
By: David Hall, Head of Transport & Development
To: Highways Advisory Board – 5 May 2009
Subject: Smarter Choices – 2009 Progress Report
Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Following on from a report to this Board on 8 July 2008, this updated annual progress report indicates the breadth and scale of Sustainable Travel initiatives currently underway. They complement the wider 'Greener Kent' agenda and ensure that Kent Highway Services and its partners continue to make a substantial contribution to tackling congestion, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions across the county.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In July 2004, the DfT published 'Smarter Choices - Changing the Way We Travel'. The document was the result of a project that looked at the potential impact that 'soft factor' or indirect interventions can have on travel demand. These 'soft' transport policy measures included workplace and School Travel Plans. The report demonstrated that, for relatively little investment compared to large capital infrastructure schemes, 'soft' measures have a key role to play in changing travel patterns and improving accessibility.
- 1.2 In 2004 KCC secured additional funding from the DfT and DfES (DCSF) to employ a team of School Travel Advisors whose principal role would be to work with schools across the county to deliver School Travel Plans. School Travel Plans are a strategy developed by the whole school community to address issues of local congestion, pollution and safety attributable to the school-run. They contain clear objectives and targets and a range of measures tailored to the circumstances of that school.
- 1.3 Since 2004 the team has developed and expanded its remit, working collaboratively with partners both inside and outside of KCC to deliver a broad range of targeted measures aimed at promoting and facilitating 'smarter' travel choices for people of all ages across the county.
- 1.4 This report indicates the breadth and scale of the work that is currently underway to complement the wider 'Greener Kent' agenda, ensuring that Kent Highway Services and its partners make a substantial contribution to tackling congestion, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions across the county.

2. Key Achievements

2.1. Some headline achievements in 2008/09 include:

- 50-60 new School Travel Plans, taking the Kent Total to **470** (approx) or **78%**
- A **1%** shift to sustainable modes of travel to school (against 2006/07 school census base data)
- **114,000** school-run journeys saved through walk to school initiatives (as of March 09)

- Over **13,000** Kent Freedom Passes issued, with an estimated **2%-6%** improvement in journey times outside those schools with a significant uptake of the scheme
- **400** personal pledges from Maidstone residents to make 'greener' travel choices as part of In Town Without My Car (September 2008)
- **£100,000** of capital investment in sustainable travel to school facilities, within school grounds (Local Transport Plan)
- A projected **3,163,283** car journeys saved in 2009 through Kentcarshare which equates to a saving of over 1000 metric tonnes of CO₂

3. School Travel Plans

- 3.1 The highly successful School Travel Plans project is now entering its final 'official' year. As part of funding secured by the Government's "Travelling to School" initiative, KCC – along with all other Local Authorities – is expected to deliver School Travel Plans at 100% of schools in the County by March 2010. At the time of writing, it is expected that between 50 and 60 Travel Plans will have been completed during 2008/09, bringing the total to approximately 470 schools (78%). While this still leaves a further 130 (22%) schools to achieve in 2009/10, this is considered achievable, particularly if a more direct and prescriptive approach is taken to producing these documents at harder to reach schools. Regardless of the final tally at March 2010, the project represents a huge achievement, having built on a baseline of just 7 schools with Travel Plans in 2004.
- 3.2 As well as showing a demonstrable impact on the school-run, the initiative has also secured in excess of £2.3 million of additional Capital funding to schools in Kent which have been spent on a wide range of initiatives to support the objectives of School Travel Plans e.g. cycle storage, sheltered waiting areas for parents, footpaths etc
- 3.3 A recent announcement confirmed that the School Travel Advisor funding, currently received as part of KCC's Area Based Grant, will be continued in 2010/11. We await further guidance from Government as to their priorities for delivery beyond 2010.

4. Local Transport Plan School Capital Grant Funding

- 4.1 For the first time in 2008/09, funding was made available through Kent's own Local Transport Plan to schools proactively driving forward their School Travel Plans and providing solid evidence of modal shift away from the car. £100,000 of funding was split between 12 schools across the county leading to the development of a range of initiatives including secure cycle/scooter storage, improved pedestrian access, signage and sheltered parent waiting areas. The scheme has been an excellent tool to secure the longevity of School Travel Plans and to further engage schools in taking responsibility for their carbon footprint and impact on local traffic congestion. A new set of submissions are currently being assessed for funding in 2009/10.

