

Developing a Sustainable School Travel Strategy

Introduction

The last fifteen years have seen an increase in the number of pupils arriving at school by car. One in five cars on the road in urban areas at the morning peak of ten minutes to nine is taking children to school. This has led to traffic congestion, air pollution and parking problems around schools and the local community and has resulted in a reduction in health and fitness.

There are a number of reasons for this, which include:

- Rising car ownership
- Parents under increasing pressure of time
- Parental preference gives a wider choice of school
- Inadequate bus services and high fares in some areas
- Worries about bullying on the school bus
- Increased traffic and fears about road safety
- Increased fears about personal safety, including bullying and abduction
- Parents feeling obliged to rely on car travel due to peer pressure
- Lack of suitable cycling or safe walking routes

In a move to address these issues the Education and Inspections Act 2006 has introduced a number of responsibilities for local authorities with regard to school travel. Under the Act there is a duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable school travel and transport for children and young people.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 defines sustainable modes of travel as those that the local authority considers may improve the users' physical well-being, the environmental well-being of all or part of the local authority area, or a combination of the two.

The statutory responsibility for local authorities comprises four main elements:

- an **assessment** of the travel and transport needs of children and young people within the authority's area
- 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
- 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

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- the **promotion** of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions;

The development of this strategy for Salford, therefore, sets out to identify and address the city’s school institutions’ travel needs incorporating the four key elements laid out in Salford City Council’s statutory responsibility.

The development of the strategy is being co-ordinated jointly by the council’s Children’s Services Directorate and Urban Vision Partnership Limited. The strategy will cover school transport for all children living in Salford of sixth form age and below. This incorporates all those who travel within Salford and those travelling to schools outside of the Salford area. It also includes those who live outside Salford who travel into the city to receive education or training.

Existing local policies and strategies

Salford City Council and its partners are committed to working with schools and others to promote sustainable modes of transport. A number of policies and strategies related to sustainable school travel already exist both for Salford and for the Greater Manchester region. The Sustainable School Travel Strategy will support and complement these existing documents.

- Sustainable Transport IN Salford
- School Travel Strategy
- Home to School Transport Policy
- Post 16-19 Transport Partnership Policy
- Making the Vision Real: A Community Plan for Salford
- Children & Young People’s Plan
- Road Safety Strategy
- Cycling Strategy
- 14-19 Strategy
- Asset Management Plan
- Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Outline Business Case
- School Admissions Policy
- Disability Equality Scheme

This strategy addresses the city-wide issues surrounding sustainable transport. The implementation of the action plan for this overarching strategy will have a significant impact on school travel as it focuses on the development of public transport and the promotion of walking and cycling in the city.

The development of the sustainable travel to school strategy, looking specifically at school travel, provides a valuable opportunity to assess and develop the role of sustainable school travel in greater detail.

The existing ‘School Travel Strategy’ outlines the city’s strategy to promote and develop school travel plans in all schools and colleges in the city (see

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section on STPs for further information). ‘The Sustainable School Travel Strategy’ will build on the foundation of this strategy.

The Home to School Transport Policy lays out the policy of the local authority with regard to school transport provision. This policy is currently being revised in response to the changing requirements under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The revision to the policy will include the local authority requirement to provide greater access for children from the most disadvantaged families and disabled parents with school age children and will take account of the emerging vision statement for primary education as part of the Primary Capital Programme.

Greater Manchester policies

The Sustainable School Travel Strategy will also support several of Greater Manchester’s policies.

- Local Transport Plan (Greater Manchester)
- Air Quality Strategy (Greater Manchester)
- Bus Strategy (Greater Manchester)
- Walking Strategy (Greater Manchester)

Notably, the strategy will contribute to a number of the objectives laid out in the Local Transport Plan including:

Objective B: Reduce the impact of motorised traffic, improve road and community safety and increase the proportion of short trips made by bicycle and on foot within residential areas

Objective D: To ensure that the county’s transport system becomes increasingly sustainable and less environmentally damaging, whilst improving quality of life and the health of the population.

