

# Travel Wisely

## *Ideas for Action*

### School Travel Plans

A school travel plan is a document produced by a school in conjunction with the Local Authority. It encompasses all the issues relevant to journeys to and from the school and includes concerns about safety and health, and proposals for ways to make improvements. It is away of bringing together the ideas and contributions of different groups of people, to help to solve problems.

The 'Road Safety Strategy for Wales', explains that:

"school travel plans aim to encourage schools to identify and solve problems associated with the school journey (especially those related to safety). The plans are produced by the schools themselves and do not have to include physical measures to improve routes but instead are a 'way of living and learning'."

School travel plans have attracted government support as they are seen as a way to help reduce the number of unnecessary car journeys.

The plan can be used as a basis for measuring change, and, when approved by the governing body (or the school board in Scotland), it can become a formal statement of school policy.

Developing and writing the plan helps to:

- involve lots of people
- produce fresh ideas
- share out tasks and responsibilities
- define priorities, objectives and targets
- keep everyone informed of intentions and actions
- make links to classroom work
- integrate work on school travel with the Healthy Schools and Eco Schools schemes.

School travel plans are co-operative ventures, and their success depends on informing, consulting, and involving everyone with an interest in the project. This includes pupils, parents, teachers, governors, school premises manager, local residents, councillors, health promotion officers, and perhaps public transport operators.

Representatives of these groups need to be actively involved in working out the details of the plan, and everyone who might be affected, for example all parents, should be consulted about proposals.

Most local authorities in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland have a School Travel Adviser or Co-ordinator who will give support and guidance.

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## How to write a School Travel Plan

Start by forming an action group or committee with its own name.

It could be a fairly formal group that meets at the school, or an informal group which works just as well.

Seek the support of your local authority school travel adviser / co-ordinator. Many local authorities now produce their own excellent guidelines to help schools prepare a STP, in print or on websites, and some supply a template to simplify the process.

The main elements will be common to all STPs but each plan is unique because it is produced and owned by a particular school, and addresses that school's needs.

Detailed guidance on how to produce a STP, what to include, and what it might look like can be found in the Sustrans free leaflet 'How to develop a school travel plan', and in the DfT booklet 'Travelling to School - A good Practice Guide'. The Scottish Executive's booklet 'Guidance on How to Run Safer Routes to School' contains lots of helpful advice.

The following list is a good basic guide to what a School Travel Plan should contain:

- a brief description of the location, size and type of school;
- a brief description of the travel/transport problems faced by the school/cluster of schools. (This should include all pupils' travel needs: journeys to and from school at normal start/finish times, journeys to attend pre-and after-school events and journeys made during the school day to attend activities at other locations;)
- the results of a survey to identify how children currently travel to/from school and how they would like to travel to/from school.
- clearly defined targets and objectives;
- details of proposed measures;
- a detailed timetable for implementation;
- clearly defined responsibilities;
- evidence that all interested parties have been consulted;
- proposals for monitoring and review.'

Essentially the plan is a statement of problems, which need to be addressed, and a strategy for overcoming or reducing them by a number of initiatives which will make journeys to and from school safer and healthier. The initiatives will often include promotional activities, training, better facilities, enhanced public transport services, and safety improvements to the physical environment.

## How to put a School Travel Plan into practice

The plan needs to be known. Give it suitable publicity. If it is a few pages long, it helps to have a leaflet or poster version highlighting the main targets and proposed actions, which can be displayed around the school and inserted into newsletters to parents.

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Seek opportunities to reinforce the aims behind the plan; for instance the Sustrans video could be shown at assemblies, 'new parents' induction meetings, or PTA meetings. Inviting media coverage of special events helps to spread the word, and can be a morale booster for those involved.

There should be reference to the School Travel Plan in the school prospectus and on the school's website, and it could be part of a home school agreement. Ask the governing body / school board to approve the School Travel Plan as part of the school's development plan - and to review it annually. The plan will need to be regularly modified to reflect the school's changing needs and circumstances.

DfES/DfT will give a grant to every English state school that implements a School Travel Plan to help fund measures identified in the STP, such as cycle parking, lockers, bus bays. Details are available from local authority school travel advisers. The capital grant funding has been extended and is now available until 2007/8.

## Case Study

Afon Taf School, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, [www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk)

The school is sited in an ex mining village of about 400 people. The partners are pupils, local business, Local Authority, Welsh Assembly. The Key Features of the plan involve Curriculum Work, Cycling, Walking, Community Involvement. Class 9Q used school travel as a part of their Geography coursework. The target was to bid for a slice of the Welsh Assembly's Safe Routes to Schools budget to construct secure cycle storage. The class divided itself into groups, each with a particular responsibility to deliver one element of the plan to build new cycle facilities on behalf of the school's 1,300 students. During the course of the school year, pupils gave up their free time to work on the project. The final bid was supported by the full range of IT specialisms - video, CD-Rom and desk-top hard copy evidence. One group tested opinions within the school and those of parents. More than half those asked said they would like to cycle and parents said they would let them. Another looked at the siting and design of storage racks and sheds, while yet another worked on the details of the management of the cycle to school scheme covering such things as training, locking and unlocking the units, and a system of cycle permits. A final group looked at upgrading a riverside path to create a traffic-free cycle route to Aberfan, where about 60 per cent of pupils living within two miles of the school are located. The 'Riverside path group' identified that in parts the main pathway into school was too narrow, and that the surface was unsuitable for bikes especially in wetter conditions. The group met with the Road Safety Officer, surveyor and teacher in charge of land and buildings to discuss possible solutions. The pupils then presented their findings to the Welsh Assembly. The bid was presented to the Welsh Assembly – and was successful, being awarded £60,000 for cycle storage and other facilities. The Cycle storage was installed in September and has been full each day since.