

School Transport Scrutiny Review

Executive Summary

- > The terms of reference of the review group were:
 - To assess the impact of the 'school run.'
 - To identify pupils', parents' and teacher attitudes towards school transport.
 - To identify the effectiveness of school travel plans.
 - To identify demand for additional public services and associated costs.
 - to identify any strategic recommendations for improvement and to consider what actions, if any, are available to the District Council.

- > Car use is increasing nationally and in Wiltshire the number of children being driven to school is currently rising year on year.

- > The benefits of reducing the use of the car to transport children to school are:
 - Increased child safety
 - Healthier, more active, independent and alert children
 - A cleaner environment
 - Improved amenity for residents living near schools

- > Wiltshire County Council organises transport for approximately 11,000 entitled students through contracts with bus and taxi companies. The budget for this, together with transport for students with special education needs, is approximately £12.5 million.

- > In addition to funding buses for school travel, the County Council works with schools to draw up travel plans with the aim of encouraging alternative methods of school travel. Whilst the travel plan system is effective at identifying issues at particular schools, there are aspects of the travel plan process which need further refinement to maximise the benefits that the plans can bring. For example, the plans need to be shared amongst transport and highways officers generally within local authorities in the county to ensure that achievable improvements are realised. The particular examples brought to the attention of the review group are highlighted within the report.

- > There are already examples of innovative ways of achieving this reduction in car use for the school run such as the "Kiss and Run" scheme operated from the Beehive Park and Ride site by Leaden Hall. The review group feel that these should be promoted at a strategic level to enable them to become standard practice across the county.

- > In addition to this, there are new practices which could be introduced which would make a significant positive impact on reducing the congestion created by the school run. A pilot of

yellow bus schemes at various locations across the country has proven that these dedicated school buses not only have many advantages such as a regular driver who can get to know the children, but they can be an affordable alternative to normal buses. The review group considers that an in-depth analysis of the suitability of yellow buses for use in Wiltshire would be beneficial.

- > During the review, the research analysed by the review group demonstrated that in order to achieve a significant shift away from the use of the car, it would be necessary to introduce measures to actively discourage car use as well as encouraging alternative forms of transport. These methods could include exclusion zones or “no stopping” zones around schools to encourage parents to find alternative drop-off points away from the school gates

In summary the recommendations from the review are:

1. *The review group consider that further consideration should be given to running a network of yellow school buses in Wiltshire. However, in the short-term, the review group believe that there are other changes which could be brought into practice which could also have a dramatic impact at minimal cost.*
2. *That the specific request from Shrewton Primary School that a bus be provided for children travelling from Larkhill be investigated by Wiltshire County Council’s Bus Network Manager.*
3. *The review group would like Wilts & Dorset to explore the possibility of offering “bulk-buy” tickets to schools to reduce the costs for non-entitled children of travelling on commercial buses and that schools should be approached and offered these tickets. The review group also calls upon Wilts & Dorset to offer half-fares to school children before 9am. In addition, the review group would like the District Council and the County Council to lobby the government for an introduction of a similar concessionary fares scheme for children travelling on buses as that introduced for those over 60.*
4. *The review group fully endorse the Salisbury Area Minibus Brokerage Agency scheme and would encourage any schools that have mini-buses or, any schools that would like to hire a mini-bus, or perhaps arrange a joint ownership scheme, to contact the Salisbury District Community Transport group to pursue this. The review group also recommend that a copy of any promotional material on the scheme be sent to every school in the District.*
5. *The review group investigated the use of park and ride sites as drop off points from which students could walk or cycle to school, or be collected by a mini bus on a shuttle service such as the “Kiss and Run” operated by Leaden Hall. This has support from the former Salisbury District Council leader and Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder. In the opinion of*

the review group, considerable scope exists for extending this to other schools. Therefore it is recommended that the Head of Forward Planning and Transportation at the District Council make contact with the schools listed in the report to progress this.

- 6. The review group consider park and ride buses are not running at maximum capacity between 3pm and 4pm when the school day finishes. Therefore the option to use the park and ride buses for the return journey from school should be maximised by Salisbury District Council, Wiltshire County Council and Wilts & Dorset.*
- 7. All schools should be encouraged to share the names and addresses of all parents who wish to car share to increase uptake as operated by Leaden Hall.*
- 8. It is recommended that the schools hold a list of volunteers to supervise walking buses and that support be sought from the wider community to achieve a greater number of volunteers than at present.*
- 9. The review group recommends that parking ambassadors should visit schools on an occasional basis on days convenient to the schools. Further to this the review group consider that the visits of the ambassadors should be unannounced and any parents in violation of parking restrictions should be penalised.*
- 10. The review group would like the County Council to seriously consider the requests for 20 mph zones at each school visited during the review.*
- 11. Each school should appoint a travel plan champion and consideration must be given to a periodic handover of travel plan responsibilities. It is not recommended that headteachers take on the responsibility of the travel plan. However, an interested governor/parent can act as an effective travel plan “champion” for the school travel plan.*
- 12. Once a school has achieved a grant for on-site capital works under the “Travelling to School Initiative”, the criteria should be relaxed to allow the subsequent grants to be spent on off-site works.*
- 13. To maximise the effectiveness of travel plans all requirements of schools must be enshrined in the adopted travel plan. The new officer recruited by the County Council to oversee the implementation of school travel plans should then share the plans between travel plan advisers, bus network organisers and highway engineers to ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivering the measures identified. Schools should also be given specific and timely indications of whether measures contained within the plan can be achieved.*

14. *St Edmunds School felt there needed to be a champion at national level to move school travel issues forward as Jamie Oliver did for school dinners. The review group would support this approach.*
15. *St Osmunds School, Salisbury – It is recommended that the Council set up a meeting as a priority with the school and representatives of the Friary and agree an action plan to take this issue forward as a matter of high importance and that Salisbury District Council enforce residents' off road parking areas within Friary to prevent unauthorised parking.*
16. *Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School – It is recommended that the Joint Transportation Team, in partnership with Sustrans investigate the completion of the cycle path and the Joint Transportation Team liaise with the Travelwise Team to investigate the creation of a pavement from the school to the Reading Rooms and write to the school with the outcome.*
17. *Trafalgar School – Given the serious accident involving a child on this road, it is recommended that a safe crossing point on The Borough be progressed as a matter of urgency. During the review it came to the attention of the review group that this solution was desired by the school and this was brought to the attention of Wiltshire County Council. It is understood that School Travel Advisors are now working with both the Downton schools, the parish council, and officers from the Joint Transportation Team with a view to progressing this scheme and the review group would fully endorse this.*
18. *Bemerton St John primary school – the safe path alongside the cricket ground to link the school with a car park should be given a high priority. Additionally the feasibility of the continuous path to Quidhampton be investigated. The County Councillors for the area are currently progressing this matter however, it is understood from the Travelwise Manager that the above schemes cannot be funded from within school travel budgets. The review group strongly support the actions of the local members in seeking a solution to this issue and recommended that the Joint Transportation Team be asked to assess them and report on whether they can progress them.*
19. *Whilst it is acknowledged that there may be planning constraints upon building a school on one site at Shrewton Primary School, the review group would request that Salisbury District Council's Development Services Unit offers appropriate guidance.*
20. *During interviews, the Headteacher of St Edmunds School on the Laverstock campus indicated that she would support the use of the park and ride sites as strategic drop off points particularly the London Road site for St Edmunds. This would require a safe walking route to*

link the Park and Ride site with the Laverstock campus and could be a continuation of the Bishopdown/Laverstock cycle way. Children travelling from Amesbury to Salisbury schools could be dropped off at the Beehive Park and Ride site and then buses could be used for the remainder of the journey, children attending Westwood St Thomas' could be dropped off at Wilton Park and Ride and Britford Park & Ride is available for a minibus pick-up for Trafalgar school. Sites could be equipped with bicycles for the students to be able to cycle the remainder of the journey to school, or the students could walk or be collected by bus. Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council should investigate this further as a priority.

- 21. It is recommended that in all the above cases the local district, county and parish councillors be involved from as early a stage as possible.*
- 22. The review group would like relevant officers to provide monitoring reports on all of the above schemes and report back to the full Scrutiny Panel with progress quarterly.*

Salisbury District Council: Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Panel

The School Run: An examination of School Transport with an assessment of its overall effectiveness and impact in South Wiltshire

Introduction by Councillor Ian McLennan

Lead Member: School Run Review Group

Children represent the future. Providing them with a first class education is essential, ensuring a safe, healthy route to and from school commonsense. Schools are a magnet not only for children but also for cars. The arrival and departure of our children at the school gate has become a daily hazard for them. Local school Travel Plans have assisted but are just one ingredient towards increasing safety and cannot address a wider vision.