5. Kent Freedom Pass

- 5.1 KCC first introduced the Kent Freedom Pass scheme in June 2007, providing bus travel free at the point of use to students attending school in three pilot areas (Canterbury district, Tonbridge town and Tunbridge Wells district). Since then it has proven very successful, encouraging children away from car travel and on to Kent's bus network. By the end of the first year, pass holders had made more than 1 million journeys and over 13,000 passes have now been issued.
- 5.2 The original pilot scheme was intended to run until 2009 however its success led to it being extended to the remainder of Tonbridge & Malling, Dover, Maidstone and Shepway districts in June 2008 and Swale and Thanet in January 2009. The scheme

will be extended to its final countywide phase in June 2009 by covering schools in the districts of: Ashford, Dartford, Gravesham and Sevenoaks

5.3 Preliminary research has indicated that:

- 30% of those applying for a Kent Freedom Pass, were previously driven to school (it is unclear at this stage what proportion of these students have actually made the switch for their home to school trips)
- Journey times have improved between 2% to 6% outside those schools with a good uptake of the scheme

6. Sustainable Travel to School Strategy and supporting initiatives

6.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport on the journey to school. Kent's Sustainable Travel to School Strategy was duly published as a consultation draft on 31 August 2007 and was published in its final form on 31 August 2008.

6.2 Good progress is being made on the delivery of the Strategy and its development has led to improved joined-up working between directorates involved in co-ordinating travel to school, including KHS, CFE and Commercial Services.

6.3 As part of its Area Based Grant, Kent receives £112,865 per annum (5 years from 2007/08) from Government to support the delivery of this strategy. The following have been delivered in 2008/09, as required by the Act.

- An infrastructure audit, highlighting sustainable transport provision at all Kent schools
- A Sustrans Bike IT officer promoting cycling to schools in Ashford
- Partnership funding for the Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group Charity
- Improving web based travel information for schools, pupils and parents

6.4 In 2009/10 it is intended to explore the potential for Theatre in Education to support key messages and also software to support and streamline the ongoing monitoring and auditing of Travel Plans (see para 7.5 re. iTRACE)

6.5 Additionally two new initiatives are being piloted including a hard hitting campaign targeting parents parking on 'School Keep Clear' zig zags and a scheme called *Journease* which aims to engage secondary school aged children in providing journey planning information and resources to their peers. This is a similar concept to the Junior Road Safety Officer scheme where pupils act as a conduit within the school, promoting key messages.

7. Employer / Developer Travel Plans

7.1 Changes in Government Guidance have led to a significant increase in Travel Plan Conditions secured through the planning process. In this context a Travel Plan can be defined as 'A strategy for managing multi-modal access to a site or development focusing on promoting access by sustainable modes'. The main objective of a Travel Plan is to reduce the number of single occupant car trips to a site. A successful Travel Plan will give anyone travelling to and from a business or organisation a choice of travel options and encourage them to use the more sustainable ones.

7.2 Provision of an effective Travel Plan will never be able to justify the siting of a development in a totally unsuitable location. However, a sufficiently strong Travel Plan may help to counterbalance the disadvantages of a site where sustainable access without Travel Plan measures would be less than ideal. A Travel Plan will need to be

robust enough to give assurance that the sustainable travel patterns predicted by the developer will be delivered once the site is complete and operating.

- 7.3 Significant progress has been made in the last year in clarifying protocols and processes between KHS, District Planning Authorities and the Highway Agency for the scoping, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of Travel Plan conditions. This has included the publication of Kent's "Guidance on Transport Assessment and Travel Plans" which is intended for adoption by KCC as a material consideration in Planning.
- 7.4. The five tests relating to the appropriate use of planning obligations (as set out in ODPM Circular 05/2005) will be adhered to when considering the Travel Plan as part of the legal agreement. The use of conditions will also need to be in line with the guidance outlined in the DoE Circular 11/95. This is particularly important in the current economic climate where KHS and the Planning Authority need to balance what is 'reasonable' and viable with environmental and sustainability considerations.
- 7.5. KHS are seeking to procure a bespoke piece of software called iTRACE to substantially streamline and improve the tracking and monitoring of these Travel Plans. iBase Systems Ltd (iBase) has developed and implemented the iTRACE system for capture management and reporting of work place and schools Travel Plans across London. iTRACE has been developed over the last 4 years with the support of Transport for London.