Transport policies and guidance

Transport Act (2000)

Under the legislation local transport authorities were required for the first time to publish Local Transport Plans (LTP) setting out their policies for the promotion of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities in their area. These are forward plans with sustainable travel at the centre.

Transport 2010: the Ten-Year Plan (2000)

This plan considers travel planning as key to encouraging increased use of sustainable modes of transport.

Tomorrow’s Roads Safer for Everyone (2000)

The Government’s road safety strategy set targets for casualty reduction by 2010. The targets are set against a baseline of average figures for 1994-1998.

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- 40% reduction in the total number of people killed or seriously injured
- 50% reduction of the number of children killed or seriously injured
- 10% reduction in slight casualties

Greater Manchester has set a stretch target of reducing the number of children killed or seriously injured by 55%. A supplementary target of tackling the significantly higher incidence of casualties in disadvantaged areas was added at a later date.

National Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport (2001)

Travel Plans should be submitted alongside planning applications. This has a significant implication for the development of new or expanded school facilities. The guidance advises that school travel plans should promote safe cycling and walking routes, should restrict parking and car access at and around schools and should encourage on site changing and storage facilities.

DfES and DfT Travelling to School Initiative (2003)

This document’s main objectives were to improve road safety for children and to reduce dependence on the car by promoting walking, cycling and public transport as more responsible, accessible and desirable alternatives for the home to school journey. This document contained the objective for all schools to have a travel plan by 2010.

White Paper: ‘ The Future of Transport: A Network for 2030’ (2004)

This paper sets out a twenty-five year strategy to provide and promote alternatives to the car through

- Encouraging travel planning
- Creating a cycling and walking culture (particularly for children)
- Investment in public transport

Making Smarter Choices Work (2004)

Provides a guide for local authorities on smarter choices, and how to use them to improve traffic flows and ‘make life more pleasant for local people’. This guidance outlines a range of initiatives that both support and encourage sustainable travel by reducing car dependency.

Measures include

- Site specific travel planning
- Improved information
- More efficient car use
- Reducing the need to travel using information and technology

Educational developments

A number of recent key developments within education have, or will have in the near future, a significant impact on the nature of school travel in the city. These changes need to be considered in the development of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy for Salford.

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➤ ***Every Child Matters (2003) and Every Child Matters: Change for Children (2004)***

These documents outline a fresh approach to total well-being from birth to age 19 years. Every child, whatever their circumstances, is to have the necessary support to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

The development of sustainable safe school travel will contribute to many elements of these objectives.

➤ ***14-19 Diplomas***

By 2013 all 14-19 year olds should have access to the full range of diplomas in vocational subject areas. It is unlikely that individual schools will be able to offer all diplomas and therefore more students can be expected to travel during the school day to access the curriculum.

➤ ***Extended schools***

The latest document produced by the Department for Children, Schools and Families in June 2007 (called Extended Schools. Building on Experience) has outlined the following requirements for extended school arrangements:

Primary schools have to provide access to a varied menu of activities, combined with childcare, from 8am to 6pm, five days a week, 48 weeks a year.

Secondary schools need to make the school available or have arrangements to provide access to a safe place to be before and after school hours and offer access to a varied menu of activities which also offer young people a safe place to be from 8am to 6pm during term-time and more flexibly in the holidays (secondary schools do not need to provide access to formal childcare).

Half of primary schools and a third of secondary schools are expected to provide access to this core offer by 2008, and all schools by 2010. No specific targets have been set for special schools, but the government’s prospectus emphasises that children with disabilities or special educational needs must be able to use all the new services.

Where provision is offsite, safe transfer arrangements should be in place, which can be arranged by the provider or the school and charged to parents.

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➤ **Private Finance Initiative, Building Schools For the Future (BSF) and Primary Capital Programme (PCP)**

In September 2005, the Minister of State for Schools and 16-19 Learners approved the £50.23 million Private Finance Initiative (PFI) scheme to rebuild Buile Hill High School on its existing site and Harrop Fold High School on the Hilton Lane site.