During our investigation we were welcomed by schools, observed their successes and frustrations and could see that their difficulties often lay outside rather than inside the campus. We met with County and District councillors and officers and Wilts and Dorset Bus Company. We experienced some positive outcomes and met some barriers mostly where an organisation wished to keep to it's 'comfort zone'.

We have made many recommendations for single and collective implementation. These can make important differences to some schools. We encourage all schools to adopt ideas and best practice from the pathfinders. I am pleased to note that already there are signs that some of our recommendations are coming to fruition.

However, when we examine our wider vision, it is clear that fundamental change is sought by the public. For example 7 out of 10 people agree the congestion issue. Virtually everyone believes dedicated school buses to be a good idea and would like to see councils and schools invest in them. Where cars are essential 'Drop Off Zones' gain overwhelming support with school exclusion or no stopping zones complementing the improvement. Parents, teachers and local residents would welcome these improvements. Just imagine schools clear of static traffic and children arriving by means other than car!

The Scrutiny Group knows much can be accomplished if all parties commit to a radical change in their current outlook. We are yet to be convinced that all parties possess the necessary qualities.

It has been a pleasure to work with all members of the Review Group and we would all wish to record our thanks to Sara Draper for facilitating the process, offering advice, putting our thoughts into words and carrying out essential research to enable us to reach practical conclusions and explore best practice.

I commend our report to you.

Report of the School Run Scrutiny Review Group:

An examination of School Transport with an assessment of its overall effectiveness and impact in South Wiltshire

Contents

Terms of reference and scope of the School Run Scrutiny Review	4
Membership of the Scrutiny Review Group.....	4
Methodology.....	5
The Current Situation In Respect of School Travel In South Wiltshire	7
Wiltshire County Council’s Contribution to School Transport	
Buses.....	11
Travel Plans.....	13
Results from Visits to Schools and Consultation:	
Innovative Solutions and Best Practice	15
Issues To Be Resolved – District Wide	16
Issues To Be Resolved – Site Specific.....	17
People’s Voice Consultation	20
How Can The Numbers of Cars Arriving at the School Gates Be Reduced?	21
Site Specific Solutions.....	30
Bibliography.....	32

Terms of Reference and Scope of the School Run Scrutiny Review

1. The School Run Scrutiny Review Group was commissioned by the Council's Environment & Transport Overview & Scrutiny Panel in April 2005 to undertake a review of the school transport provision and the traffic impact of the school run in South Wiltshire.
2. The terms of reference of the review group was:
 - To assess the impact of the 'school run.'
 - To identify pupils, parents and teacher attitudes towards school transport.
 - To identify the effectiveness of school travel plans.
 - To identify demand for additional public services and associated costs.
 - to identify any strategic recommendations for improvement and to consider what actions, if any, are available to the District Council.

Membership of the School Run Review Group

3. Councillor Ian McLennan (Labour, Laverstock Ward) was appointed by the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Group to lead the School Run Review. Councillors Kevin Cardy (Conservative, Bishopdown Ward) and James Spencer (Liberal Democrat, Bulford Ward), and Mrs Pam Rouquette (Agenda 21 representative) were appointed to serve on the Review Group.

Sara Draper in the Council's Democratic Services Unit supported the Scrutiny work.

Methodology

4. The review was undertaken in accordance with the council's new scrutiny arrangements and included the following research methods:

Desk Research:

A list of publications, papers and documents was assembled by the scrutiny support officer Sara Draper throughout the review. A bibliography can be found at page 32. Each member of the Review Group was presented with a full set of these background papers.

Interviews:

Interviews were conducted with: Councillor Kevin Wren (Leader of the Council until February 2006, and a local county councillor), Councillor Dennis Brown (Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport); Mr G Good (Operations Director for Wilts and Dorset), Mr M Callow (Commercial Director for Wilts and Dorset), William Prendergast (Wiltshire County Council Travelwise Manager) and Phil Grocock (Wiltshire County Council's Bus Network Manager).

The transcripts of the interviews have been included in the supporting papers.

School Visits:

The Review Group visited the following schools as part of the scrutiny process:

- Bemerton St John
- St Osmunds
- Shrewton Primary School
- Stratford Sub-Castle
- Godolphin School
- St Edmunds School
- Trafalgar School, Downton

The Group met with governors, headteachers and travel plan champions to discuss their views, achievements and concerns. Reports detailing those matters discussed at the visits can be found in the supporting papers. These sessions were particularly helpful, providing a valuable insight into the impact of travel on schools and practical examples of the situation around local schools during peak times. The evidence gained at these visits was vital in shaping the conclusions and recommendations contained in this report.

Consultation:

Councillor Ian McLennan wrote to all schools in the District inviting them to submit their views on school travel and travel plans. 17 schools, 24% of those contacted, responded to the

consultation either by meeting with the members or by writing to submit views to the review group. A series of questions on school travel were devised as part of the Autumn 2005 People's Voice questionnaire and over 500 responses were received.

A full analysis of the consultation responses together with the comments received can be found in the background papers.

Best Practice Research

The Review Group considered best practice research published by the Department of Transport and Sustrans including pilots of yellow buses, a report entitled "A Safer Journey to School – A Guide To School Travel Plans", a report entitled "House of Commons Transport Select Committee - Inquiry into Home to School Transport", and reports published by Transport 2000. The documents consulted can be found with the supporting papers.

Review Group Meetings

5. After each stage of the scrutiny review the members of the Review Group came together to discuss the issues raised and to identify areas where further work or research may be required.

The Current Situation In Respect of School Travel In South Wiltshire

6. The evidence gathered by the review group demonstrated that there are over a billion school run trips per year in the UK.¹ Information provided by Wiltshire County Council indicated that 46% of primary children and 24% of secondary children in the county travel to school by car² and Government figures indicate that “school run” traffic equates to 20% of cars on UK roads during the morning rush hour.³
7. The reasons for an increase in car use are complex. In Britain today, families have more disposable income than previous generations and therefore are more likely to own at least one, if not several, cars per family. In addition it is increasingly common for the parent responsible for taking the child to school, to continue to work and therefore be restricted by time. However, in addition to general lifestyle changes, members were also aware of changes to school travel patterns specifically.
8. Since 2002⁴ parents have been given a degree of choice about which school their child attends and are no longer restricted by the proximity of a school to their home. However, children attending a school outside of their catchment area are not entitled to free bus travel and it can often be expensive for parents to send children to school on commercial buses particularly when there is more than one child in a family. In addition Salisbury has a relatively high number of private schools which serve a wider catchment than local education authority (LEA) schools and for which no school transport is provided by the LEA.
9. However, cost is not the only factor affecting parents’ choice of transport method for their children. Indeed it is the choice of school which often dictates the choice of transport. A Department for Transport study revealed that, when questioned, parents listed the following factors (in order of priority) as affecting their choice of method to transport their children to school:
 - Child safety
 - Cost
 - Convenience
 - Reliability of transport

Therefore all of the above reasons have led to an increase in the number of cars used for the “school run”.

¹ The Sutton Trust report to the House of Commons.

² Salisbury Transport 2000 – The Way to Go

³ The School Crawl By David Hurdle

⁴ Education Act 2002

10. The members were concerned about this increase for the following reasons:

Pupil safety – Based on their own experience of the District, the members were concerned that the large volume of traffic arriving on school premises within short periods of time at key points in the day, was causing a hazard for pupils. The members considered that this was particularly acute because of the unsuitable location and layout of many schools which allowed little room for these cars. Therefore there seemed to be an obvious benefit of reducing congestion with an assumed reduction in accidents involving school children as fewer cars would be traveling along the school route.

Health of Children – There is an increasing concern about a lack of activity in the nation’s young people. Walking or cycling to school provides a good source of daily exercise. Evidence shows that not only are children who are more active more alert in the classroom, they are also likely to become more active adults That means less risk of heart disease and other health problems in later life.⁵ In addition children inside a car breathe in more pollution than they would walking.⁶

Independence and Road Awareness Skills - For many children, making their own way to school is a chance to learn 'skills for life', becoming more independent and self-confident.

Establishing Travel Patterns Early in Life – Travel habits are formed early in life and if children grow up depending on the car as the main method of transportation this pattern can be difficult to break.

