in Hereford**. Walking has increased from 70% to 78% and car use decreased from 28% to 22% over the period 2007 to 2010.

Community Impact

- 29 The adoption and implementation of STP can provide a positive impact on the local community around the school by reducing congestion and improving safety. The STP provides an opportunity for the school and the local community together to look at transport issues, identify solutions and make proposals for highway improvements which feed into the Safer Routes to School priority list. Overall they help to improve road safety around schools and reduce the

impact of the school run on traffic as a whole.

Financial Implications.

30 None as a result of this report

Legal Implications

31 None

Risk Management

32 None

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sustainable Schools Update Issue 3

Background Papers

None