The project is central to Salford’s strategy to raise attainment and achieve inclusion at Key Stages 3 and 4 for the most deprived areas of the city by creating schools with the size, stability and capacity for excellence and innovation. The city council has appointed a private sector partner, Hochtief to design, build, finance and operate the new school buildings over a 25 year period.

Building Schools for the Future (BSF) is a government investment programme to invest in improving secondary schools. It has been announced that Salford's BSF Outline Business Case has been approved. This means that more than £150 million is available to invest in transforming the city's secondary school education.

BSF is a long-term programme of investment and change aimed at transforming secondary education by providing 21st century learning environments for all secondary pupils across the city, providing more opportunities for pupils and a greater range of services at each school. The programme should provide five new school buildings and refurbishments for another three schools.

Some of the highlights include proposals for the establishment of an Academy on the current Hope High School site, before it moves to a new building on the Quays adjacent to the mediacity:uk development; a brand new building for Wentworth High School, Walkden High School and All Hallows RC High School and a replacement for The Swinton High School and Moorside High School.

The Primary Capital Programme (PCP) is a major government investment initiative over a 15 year period, starting in April 2009. This will aim to replace or refurbish 50% of primary schools nationally. As part of our vision for primary education in Salford, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) will expect us to take into account pupil projections over the next 15 years which could include a major reorganisation of the primary school estate.

As these changes are made to both primary and secondary education facilities, the travel needs will need to be reassessed and planned for. The development of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy will provide the ideal opportunity for this to take place.

➤ **Healthy Schools**

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The National Healthy School Standard, part of the Healthy Schools programme was launched in October 1999. It provides an accreditation process for education and health partnerships. The standard covers eight key themes: healthy eating, personal social and health education (PSHE), citizenship, drug education, emotional health and well being (including bullying), physical activity, safety and sex and relationship education.

The inter-relationship between health and travel to and from school was reinforced in 2005 when it became a requirement for schools to have completed or be working towards the completion of a School Travel Plan before being accepted onto the Healthy Schools programme. All but one school in Salford is registered with the Healthy Schools Programme.

➤ **Eco Schools**

‘Eco schools’ is an internationally recognized scheme that aims to encourage young people to think about the environment and their impact on it.

The programme is mainly based in schools and provides a simple framework to enable them to analyse their operations and become more sustainable. Young people lead the programme organising their own committees, coming up with ideas and conducting new projects. Schools are rewarded for their efforts by achieving a Bronze, Silver or Green Flag Award. The programme is designed so that it can be applied to all schools, whatever their circumstances. Salford currently has 48 schools in the programme, 3 of which are Green Flag awarded.

The Eco schools scheme provides an ideal framework for schools and pupils to address the need for more sustainable modes of school travel.

Existing Initiatives and Provision

Passenger Transport Unit

The Passenger Transport Unit within the council’s Community, Social and Health Directorate is an operational department which provides the necessary transport for Salford’s home to school transport needs on behalf of the Children’s Services Directorate through a service level agreement.

School Travel Plans

A School Travel Plan (STP) is a document produced by a school or college that sets out how it is going to encourage pupils to walk, cycle or use public transport on the school journey, in order to reduce the number of car journeys to and from school.

An STP contains information about the way pupils presently travel to and from school, targets and an action plan. We are working towards the Department for Transport (DfT) and Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) target of all schools to have an approved plan by 2010. Currently 61 per cent of Salford schools have an approved plan.

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The DCSF/DfT currently provide funding for the employment of a school travel plan adviser. There is currently no guarantee that this funding will continue beyond March 2008.

Walking buses

‘Walking buses’ is the term used to describe any scheme where children are walked to school in an organized group, usually led by parent volunteers. A number of schools in Salford operate walking buses.

In 2007 a further 13 schools received grant funding from the Department for Transport to establish a walking bus scheme.

Walk to School initiatives

Salford has taken part in the annual national ‘Walk to School’ week in May and the annual international ‘Walk to School’ week in October for several years. These initiatives provide resources to encourage schools to promote walking to school.