Environmental Impact – The review group consider that the increase in traffic on roads in Salisbury District is detrimental to the environment of the area both in terms of noise and air pollution. Therefore the review group were interested in ways to achieve a reduction in traffic generated by the school run by the promotion of environmentally friendly methods of travel such as using the bus, walking or cycling.

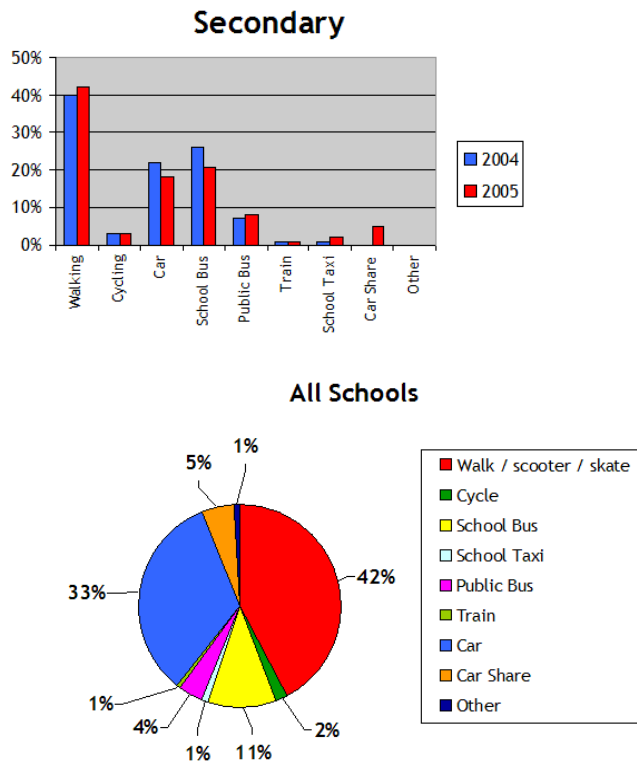
Amenity of local Residents – The review group were aware that local residents were often very unhappy with the influx of traffic to deliver pupils to and from school as it caused them difficulty when accessing and exiting from their properties during the “school run” times.

⁵ British Heart Foundation - Choosing health? Choosing activity

⁶ Department for Transport - A safer journey to school: a guide to school travel plans

11. In addition to the concerns of the review group, Wiltshire County Council is also concerned about this increased generation of traffic and has a target to reduce modal share by car to 40% or less for primary pupils and 17.5% for secondary pupils by 2010.⁷ In order to assess progress towards achieving this reduction the County Council has established an annual survey, the Wiltshire Travel Tally, to establish which methods of transport are being used for the “school run” and in what proportions.
12. On Tuesday 18 January 2005, 175 schools, comprising 37,814 children, in Wiltshire took part in the Third Great Wiltshire Travel Tally, making it the largest ever school travel survey in Wiltshire and one of the largest in the country. The survey asked children how they travelled to school on that day. The tally has become an annual event in Wiltshire and will soon become a nationwide event, every January, as part of the Government’s ‘Travelling to School Initiative’. The aim of this initiative is to boost walking, cycling and bus travel to school and tackle congestion around the school run.

The chart below shows the results of the 2005 survey.



13. The results provided by Wiltshire County Council show an increase of 2%, to 42%, in the number of secondary school pupils walking to school in 2005 compared to 2004 and an increase of 6% in the number of students car sharing. However, the number of children

⁷ Salisbury Transport 2000 – The Way to Go

travelling to school by a school bus reduced by 6% to 20% of pupils. Whilst these figures give a useful indication, they do need to be treated with some caution as the survey only takes place over one day and it is possible that the results may not be fully representative of school travel across the County.

14. The parents of pupils have a decisive in role in determining how their children travel to school. However, once Wiltshire County Council has established how pupils are travelling to school through the travel tally, it has a vital role to play in taking practical action to help achieve its target of a reduction in car use.

Wiltshire County Council's Contribution to School Transport

15. Wiltshire County Council's contribution to the issues surrounding the "school run" can be divided into two key areas. The first key area is direct school transport provision in the form of buses and the second is the provision of advice, assistance and funding to enable schools to implement travel plans.

The Provision of Buses

16. Wiltshire County Council has the statutory responsibility for providing school and public transport. Eligibility for free bus travel for school children is divided nationally into "entitled" and "non-entitled" children. Entitled children are those which are eligible for free or assisted transport to and from school or college under the Education Acts or in accordance with Local Education Authority policy (a list of which children are included in the category "entitled" can be found at appendix A).
17. Figures provided by the County Council have demonstrated that across the County, transport is provided for 11,000 entitled pupils and students, through contracts with around 150 bus, coach, minibus and taxi companies. There are networks of services running into all secondary schools and many of the primary schools that serve rural catchment areas and are often linked in some way to the public transport provision in the area. The County Council has informed the review group that in Wiltshire virtually every public transport contract in the rural areas is linked to a school transport movement. The County Council has also stated that the income from the school transport (paid for from the Education transport budget) is vital to the viability of much of the public transport network.
18. The parents of non-entitled children must make their own transport arrangements. Non-entitled children may apply to travel on school transport contracts set up for entitled children where these are available (subject to availability of space). Many others travel on ordinary public transport services, or on 'special school buses' which are provided either commercially by the bus company or as part of a socially-necessary bus service that is funded by the council. A copy of Wiltshire County Council's guidelines for supported services is attached as appendix B. This sets out the priorities and criteria that the County Council use to determine which services to support (subject to availability of funding).
19. The Passenger Transport Manager at Wiltshire County Council states that "due to the high costs of provision it is normally only possible to justify support for school bus services where work can be coordinated so that the same bus can do several linked journeys (either by linking

with public transport services or by running two or more school bus journeys one after the other). Therefore the existence or otherwise of buses suitable for non-entitled children depends on local factors, numbers involved, and the costs of provision.”

20. There is no separate data on how much is spent by the County Council on school transport journeys, other than that for entitled children, or how many children are travelling on them, as they are part of the overall public transport network. The gross cost of entitled school transport to mainstream schools in Wiltshire is over £9 million per annum, less income of around £350,000 from 16-19 student contributions. Transport for children with special education needs costs a further £3.7 million per annum. Expenditure is rising by considerably more than inflation due to nationally-applicable pressures on operating costs. This is compared with £2.2m in subsidies for public transport. The County Council gave the example that it can cost up to £200 per day to hire a 53 seater coach for a school run. If the bus ran absolutely full every day of each term, this would still need a fare of £3.77 per day per child to be viable. In reality, a fare of £4 or more would be needed to break even.

21. However, the case study of St Edmunds and Wyvern schools in Laverstock has shown the importance of creating a system of school transport which is convenient for schools as well as one which is cost effective for the County Council and Wilts & Dorset. During the review Wilts & Dorset remarked on what they perceive to be the difficulty generated by the alteration of the start time of St Edmunds and Wyvern schools in Laverstock. Previously, at the Laverstock Campus, 6 double deck buses ran to the schools from the Salisbury estates, carrying over 200 children, and operated commercially by Wilts & Dorset. The services were only commercial because the timing of the school days was agreed, when the schools were built, such that buses coming into the city from the rural areas with commuters and college students for 0830 could double back to the estates in the area and provide a service to the schools in their ‘spare time’. However, the alteration of the start time at the schools meant that some of these bus journeys were no longer viable and St Edmunds School now pays a subsidy to a private coach company of £20,000 per annum to maintain some of the buses at an earlier time. However, from St Edmunds’ perspective, the transport arrangements were not satisfactory before the change and therefore there was no incentive for the school to keep to the previously agreed timetable. The school has emphasised that, whilst school travel is important, it must not dictate the running of a school which is principally a place of education.

Note: The review group note that the new school end times do not match the bus times by just a few minutes, leaving children with unnecessarily long waits for a bus. The review group would like the schools to reconsider the school day.