8. National Rail Station Travel Plan Pilot

- 8.1 In 2008 a partnership led by Kent Highway Services, Southeastern and Ashford's Future made a successful bid to participate in a National Rail Station Travel Plan Pilot. The 2007 Rail White Paper proposed that station travel plans be tested through a series of pilots, and ATOC is co-ordinating a national pilot scheme on behalf of the Department for Transport DfT. Ashford station was selected as one of 31 successful applications across England out of a total of 70 bids.
- 8.2 The National Rail Station Travel Pilot provides an exciting opportunity for Kent to participate in a national initiative to promote sustainable travel to rail stations. The development of the Travel Plan and supporting initiatives will assist the sustainable expansion of commuter rail travel in Kent as a result of the new High Speed (HS1) services. It is intended that best practice be rolled out to other stations in due course.
- 8.3 The Ashford Station Travel Plan is due to be launched in May 2009, with a series of innovative measures, including personalised travel planning and marketing tailored to the specific needs of individual commuters.

9. Kentcarshare / Kentjourneyshare

- 9.1 In the context of the Ashford Station Travel Plan (highlighted above), the successful Kentcarshare journey matching facility is being developed and expanded to include greater flexibility for journey matching.
- 9.2 This will include new 'budi' elements for walking, cycling and taxi trips aimed at improving personal security, knowledge and confidence of local cycle routes and cost sharing opportunities.
- 9.3 The Kentcarshare scheme currently has 3000 members with 3117 journeys registered. Based on current matches it is estimated that in 2009 the scheme will save:
 - 3,163,283 miles

- £577,312
- 1,040.7 metric tonnes of CO2

10. Streetcar

- 10.1 Kent's partnership with Streetcar to promote and develop Car Clubs in the county continues. The core scheme at County Hall has recently expanded to include an additional third car and the intention is that this will ultimately be located in The Mall car park, with the potential to serve Maidstone Borough Council and Jacobs employees, as well as being more readily available to residents to the south of the town centre.
- 10.2 Positive discussions have taken place with District Council partners and developers, raising awareness of the potential for such schemes to address parking limitations on new town centre residential developments. A number of developments across the county have the provision of a Car Club facility conditioned as part of S106 Agreements and it is hoped that this model will serve to quickly develop a viable network of Car Club cars across the County, presenting a genuine alternative to traditional car ownership

11. Travel Awareness Campaigns

- 11.1 A key part of our strategy is to carry the sustainable travel message to people through a series of campaigns, promotions utilising the media and face to face communication. Examples of such activities in 2008/09 have included:

- *Maidstone Goes Green*

The development of an exciting new partnership between KCC, Maidstone Borough Council, The Maidstone Town Centre Management Group and Maidstone's three main shopping centres (The Mall, Fremlins Walk and Royal Star Arcade) led to opportunities to promote sustainable transport in the town under the umbrella of 'Maidstone Goes Green'. Free space was made available in all three of the shopping centres to promote KCC led 'green' initiatives and it's hoped that this activity will prelude a major event on 'In Town Without My Car Day' on the 22 September. This is traditionally the culmination of European Mobility Week (13-21st September).

- *In Town Without My Car*

Building on the success of the Maidstone Goes Green partnership, In Town Without My Car held in Maidstone in September 2008, represented the largest promotional and awareness raising campaign that KHS have delivered to date. A week of activity and promotion in all 3 major shopping centres, culminated in a day when all Maidstone residents and employees were encouraged to leave their car at home and try a sustainable alternative. A partnership with the KM helped to ensure excellent and positive publicity for the event.



- 11.2 Through the development of these initiatives, KCC have forged excellent partnerships with local organisations e.g. Maidstone Town Centre Management, local shopping centres, retailers, lobby groups and the media. This partnership working has maximised the potential of such initiatives and has also allowed them to be delivered in a very cost effective way through sponsorship in kind. KHS aim to build on these partnerships in 2009/10, facilitating the delivery of our core messages at the local level through funding to support locally led campaigns and initiatives. A Maidstone Goes Green/In Town Without My Car event is planned for Maidstone in 2009 and is to be led by the Town Centre Management. Early discussions are also underway with Canterbury City Council and the Canterbury Employers' Travel Plan Forum regarding a similar event later in the year.

12. Conclusion & Recommendation

- 12.1 The success of Smarter Choices relies on developing partnerships with people and organisations across Kent. A fundamental principle of Smarter Choices is to develop and deliver highway schemes and services, which are aligned with people's travel needs. This can be achieved by continuing to engage with the public and other stakeholders to raise awareness and ownership, leading to the development of effective schemes that deliver real behavioural change.
- 12.2 Smarter Choices gives Kent an opportunity to make good progress towards improving access, tackling congestion and delivering sustainable development as defined in the LTP2. The plan builds on good practice and is achievable and cost effective. Members are asked to note the good progress being made and continue to support the delivery of the programme.

Background Documents:

None.

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