In October 2007 the ‘Walk to School week’ will be extended to ‘Walk to school month’ for the first time. Individual schools also hold their own walk to school weeks or events such as ‘Walk on Wednesdays’.

Park and Stride

A number of schools have introduced a ‘Park and Stride’ scheme. This involves providing an allocated parking area away from the school entrance. Pupils are dropped off at the allocated point and walk the final length of the school journey. This reduces congestion around the school journey alleviating parking problems and safety issues. In addition independent travel and a healthier lifestyle are promoted.

Cycle storage and parent shelters

As part of the implementation of their school travel plan a number of high schools have provided cycle storage to encourage pupils to cycle to school. Similarly, in primary schools, schools have provided shelters for parents for use whilst waiting to collect children at the end of the school day.

Independent travel training

Independent Travel Training is a structured programme designed to teach students who have special educational needs how to travel independently.

Students learn travel skills for an identified route, usually to and from school or college. They are supported in learning to use public transport and developing the necessary skills for safer independent travel.

The Independent Travel Coordinator currently works closely with staff, students, families and other adults at Chatsworth High School, Oakwood High School and Eccles College. She works one to one with students, developing the necessary skills and awareness to travel a route independently. The programme is well planned, designed for each individual, risk assessed and monitored.

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In the first year, September 2006 to July 2007, three students from Chatsworth, two from Eccles College and thirteen from Oakwood High have been trained and now travel to and from school/college independently on public transport.

For the next academic year approximately 35 students have been identified to be involved in training and this number keeps growing as the students and families acknowledge the ultimate aim to enhance employment opportunities, social activities and promote skills to independent living.

Yellow buses

The Albion High School has a yellow school bus, with all the safety & security measures that go along with it, for example CCTV, dedicated seats, registers and passes.

Bus behaviour initiatives

A number of initiatives are in place to encourage bus travel by reducing the incidences of bullying and other unacceptable behaviour on buses.

- Some schools have identified members of staff as travel coordinators. They act as a point of contact should problems arise and coordinate responses as and when required.
- The 6 school-based police officers in Salford are aware of problems that exist on school buses. They assist in the loading/unloading of pupils on buses to ensure a good level of conduct on the bus. In some circumstances they will travel on board vehicles if there is a specific problem. Police officers receive free travel on buses.
- Bus passes are provided by First Buses and other operators to members of staff at school if they are prepared to travel on buses with pupils to ensure good behaviour (this has happened at Harrop Fold High School).
- Behaviour on buses is monitored. When an incident occurs the bus driver will fill in an electronic incident report form upon returning to the depot. A manager will then email this report form to:
 - GMPTE
 - Community Safety Unit
 - Police
 - School (if they have details)
 - CCTV monitoring station
 - Elected members (GMPTA)

The Greater Manchester Public Transport Executive (GMPTE) collates incidents and issues monthly reports regarding these incidents.

Safer routes to school

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Road safety is often compromised outside the majority of schools, the problem being exacerbated by the number of children who are driven to school and the problems associated with parking and congestion that occur as a result.

The ‘Safer Routes to School’ initiative identifies those schools across the city that have concentrations of child casualties occurring in their vicinity, especially at school start and finish times and this allows a priority list to be drawn up. It is envisaged that two sites will receive treatment each year. The ‘Safer Routes’ package involves a partnership approach with the school, the Road Casualty Reduction Group at Urban Vision as well as the school travel adviser. It provides a holistic approach that includes both amendments to the physical layout of the streetscape as well as tackling the parking problems by working with the school to devise a school travel plan.

Road safety education, training and publicity

As part of their remit the council’s Road Safety Unit works in partnership with the school travel adviser on pedestrian and cycle safety and promotion of safer attitudes and behaviour on journeys to and from school.