Travel Plans

22. One of the primary tools for monitoring school travel patterns and achieving changes in travel habits is a school travel plan. The Department for Education and Science states that all schools must have travel plans and it should be central to their operations. A school travel plan is a series of practical steps for improving children's safety on the school journey. It aims to:
- reduce accidents and danger on the journey to school
 - enable parents and children to choose walking, cycling and public transport with confidence
 - cut congestion at the school gate
 - improve children's health and fitness through walking and cycling
 - equip children with better road awareness and give them familiarity with public transport
 - give children the opportunity to have a say in decisions which affect them provide an interesting focus for classwork within the national curriculum
 - build links within the whole school community
 - make the area around the school safer and more enjoyable for everyone.
23. The County Council's target is for all of its 258 schools to have a travel plan by 2010. In 2003-04 seventy-four travel plans were submitted, 147% more than anticipated.⁸ The County Council's target is supported by two full time school travel plan advisors based at the County Council overseen by the Travelwise Manager for Wiltshire. These officers work directly with schools to encourage and support the creation and implementation of school travel plans. The review group was informed that the Government is considering including school travel planning in Ofsted assessments with the intention of further embedding them into school assessment culture.
24. Once a school has had a travel plan adopted by the County Council, funding is then available for capital works to help to achieve aims included in the plan. There are two funding streams for capital works and the first is provided under the Government's *Travelling to School Initiative*. This is a one-off payment which is based on a formula of a base rate, plus £5 per pupil. The base rate for a primary school is £3750, and £5000 for a secondary school. This funding must be spent on site and for capital works such as bicycle storage, separated pedestrian access, or a pedestrian waiting shelter. Subject to travel plans being updated and the statistics monitored regularly, schools can then bid for further funding in later years.
25. The second source of funding is Wiltshire County Council's *Taking Action on School Journeys Challenge* totalling £100,000 in 2006/7. The scheme is run on a bidding system and applications are scored according to a variety of relevant criteria, including the quality of the

⁸ Wiltshire Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report 2004

travel plan. The works can be on the school site or on the highway. The amount available is dependent on the number and quality of other bids but there is no maximum amount that schools can bid for. However, for any scheme to be eligible to receive a grant it must be contained within an adopted travel plan which meets Department for Transport guidelines.

26. In 2004/5 Wiltshire County Council spent £147 513 on Safe Routes to School projects as part of the Council's Taking Action on School Journeys Challenge initiative. The success of high quality infrastructure has been shown following the installation of the Bishopdown-Laverstock cycleway, which serves all the Laverstock schools. In 2001, 13% of school journeys to St Joseph's RC school in Laverstock were recorded as being made by cycle - believed to be the highest in the county.⁹
27. The production of school travel plans is a very important part of the school transport jigsaw. The problems and solutions are often very specific to an individual school. The travel plan is a very effective way of highlighting the key areas and projects of importance and the review group wholly endorse their continued promotion and the work the County Council is undertaking to encourage and support all schools to produce a travel plan. Notwithstanding this support, the review did uncover problems with the travel plans in operation and these are discussed further on page 17.

⁹ Wiltshire Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report 2004

Results of Findings from School Interviews and Public Consultation

28. The interviews with the schools in the District revealed a combination of innovative solutions to problems of school and transport and issues still remaining to be resolved. The review group were impressed by the commitment and drive demonstrated by many of the schools in tackling the issues created by the “school run” and some specific examples are outlined below. Most of the schools interviewed had received a grant from Wiltshire County Council for travel plans in the last few years ranging from £500 - £5000 and this money had been put to good use. Of the issues still to be solved, some were of a District wide nature and some were cited by particular schools.

Innovative Solutions and Best Practice

29. Many of the schools interviewed are being very proactive about promoting good travel practices. For example several schools issue information on car sharing and their school’s travel plan as a matter of course.
30. Godolphin School operates a network of school buses which collect pupils from as far away as Andover and Winchester the cost of which is borne by the school. The school indicated that they would be willing to extend this to other schools where there was an interest in the scheme.
31. Barford St Martin school introduced a traffic priority system outside the school in 2002 as a result of the school’s travel plan and this has improved safety considerably. The landlord of a local pub also allows parents to use his car park as there is a lack of a permanent parking solution at the school.
32. Leaden Hall operates a very successful “Kiss and Run” school minibus service which collects children from the Beehive park and ride site. The parents drive to the site and drop the children off and then the mini bus collects them and takes them to school. The review group feel that this is an excellent scheme. Firstly it diverts vehicles away from the city centre and secondly, it reduces the number of vehicles arriving at the school gates which is an area not designed to cope with large numbers of vehicles to an area, a park and ride site, which has been specifically designed for cars. This greatly enhances child safety at the school.

Issues to be Resolved - District Wide Issues:

33. According to the research of the review group, child safety was a principal concern of schools in South Wiltshire given the large numbers of cars descending on and around the school premises within a very short period of time. The visits to schools and the feedback from teachers and governors demonstrated that many schools lacked the appropriate infrastructure to deal with a large influx of traffic resulting in cars parking on yellow lines and in inappropriate locations. Many of the schools highlighted the perceived danger to school children of negotiating badly parked cars and heavily congested roads with a lack of safe pavements, crossing and waiting areas. In some places this had even lead to serious accidents involving children such as in Downton. All schools considered safety infrastructure outside of schools to be insufficient.
34. The issues of child safety were further highlighted in the interviews as every school questioned felt that a 20mph zone outside the school would be of benefit to child safety. Findings from the Transport Research Laboratory into 20 mph zone pilot projects across England, Wales and Scotland, indicated that on average, speeds dropped by 9 mph, annual collision figures fell by 60% and the overall reduction in child casualties was 67%.¹⁰ Information analysed by the review group demonstrated that at 40mph most children hit by a car would die; at 30mph 50% would; but at 20mph only 5% would.¹¹ The first three 20 mph speed limit forming zones were implemented in Sheffield, Kingston upon Thames and Norwich, in January 1991. Since then, around 450 zones have been implemented in the UK.
35. Many, although not all, of the schools interviewed felt that it would be helpful if parking ambassadors patrolled the school sites to enforce the yellow lines to prevent parents parking on them and causing a danger to children.
36. Car sharing was an option that the schools viewed as more viable than additional buses for primary schools in the rural areas given their small number of pupils compared to secondary schools.
37. Whilst it seems that the initial publication of travel plan schemes and funding is very successful leading to a high level of take up, the schools considered that the monitoring and updating of the travel plans causes problems. Although further funding is available through maintaining travel plans, on the whole, schools are not managing to keep the plans updated and the initial burst of enthusiasm is often being lost. The review group suggested that a dedicated officer be

¹⁰ Review of traffic calming schemes in 20 mph zones. Transport Research Laboratory

¹¹ The School Crawl By David Hurdle

appointed to oversee the implementation of travel plans and the review group have recently learned that Wiltshire County Council has recruited an officer specifically to work with schools with travel plans to help them implement and maintain them.

38. The evidence presented to the review group indicated that one of the reasons for the plans not being updated is that the restriction of funding to on-site capital works means that the schools do not have any further on site works that they wish to spend the money on so there is little incentive for them to apply. In addition the review group heard that the schools are often unsure what they need to do in order to maintain their travel plans. It is hoped that the new officer will work to address this with schools.

39. Further to this, the research of the review group highlighted several instances where schools had schemes that they wanted to put into place to solve particular problems but did not know how to achieve them. An example of this was Stratford-Sub-Castle school. The Headteacher and governors of the school had identified that a footpath was needed from the Reading Rooms, located approximately 500 yards from the school, to the school premises to allow parents to park in a car park away from the school and safely walk the pupils to the school gate. At present there is no such path and any parents that do use the Reading Rooms' car park have to walk on the road. The Travelwise Team at Wiltshire County Council informed the review group that such a scheme needed to be included in an adopted and updated travel plan before it could be actioned. The above scheme at Stratford-Sub-Castle is contained within the travel plan of the school however the Travelwise Team deemed the plan to have lapsed as it had not been updated. Despite this, the Joint Transportation Team provisionally indicated that the scheme would be practicable and they had not taken any action to progress it as it had never been brought to their attention.

40. The review group were concerned that there are affordable and achievable schemes, like the one above, which would make a real difference at schools across the District, that are not being realised because of blockages in the process. The particular examples of schemes brought to the attention of the review group are listed below.

The site specific issues were as follows:

41. St Osmunds School, Salisbury – The main issue for the school is a lack of safe parking. Parking is available in the Friary estate but residents do not want the parents of the school children to park there. However, residents were willing to accept an agreement whereby a financial contribution (£25 per parking permit) was paid annually to Salisbury District Council for projects to benefit the estate's residents in exchange for limited parking for parents of the

school children. The school collected £25 fees initially but due to an administrative error at the Council the cheques were never banked. This combined with the use of the estate by Bishops Wordsworth pupils free of charge led to the scheme falling into disrepute. The school would like a formal 5 year agreement to be put in place with some of the money going to the Friary and some being put towards traffic improvements for the school. The school would also like parking ambassadors to enforce the off road parking restrictions which will ensure only those with permits can park legitimately on the estate.

42. Shrewton Primary School - Many children come from the army camps at Larkhill and Winterbourne Stoke but there is no bus for this. In addition the school is located on two sites which requires children to cross over a road to move from one site to another. The school children sometimes have to walk along the road to a safe crossing point to move from one school site to the other as there is no path on one side of the road. However, the school has created a safe path through a field to avoid the children walking along the road.
43. Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School - The cycle path which was unveiled by Sustrans actually stops at the most dangerous point. The cycle path needs to be completed so it provides a comprehensive path. There is a need for a comprehensive footpath from the school to the Reading Rooms 500 yards away to allow the car park there to be used as safe drop-off. Stratford-Sub-Castle is used as a rat run by drivers trying to avoid the congestion on Castle Road and therefore traffic calming is needed.
44. Laverstock Campus – The schools at the Laverstock campus all suffer from the problems of congestion at this site. Over 2000 children attend the four schools in Laverstock each day and therefore the large influx of cars on Church Road creates many problems. St Edmunds School found many children were arriving late for school and losing much productive time early in the morning and that this was due, in part, to transport problems.
45. Trafalgar School highlighted the lack of a safe crossing point on The Borough. The parents currently use the front of the school as a drop off point however, there was a serious accident at this point in 2004 involving a child from the school. Therefore the teachers are trying to discourage parents from using this area as a drop off point. Were a safe crossing to be provided then it could be used by pupils from both Downton Primary School and Trafalgar Secondary School.
46. Bemerton St John primary school has a desire to have a safe path from along side the cricket ground to link the school with a car park thus allowing parents to park away from the school gates and safely walk the children to school. The school would also like a safe walking route

from Quidhampton to the school as there is no continuous path at present and therefore the school considers it dangerous.

People's Voice Consultation

47. In addition to the evidence gathered from schools, the review group also commissioned a survey to investigate the views of the wider public on school travel. The survey results can be viewed in full as part of the background papers but in summary the results indicated that school run traffic congestion was a concern for 72.2% of respondents, the highest figure was recorded in Salisbury with 82.3% of respondents listing it as a concern. All respondents were concerned about school traffic congestion irrespective of whether they had children and the age of any children that they did have. An overwhelming majority of people, 92.7% of people felt that dedicated school buses for children are a good idea and 74.9% considered that Council's should invest more in the provision of school buses. However, 70.9% also answered that it was acceptable for children to travel on commercial buses. Around half of respondents think that the schools should contribute to the costs of these buses however only 33.3% of those with children felt the schools should contribute. 85% of respondents supported the idea of drop-off zones with almost half supporting the concept of exclusion zones around schools.

How Can The Numbers of Cars Arriving at the School Gates Be Reduced?

Methods to Encourage Alternative Forms of Transport

48. The Review Group interviewed many different organisations and individuals to find solutions to the problems identified above. The solutions that emerged were a mixture of site-specific solutions which could make an immediate and dramatic difference to a particular school, and strategic solutions which could be applied across the District or across the County. It is important to note however that, not only are the solutions for primary schools very different to those for secondary schools especially in Wiltshire where on average students travel much greater distances to attend a secondary school than to attend a primary school, but each primary and each secondary school has its own specific characteristics which often require a site specific solution. The necessity of this tailored approach is part of the reason why travel plans are so important as they allow these individual issues to be highlighted.
49. The review group would like further investigation to be undertaken into each of the solutions listed below and reports be brought back to the Environment and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Panel once detailed negotiations have been undertaken with the relevant organisation.

Yellow School Buses

50. The findings of the Boston Consulting group and the results from the public consultation undertaken by the review group indicate that the provision of alternative transport is a key to reducing the dependence on the car as the primary method of transporting children to school. The conclusion of the Boston Consulting Group's report was that parents would not stop driving their children to school until they are convinced that there is a solution which is cheap, convenient and safe. The Boston Consulting Group concluded that only American style yellow school buses could provide the system-wide solution and this has been tested in trials in Yorkshire, Surrey and Bristol (available in background papers).
51. An evaluation undertaken in October 2003 by the Department for Transport of the introduction of yellow buses into the UK shows that they generally become well used, and can be effective at reducing car use, particularly at primary schools. The original pilot projects were in Wrexham (North Wales), Runnymede (Surrey) and Hebden Bridge (North Yorkshire). Surveys after the introduction of the yellow buses took place in September 2002 and May 2003. Car use at both the evaluated primary schools reduced (from 45% to 34% at Wrexham Primary and 40% to 36% at Hebden Bridge Primary). Four local authority estimates of the typical

change in car use from travel plans were between 10% and 30%.¹² However, the studies also showed that if the initial impact of the yellow buses was to be maintained, measures to discourage replacement car journeys would have to be introduced. The necessity for measures to actively prevent parents using cars as well as offering alternatives, the carrot and the stick, is borne out by results from a survey conducted by St Edmunds School in Laverstock which demonstrated that parents drove their children to school because they wanted to and even if a free bus was provided they would not use it.

52. The costs of yellow buses can be divided into the costs for parents for using the buses and the costs for local authorities of providing the yellow buses. The costs in both categories varied across the pilot areas depending on the level of charging. Several of the pilot schemes operated solely for children entitled to free school transport, in some schemes local authorities charged on a concessionary basis for spare seats, and in other areas the vehicles were operated wholly for pupils not entitled to free transport, who were charged fares of typically 45-50p per journey. A table of the charges levied is attached at appendix C. The pilot study demonstrated that parents considered the yellow buses to be more expensive than commercial buses. In some areas parents considered £1.00 per day as a reasonable fee to charge but in other areas this was considered too expensive for primary school pupils.
53. The pilot study identified that the administrative costs for local authorities operating yellow bus pilots were raised, particularly when schools were operating a system of pre-payment for the bus use. However, the results of the study indicated that there was little difference in cost between operating a conventional school bus and operating a yellow bus providing an equivalent standard of service. Some costings were as follows:

Wokingham - The cost of the contract with *First*- £195 per school day for the driver and vehicle, plus £40 per day for the escort.

Windsor and Maidenhead - The cost of the present gross cost contract with *First* was equivalent to £200 per school day. The previous contract cost the authority £160 per day, although after allowing for revenue (around £44 per day), the overall net deficit for both services was similar.

Harrogate - The latest yellow school bus contract cost £159 per vehicle per day, using the high capacity single deckers, or the equivalent of £2.65 per seat (before fares revenue). The double deckers are reportedly costing nearly £200 per day.

¹² Department for Transport Pilots of Yellow Buses

54. The costs in the Department for Transport report indicate a range of prices quoted of between £160-210 per day, which is between £30,000 and £40,000 per annum. Of this, approximately £10,000 to £11,000 is potentially recoverable through user charges of £1 per child per day if the bus is operating for non-entitled children. This cost is also comparable to that which Wiltshire County Council currently quote for the cost of a dedicated school bus in Wiltshire (see paragraph 20).
55. However, based on the evidence provided by Wiltshire County Council many of the school bus movements in the County are linked to a commercial bus contract in order to reduce the operating cost. Given that yellow buses can only be used for school transport, were they to be introduced in Wiltshire, the operating costs to the County Council would be likely to increase. A study would need to identify how many buses currently providing school transport also perform commercial contracts to enable a detailed cost analysis to be undertaken for Wiltshire.
56. The Boston Consulting Group research indicated that spending £184 million per year to provide busing for primary school children travelling more than a mile to school would result in benefits valued at £458 million per year. These benefits were costed in terms of the time savings for parents who need no longer drive their children to school and the savings from decreased congestion. However, it did not include additional benefits such as facilitating school choice for children from less well-off backgrounds, or the reduction in truancy and petty crime. These benefits have been a noticeable feature of some of the yellow bus trials, but are difficult to quantify.
57. Safety of students is also a crucial piece of the school transport jigsaw. Parents cannot be expected to adopt alternative transport arrangements for their children which do not provide the same level of reassurance as driving their children to school. The Boston Consulting Group cited evidence demonstrating that in the UK cars are 15 times safer than cycling or walking, a commercial bus is 50 times safer and, based on US experience, a school bus is likely to be well over 100 times safer than walking or cycling. The People's Voice survey indicated that only 23.4% of respondents thought that primary school children are safe when travelling to school on unsupervised school buses whereas 77.3% of respondents thought secondary school children were safe on unsupervised school buses. However, in contrast to the results of the Boston Consulting Group, the People's Voice survey results indicated that people in Wiltshire perceived walking to be the safest method of travel to school.
58. In addition to the safety of children, research conducted by the Boston Consulting Group, identified the following as further benefits of a dedicated school bus:

- having a regular driver, who gets to know the children, and may also be accompanied by an escort – often a parent.
 - Children are allocated their own seat.
 - The bus makes frequent stops, allowing all children to be picked up in close proximity to their homes.
59. Given all the positive findings from the pilots of yellow buses, ***the review group consider that further consideration should be given to running a network of yellow school buses in Wiltshire. However, in the short-term, the review group believe that there are other changes which could be brought into practice which could also have a dramatic impact at minimal cost.***

Commercial Buses

60. Wiltshire County Council’s current policy is not to subsidise transport for children attending parental choice schools. However, there are instances when the provision of transport to such schools can be achieved at no cost to the council tax payer. For example, Wiltshire County Council officers gave the example of one single deck bus carrying children from the Fugglestone and Ditchampton areas to Wilton First School. These children are not entitled to free transport as they live less than 2 miles from school, and pay a daily fare to use the bus. The service requires a small subsidy from Wiltshire County Council, and is only affordable because it uses a bus that has just finished performing a contract carrying entitled children to another school (if a separate bus was needed the cost would exceed the maximum subsidy threshold). In an interview with the Bus Network Manager for Wiltshire County Council he explained that these opportunities are always exploited where possible but often schools needed to contact him to let him know where a bus services is needed. ***The Bus Network Manager endeavoured to investigate the specific request from Shrewton Primary School that a bus be provided for children travelling from Larkhill. It is also understood that the Bus Network Manager is currently investigating the possibility of providing a bus from Winterbourne Stoke from the summer onwards.***
61. Whilst the review group acknowledge that price is neither the sole, nor the primary, issue for parents when selecting a transport method for their children, the relatively expensive fares for non-entitled children present an inherent obstacle to achieving a reduction in car use. Wilts & Dorset not offering half fares before 9am is a real issue of concern raised by many of the schools interviewed and bus travel is generally considered to be an expensive travel option for school children. ***The review group would like Wilts & Dorset to explore the possibility of offering “bulk-buy” tickets to schools to reduce the costs for non-entitled children of***

travelling on commercial buses and that schools should be approached and offered these tickets. The review group also calls upon Wilts & Dorset to offer half-fares to school children before 9am. In addition the review group would like the District Council and the County Council to lobby the government for an introduction of a similar concessionary fares scheme for children travelling on buses as that introduced for those over 60.

Mini Buses

62. Another option for sharing the journey to school is a minibus. Using a private minibus firm, funded by parents, can be expensive but has proved feasible in some circumstances. For example the Godolphin School in Salisbury has a network of privately funded buses which collect students from as far away as Winchester and Andover. Whilst this scheme is expensive, it may be feasible for several schools to purchase such a service together if they were to find a group of students all traveling from a similar area. As previously mentioned Leaden Hall operates the “Kiss and Run” service from the park and ride sites and Trafalgar School in Downton has a mini-bus which is used to transport some pupils home at the end of the school day.
63. The review group are aware of a scheme called the Salisbury Area Minibus Brokerage Agency run by Salisbury District Community Transport, whereby organisations such as schools, colleges, and churches in the Tidworth, Amesbury, Bulford, Durrington, Shrewton and Wylve Valley area can hire mini buses owned by other community groups for a fee, thus making the buses more affordable to run and purchase. Salisbury District Community Transport maintains a list of all those who have mini-buses and will put potential users in touch with them. ***The review group fully endorse this scheme and would encourage any schools that have mini-buses or, any schools that would like to hire a mini-bus, or perhaps arrange a joint ownership scheme, to contact Salisbury District Community Transport to pursue this. The review group also recommend that a copy of any promotional material on the scheme be sent to every school in the District.***

Use of Park and Ride Sites

64. ***Another of the strategic plans investigated by the review group was the use of park and ride sites as drop off points from which students could walk or cycle to school, or be collected by a mini bus on a shuttle service such as the “Kiss and Run” scheme described above. In the opinion of the review group, considerable scope exists for extending this to other schools.*** For example from the schools surveyed, Trafalgar School’s mini bus could be utilised to collect children from the Britford Park and Ride site to reduce the number of cars arriving at the school

gates and reduce the associated safety concerns. These schemes could be developed to include bicycles and bicycle sheds at the park and ride sites to enable students to collect bicycles, ride to school, and then ride back to the park and ride site to be collected at the end of the day.

Other examples of where the review group members believe that this could work very effectively are:

- Students travelling to Salisbury city schools, such as South Wilts Grammar School, from Amesbury could be collected from the Beehive Park and Ride site.
- Students travelling to the Laverstock campus could be dropped off at the London Road Park and Ride site.
- Students travelling to Westwood St Thomas could use the Wilton Road Park Ride.

In the interview sessions this idea was supported by the then Leader of Salisbury District Council, Councillor Kevin Wren, and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Environment and Transport at the Council, Councillor Dennis Brown. ***Therefore it is recommended that the Head of Forward Planning and Transportation at the District Council make contact with the above schools to progress this.***

65. The review group also feel that further scope exists to utilise existing park and ride buses to provide transport for school children. Representatives from Wilts & Dorset were interviewed for the review. They stated that the buses were running at full capacity during the morning rush hour and therefore without the County Council paying for more buses there was no room to use the buses to provide travel for school children. ***However, the review group consider that whilst the morning rush hour could be problematic, park and ride buses are not running at maximum capacity between 3pm and 4pm when the school day finishes. Therefore even if the buses could only be used for the return journey from school, this option should be maximised by Salisbury District Council and Wilts & Dorset.***

Car Sharing

66. Car sharing schemes encouraging parents to take up to four children in one car can be very effective at reducing the number of cars arriving at the school gates, thereby increasing student safety, minimising the impact on the environment and reducing the disturbance for local residents. Some schools have successfully encouraged parents who drive to car share. This can be particularly useful when children are traveling longer distances to school. Many schools now operate a successful car share rota and this is to be encouraged. ***All schools should be encouraged to share the names and addresses of all parents who wish to car share to increase uptake.*** This would need to be with parental consent but achieved 50% take up rate at Leaden Hall.

Walking Buses and Safe Routes

67. There are many successful walking bus schemes in operation across the District. However, parents need to be encouraged to assist with these schemes. For example in Shrewton a very successful walking bus operates on two days a week but cannot operate more frequently as it lacks the volunteers to run it. ***It is recommended that the schools hold a list of volunteers and that support be sought from the wider community to achieve a greater number of volunteers than at present.*** The County Council also acts as a facilitator to help schools implement the walking bus schemes by providing necessary equipment, such as yellow vests, and training for volunteers.

Methods to Discourage Parents from Using Cars

68. ***As mentioned above, the use of these strategic solutions to encourage the use of alternative methods of transportation, may need to be in combination with methods to deter parents from using their cars.*** One such method is a drop off zone. The use of “5 minute drop off zones” are currently being piloted both nationally and locally. These are exclusion zones around a school, set at a distance of approximately five minutes walk from the school gate, within which parents are not allowed to stop to drop children off. The parents are required to park five minutes from the school and walk or cycle the remainder of the journey either as part of a walking bus or individually. One such scheme entitled “park and stride” is in operation in Harnham and initial reports are very positive. Such a scheme greatly assists the primary aim of the review which is to reduce the number of cars arriving outside a school to enhance school safety. The review group is also aware that this scheme has been piloted on a county-wide basis in North Yorkshire although the success of this pilot has yet to be evaluated. ***As mentioned above, the use of these strategic solutions to encourage the use of alternative methods of transportation, may need to be in combination with methods to deter parents from using their cars.***
69. The evidence given to the review group indicated that many of the schools would welcome the presence of parking ambassadors to enforce yellow lines and no stopping zones outside schools. The schools themselves indicated that they did not always wish to enforce parking restrictions as, although it would improve child safety, it often brought teachers into confrontation with parents. Therefore the review group recommends that the schools be approached and asked whether they would like to have parking ambassadors to visit to enforce parking restrictions. ***The members do not consider that the ambassadors should visit regularly***

as it is acknowledged that they must spend the majority of their time in Salisbury City, however, they do recommend that the ambassadors should visit on an occasional basis on days convenient to the schools. Further to this the review group consider that the visits of the ambassadors should be unannounced and any parents in violation of parking restrictions should be penalised. The intention is that parents will not wish to risk being given a ticket and therefore will obey the restrictions much more rigorously than at present and thus creating a safer area around the school.