- **School visits** - Primary schools throughout the city are visited annually. High schools are visited on request. Lessons are tailored to suit the requirements of the school or individual teachers. A number of road safety resources and accompanying lesson plans have also been distributed to schools to encourage the inclusion of road safety into the PSHE and Citizenship curriculum.
- **Cycle training** – the council’s Road Safety Unit offers cycle training to every maintained primary school. For independent schools it is necessary to request a training course from the Road Safety Unit. The course is available for pupils who are in year five and six who are aged ten years or over. The Road Safety Unit undertakes approximately 50 courses annually (700-750 Pupils). They are practical courses that help children to develop their cycle control skills, road safety knowledge and traffic awareness. Pupils have to complete a cycling workbook as homework before commencement of the course. Courses include riding exercises in an off-road area, such as a school playground, leading to riding practice on quiet public roads.
- **Practical pedestrian training** is designed to teach pedestrian skills to 5 to 7 year olds by means of practical roadside training. Volunteers, usually parents, train the children under the guidance of the authority’s pedestrian training co-ordinator.
- The ‘Streets **Ahead**’ scheme trains out of school providers to carry out pedestrian training with those in their care. It also assists with risk assessing routes to and from schools and provides handbooks and resources such as high visibility jackets for children and adults.

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- A number of **publicity** campaigns are run annually. These are usually to support regional or national campaigns.

School crossing patrols

Salford has 90 school crossing sites. Urban Vision manages the service and is responsible for the recruitment, training, retention and supervision of all patrols.

Methodology and timetable for strategy development

Using school travel plans and school census information on mode of travel to school we are in the process of assessing children and young people's travel needs.

We are carrying out an audit of the infrastructure in place to support sustainable travel. This includes bus routes, cycle ways, controlled crossing points and traffic calming measures. It will also take account of personal safety and security including poor behaviour and bullying on school buses, walking buses and safer routes to school.

We intend to map relevant data collected during the needs assessment and infrastructure audit. Additional information relating to each school will be recorded in the form of a spreadsheet. The maps and spreadsheet will be published online for public access.

The results of the needs assessment and infrastructure audit will be used to devise a strategy action plan in consultation with stakeholders.

1.	Begin infrastructure audit and consultation with stakeholders	August 2007
2.	Publish strategy development document as statement of intent	October 2007
3.	Collect baseline data	April 2008
4.	Set performance targets	May 2008
5.	Complete audit for every school and college.	June 2008
6.	Complete mapping exercise	July 2008
7.	Publish individual school audit information and maps	July 2008
8.	Publish action plan	August 2008
9.	Establish Implementation and Monitoring Group	August 2008
10.	Establish monitoring and review system	August 2008
11.	Update strategy and publish online	Annually – August

Stakeholder consultation

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Although the development of the strategy is being co-ordinated jointly by the Children’s Services Directorate and Urban Vision, a wider range of stakeholders will be involved in the development of the strategy.

Stakeholders will include children and young people, parents, schools, the school travel plan adviser, local transport providers and the Primary Care Trust. This will be done through one to one meetings, workshops and the work of the strategy development and implementation steering group.

The strategy will be subject to a full process of consultation and debate before the council adopts the final version.

Funding

The DCSF has made an allocation of £18 113 for the development and funding of the strategy in the financial year 2007/8.

Performance indicators and targets

The following performance indicators and target will be used to measure the objectives of the Sustainable School Travel Strategy

- **Percentage of schools with an approved school travel plan**
This is currently 61% of schools. We are working to the target of 100% schools to have an approved school travel plan by 2010.
- **Percentage of pupils using sustainable modes of travel to school**
We will use the data from the January 2008 school census to establish a baseline. A target will then be set.
- **Number of child road casualties**
We are currently working to reduce child deaths and serious injuries by 55% by 2010 (compared to a baseline of 1994-1998). A baseline and target will also be set for all child casualties at school travel peak times.

Implementation and monitoring

A steering group with representation from a number of stakeholders will be responsible for ensuring the implementation of the strategy action plan.

Through the steering group we will set up a system of monitoring and review. This will include measuring performance against the targets set and comparing Salford’s performance with other Greater Manchester councils.

Children’s Services Directorate
Salford City Council
October 2007