70. ***The review group would like the County Council to seriously consider the requests for 20 mph zones at each school visited during the review.*** In an interview with the Travelwise Manager he explained that it is Wiltshire County Council policy not to allow 20mph limits outside schools. This decision was based on statistics which showed that accidents do not happen outside of schools very often and this statement was supported by statistics provided to the review group by Mouchel Parkman (see background papers). This is partly because the amount of congestion outside schools prevents cars from travelling above 20mph. In addition the Travelwise Manager informed members that the costs of implementing 20mph schemes were great, although he explained that this in itself would not be a barrier to implementation. However, the Boston Consulting Group concluded that if the government is serious about encouraging more children to walk or cycle to school, it must do more to stop the speeding on residential streets. The review group considers that the need for speed restrictions become more, rather than less important, if congestion outside schools is reduced by the measures recommended above. Reduced congestion would have the dual affect of leading the children to assume a safer area which may make them less attuned to traffic, whilst the reduction in congestion would allow the remaining cars to travel at greater speeds. Therefore, unless an exclusion zone around schools is supported, the review group would like the introduction of 20mph zones to be given careful consideration.
71. It is essential for any such scheme, be it a 5 minute zone or a walking bus, that it be based upon a safe route to school. The review group were impressed at the initiative of many schools to achieve safe routes to school and safe drop off points. For example, the review group were made aware of instances of local businesses people, such as the pub landlord in Barford St Martin, allowing their car parks to be used by parents. This community co-operation assists greatly with achieving a greater degree of child safety outside schools. ***These are examples of highly commendable local agreements and the review group would like to encourage this partnership working.***
72. The engagement of children in creating these safe routes to school can also act as an important method of education and can encourage the children to adopt safer, healthier and more

environmentally friendly travel habits. At Highfields in Leicester, motifs designed by children were used to mark out the safest routes to three primary schools. A different colour was used for each school's "trail" with dinosaur footprints and stars set into the pavements. The project began by consulting 7 - 11 year olds with the help of playworkers. Children traced their journeys on giant maps. The playworkers helped them fill out surveys and encouraged them to draw pictures of those things that frightened them on the route. A group of the children went on to work with engineers and planners to develop the trails.¹³ Such schemes can add greatly to the children's desire to use the safe routes once they are created.

Travel Plans

73. ***Each school should appoint a travel plan champion and consideration must be given to a periodic handover of travel plan responsibilities.*** In an interview with the Travelwise Manager he explained that the schools must be the primary drivers for the plans and they must take responsibility for monitoring themselves. This is an understandable position given the ratio of two full time travel plan advisors for 258 schools. However, those given the responsibility at the schools for travel plans are not experts in this area and many already have full time responsibilities. Evidence from the schools has shown that a successful school travel plan usually depends on the energy and enthusiasm of one or two people acting as champions for the project. The review group has found that whilst many headteachers are very dedicated to travel plan issues, headteachers are usually the busiest staff member at a school. ***Therefore it is not recommended that headteachers take on the responsibility of the travel plan. An interested governor/parent can act as an effective travel plan "champion" for the school travel plan.***
74. Whilst the initial funding from travel plans is very beneficial to schools, the schools often do not have any further on-site capital works on which to spend the money and therefore do not apply for further *Travelling to School Initiative* funding in later years. This often has the associated consequence that travel plans are not updated. ***Therefore the review group believe that once a school has achieved a grant for on-site capital works, the criteria should be relaxed to allow the subsequent grants to be spent on off-site works.*** It is hoped that this will have the dual aim of ensuring travel plans are updated regularly and will also enable further projects to be undertaken by schools. This would be particularly useful because the review group have found that there is insufficient funding to achieve the major projects that would make the most difference to schools.

¹³ A safer journey to school: a guide to school travel plans – Department for Transport

75. *To maximise the effectiveness of travel plans all the requirements of schools must be enshrined in the adopted travel plan. The new officer recruited by the County Council to oversee the implementation of school travel plans should then share the plans between travel plan advisers, bus network organisers and highway engineers to ensure a co-ordinated approach to delivering the measures identified.* As mentioned previously, during the review the members found that several schools had not included aims within the plan and therefore they were not eligible for funding. In some instances where aims were included in plans, they were not being progressed due to a lack of funding but this had not been explained fully to the schools nor had any alternative suggestions been proposed. *Therefore it is recommended that schools should also be given specific and timely indications of whether measures contained within the plan can be achieved.*

Promotion

76. *St Edmunds School felt there needed to be a champion at national level to move school travel issues forward as Jamie Oliver did for school dinners. The review group would support this approach.*

Specific School Measures

77. *St Osmunds School, Salisbury – It is recommended that Salisbury District Council set up a meeting as a priority with the school and representatives of the Friary and agree an action plan to take this issue forward as a matter of high importance and that Salisbury District Council enforce residents off road parking areas within Friary to prevent unauthorised parking.*
78. *Stratford Sub-Castle Primary School – It is recommended that the Joint Transportation Team, in partnership with Sustrans investigate the completion of the cycle path and the Joint Transportation Team liaise with the Travelwise Team to investigate the creation of a pavement from the school to the Reading Rooms and write to the school with the outcome.*
79. *Trafalgar School – Given the serious accident involving a child on this road, it is recommended that a safe crossing point on The Borough be progressed as a matter of urgency. During the review it came to the attention of the review group that this solution was desired by the school and this was brought to the attention of Wiltshire County Council. It is understood that School Travel Advisors are now working with both the Downton schools, the parish council, and officers from the Joint Transportation Team with a view to progressing this scheme and the review group would fully endorse this.*

80. *Bemerton St John primary school – the safe path alongside the cricket ground to link the school with a car park should be given a high priority. Additionally the feasibility of the continuous path to Quidhampton be investigated. The County Councillors for the area are currently progressing this matter however, it is understood from the Travelwise Manager that the above schemes cannot be funded from within school travel budgets. The review group strongly support the actions of the local members in seeking a solution to this issue and recommended that the Joint Transportation Team be asked to assess them and report on whether they can progress them.*
81. *Whilst it is acknowledged that there may be planning constraints upon building a school on one site at Shrewton Primary School, the review group would request that Salisbury District Council’s Development Services Unit offers appropriate guidance.*
82. *During interviews, the Headteacher of St Edmunds School on the Laverstock campus indicated that she would support the use of the park and ride sites as strategic drop off points particularly the London Road site for St Edmunds. This would require a safe walking route to link the Park and Ride site with the Laverstock campus and could be a continuation of the Bishopdown/Laverstock cycle way. Children travelling from Amesbury to Salisbury schools could be dropped off at the Beehive Park and Ride site and then buses could be used for the remainder of the journey, children attending Westwood St Thomas’ could be dropped off at Wilton Park and Ride and Britford Park & Ride is available for a minibus pick-up for Trafalgar school. These sites could be equipped with bicycles for the students to be able to cycle the remainder of the journey to school, or the students could walk or be collected by bus. Salisbury District Council and Wiltshire County Council should investigate this further as a priority.*
83. *It is recommended that in all the above cases the local district, county and parish councillors be involved from as early a stage as possible.*
84. *The review group would like relevant officers to provide monitoring reports on all of the above schemes and report back to the full scrutiny Panel with progress quarterly.*

Bibliography

A safer journey to school: a guide to school travel plans – Department for Transport

Evaluation of First Yellow Bus Pilots Schemes – Department for Transport October 2003

Salisbury Transport 2000 – The Way to Go – December 2004

House of Commons Transport Select Committee Inquiry into Home to School Transport - A memorandum from the Sutton Trust with attachments - February 2004

Centre for Independent Transport Research in London - The School Crawl By David Hurdle – 1999

Wiltshire Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report 2004 – Wiltshire County Council

British Heart Foundation - Choosing health? Choosing activity – 2003

Review of traffic calming schemes in 20 mph zones. Transport Research Laboratory Report 215. (1996)

Appendices

Appendix A - List of children entitled to free school transport – provided by Wiltshire County Council

Appendix B – Wiltshire County Council’s guidelines for “supported” school bus services.

Appendix C - Table of charges levied by schools for the use of yellow buses.

Background Papers

Notes from interviews and visits to schools

Letters received from schools as evidence for the review

Statistics on accidents outside schools in the District provided by Mouchel Parkman.

Full People’s Voice Survey Results.

Department For Transport’s evaluation of yellow bus schemes.

All the papers listed in the Bibliography above are available on request.

Briefing Paper on Criteria for Entitled School Transport Provided
By Wiltshire County Council

Entitled children are those which are eligible for free or assisted transport to and from school or college under the Education Acts or in accordance with Wiltshire County Council policy. Although the rules are complex, broadly speaking the following are entitled to free transport:

- Children under 8 years attending and living 2 miles or more from the designated school
- Children 8 or more years attending and living 3 miles or more from the designated school
- Children living less than these distances from school but where the route is deemed to be unsafe to walk (accompanied by an adult)
- Children attending and living 2 or 3 miles or more from a denominational school up to a maximum distance of 5 miles (primary) and 10 miles (secondary)
- Students in 16-19 education living 3 miles or more from and attending the designated school or college where the family is in receipt of certain state benefits (ie low income)

In addition, the following are eligible for assisted transport;

- Other (non low-income family) 16-19 students living 3 miles or more from and attending the designated school or college – transport is arranged but a charge is made, currently £250 per annum
- 16-19 students whose intended choice of career necessitates attendance at a particular course not available at an establishment nearer home (necessary rather than desirable courses only) – again, transport is arranged and a £250 per annum charge made
- Denominational school children travelling further than 5/10 miles – parents or the school make the arrangements but can claim an allowance of up to £1.80 or £2.85 per day.

Free transport for pupils under 16 is a requirement of the Education Acts, whereas post 16 and denominational transport is at the Council's discretion.

Where a child or student is deemed to be eligible for free or assisted transport, the County Council will arrange this on behalf of the parents (except for denominational pupils travelling more than 5/10 miles, as above). This means that if public transport is not available, transport will be provided. This is done in the most cost effective way – either by contract bus, or minibus or taxi, or sometimes by paying the parent a petrol allowance.

GUIDELINES FOR WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL EXPENDITURE ON SUPPORTED PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

Scope of guidelines

These guidelines apply to Wiltshire County Council's own expenditure on public transport support, Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, and any other public transport revenue support administered by the Council.

Public Transport Aims

The aims of the County Council in spending money on support for public transport services are to:

- Provide access to a wide range of facilities and opportunities (including food and other shopping, personal business, health care, learning, employment, leisure, social and recreational purposes) for those without access to private transport; and
- Maintain and develop public transport services which contribute to reducing congestion and air pollution, and improve road safety, by making public transport an attractive alternative to car use.

Methods of identifying need for supported services

The County Council will:

- identify a network of strategic and urban services on which it will seek to maintain acceptable service levels;
- work with 'accessibility partnerships' to carry out accessibility assessments and identify potential ways of meeting access needs, which may include proposals for supported services;
- work with the Community Areas and local communities to identify their transport and access needs and appropriate ways of meeting these; and
- use experimental services to test demand, or to pilot innovative ways of providing services (subject to availability of funding).

Services that are identified for support as a result of the above may include conventional bus services, demand responsive transport, or community / voluntary transport as considered most appropriate in the circumstances.

Priorities

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| HIGH | <p>H1 Maintaining acceptable weekday daytime service levels on strategic network services, and on key local services in the Salisbury urban area and the larger towns of Chippenham, Trowbridge, Melksham, Westbury, Warminster, Bradford on Avon, Corsham, Calne, Wootton Bassett, Amesbury / Durrington / Larkhill / Bulford and Tidworth (target service levels hourly on Key Bus Route Network and urban local services, two-hourly on other interurban services with more than local significance).</p> |
|-------------|---|

- H2 On other routes, maintaining at least daily (weekday) access to a local centre with a range of food and other shops, bank or building society, post office, library and doctor's surgery, and with strategic network services to a larger town.
 - H3 Maintaining journeys catering primarily for work related trips where no reasonable alternative service exists.
 - H4 Providing services for non-entitled children travelling to and from a catchment area school, where there is a minimum demonstrable level of demand of at least 20 children (see footnote).
- MEDIUM**
- M1 Providing higher-than-minimum levels of daytime weekday service on strategic network services, or key routes in Salisbury urban area and the larger towns, where justified by the number of passengers carried.
 - M2 On other routes, providing higher-than-minimum levels of weekday daytime service, or more convenient access, to food and other shopping, personal business, work or health care, where justified by the number of passengers carried and/or where it makes a significant contribution to achieving accessibility targets.
 - M3 Providing services for non-entitled children travelling to and from a catchment area school, where there is not yet a demonstrable minimum level of demand but where the service would support a School Travel Plan, and there is a reasonable expectation that the minimum demand and subsidy per passenger guidelines will be met once the service has become established (see footnote).
 - M4 Providing evening, Sunday or Bank Holiday journeys on Key Bus Route Network services, or where a significant proportion of the passengers are travelling for work, shopping or healthcare related purposes, or to meet the leisure and social needs of young people, where justified by the number of passengers carried and/or where it makes a significant contribution to achieving accessibility targets.
- LOW**
- L1 Maintaining existing services which satisfy the value for money criteria (below) but do not fall into any of the high or medium priority categories above.
 - L2 Providing services catering primarily or exclusively for leisure, social, tourism or recreation purposes (other than those included in priority M4 above).

FOOTNOTE – ACCESS TO EDUCATION; Children or students who are entitled under the County Council's Education Transport Policies will receive free or assisted transport to and from school or college as a matter of course, subject to receipt and approval of an application. This is funded from the Education Transport budget and falls outside the scope of these guidelines.

County Council funding will NOT normally be used to provide transport that is used primarily or exclusively by non-entitled schoolchildren attending an out-of-catchment school, or by post-16 students attending a non-designated school or college except under the provisions of the Education Transport Policy.

Criteria

The Council will use the following guidelines to ensure value for money:

- The Council will critically review the justification for services where the subsidy per passenger trip exceeds the following:
 - £1.25 per passenger trip for school services under priorities H4 or M3 above;
 - £2.30 per passenger trip for urban local services;
 - £3.50 per passenger trip for all other services.*(The lower values for school and urban services reflect the shorter trip distances and lower fares paid on these types of service).*
- Where the subsidy per passenger trip is above these guide limits, the Council may decide to continue support if the service is meeting a high priority need and no reasonable alternative means of access is available.
- Exceptions may also be made for experimental services.
- The guideline values may be reviewed from time to time to reflect rises in operating costs and fares.

Application of the priorities and criteria

Decisions on which services to support will be made on the basis of a balanced judgement, taking into account:

- The subsidy per passenger trip for each service;
- The relative priority of the needs met, according to the categories as given above; and
- The contribution made by each service to the achievement of the objectives and targets set out in the Local Transport Plan.

14. FINANCIAL EVALUATION

First pilot areas - affordability by users

- 14.1 The charging regimes vary with several yellow bus schemes operating exclusively for pupils entitled to receive free school transport from their local education authority, some charging on a concessionary basis for spare seats, and others operating the vehicles wholly for pupils not entitled to free transport, who are charged fares of typically 45-50p per journey.

TABLE 14.1 CHARGING REGIMES

Scheme	Charge
Hebden Bridge	50p-£1.00 per day depending on distance – pre paid only (although can opt for one journey at 25p-50p)
Runnymede	£1 per day – paid via school
Wrexham	Free – entitled pupils only
Windsor & Maidenhead	£1 per day – pre paid
Wokingham	50p per journey for first child, reduced to 40p for siblings - pre paid
Aberdeen	School did not provide information
Wigan, GMPTE	40p each way
Stockport, GMPTE	40p each way
Ilkley	50p-£1.00 per day
Harrogate	45p each way (90p for 6 th formers)
Norfolk	Free – entitled only, concessionary pupils pay £160 p.a..
Staffordshire	73p-£1.33p per day for concessionary places – pre paid
Cheshire	Free – entitled only
West Sussex	Mainly free – some concessionary places – pre paid

Hebden Bridge

- 14.2 In Hebden Bridge, the yellow bus fares are zonally based relating to the straight line distance from home to school (currently charged at 25/40/50p per journey) and are almost equivalent to the local bus fare scale (the intention is to increase the fares gradually over time so that they eventually reflect ‘normal’ bus fare levels).
- 14.3 Parents have to purchase a pass in advance and there are two options:
- a pass for the academic year (either paid in full or using monthly direct debit); or
 - a pass for the term (most users fall into this category).
- 14.4 Affordability of the bus fares for parents was an issue raised by operators/driver in Hebden Bridge, with pre payment requirements being identified as a clear issue for some parents, and thought to reduce the take up of the service.