

ASSESSMENT OF SAFE WALKING ROUTES TO SCHOOL

1. The initial assessment is carried out by two Officers from the Education Transport Team of the Department of Environmental Services.
2. The general policy for assessing an available route is **attached**.

An available route is a route:-

- along which it is reasonably practicable for a child to walk; and
- along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety.

In assessing the safety of a particular route, consideration is given primarily to dangers related to traffic and highway conditions. The potential for molestation and other dangers must also be considered in the assessment. The availability of a pavement or footpath will normally be taken to provide a safe route for that part of the journey.

The availability of an accessible verge onto which the child (and accompanying adult as necessary) can step, when vehicles are passing, will normally be taken to provide a safety route for that part of the journey. On routes where there is neither pavement, footpath nor verge, consideration should be given to:-

- (a) width of carriageway;
- (b) traffic speed;
- (c) composition of traffic;
- (d) visibility (e.g. sharp bends with high hedgerows or banks).

Consideration should be given to the accident data for the route, with particular regard to the effect on pedestrian movements. Where the road has to be crossed, the availability of facilities to assist such crossings should be considered. In assessing the safety of a particular route, regard should be given to the age of the child and any other relevant circumstances.

3. The County Road Safety Officers' Association Guidelines (**attached**) are used in the assessment procedure.

4. As a result of the inspection, the two officers make a recommendation as to whether transport is to be provided.

In making their decision, there are two main considerations:-

- (a) could the child walk to school unaccompanied, with reasonable safety?

If the answer is “yes”, then there would normally be no case for the provision of free transport.

If the answer is “no”, then (b) below should be considered;

- (b) could the child walk to school accompanied by an adult, with reasonable safety?

If the answer is “yes”, then there would normally be no case for the provision of free transport;

If the answer is “no”, provision of free transport should be considered but the matter should be referred first to the Area Highways Engineer to investigate whether any cost-effective road improvements could be made as an alternative to the provision of free school transport.

5. If, after the inspection, the officers are unable to make a recommendation, a Road Safety Officer will be asked to assess the safety of the route using the same guidelines for assessment. A decision is made then as to whether free transport should be provided. If it is decided that free transport should be provided, the Director of Environmental Services will notify the parents and make the necessary arrangements (if the Area Highways Engineer is not able to carry out cost-effective road improvements as in 4(b) above).
6. The Road Safety Officer will be asked to assess the safety of the route, using the same guidelines, if the parent is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Officers’ initial assessment. If the Road Safety Officer upholds the recommendation of the Officers’ initial assessment, then the parent is informed of their right of appeal to the relevant Committee.
7. If the parent appeals then the route is walked by Members and an assessment made using the guidelines. As a result of this assessment Members consider, at their next meeting, whether free transport should be provided on grounds of road safety.

**SCHOOL TRANSPORT – GENERAL POLICY FOR ASSESSING
ON AVAILABLE ROUTE**

1. In deciding the way it should provide free transport to enable pupils to attend school, the County Council have to determine the distance to school by the nearest available route.
 2. There are two stages.
 3. The first stage is to decide what is an available route.
 4. In Rogers v Essex County Council (1986) the House of Lords heard that for a route to be available it must be a route which:-
 - 4.1 it is reasonably practicable for a child to walk along; and
 - 4.2 a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk along with reasonable safety.
- This involves taking any dangers or hazards into account: the County Council has to make a judgement. However, the presence of public transport cannot be considered at this stage.
5. The second stage is to measure the nearest available route from home to school.
 6. If the nearest available route is below two or three miles, as appropriate, there is no absolute obligation to provide free transport but the County Council has to consider whether or not there is a duty to provide free transport having regard to its policy.
 7. If the nearest available route is more than two or three miles, as appropriate, the County Council has a duty to provide free transport.
 8. The Director of Environmental Services will decide whether a route is available under the terms of paragraph 4. above. In cases of dispute he may refer the matter to the relevant committee.
 9. The Director of Environmental Services, in deciding whether a route is available, will refer to guidelines in the County Council's Policy on Education Transport.
 10. Where the Council decides a route is available under the terms of paragraph 4 which is less than two or three miles, and a parent requests free transport on grounds that it is dangerous for an unaccompanied child but it is not practicable for the parent to accompany the child to school, the County Council may point to the existence of a public bus service to get the child to and from school safely alone.

COUNTY ROAD SAFETY OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES

The County Road Safety Officers' Association set of guidelines are used to assess the safety of routes in the light of such factors as traffic and highway conditions, on the assumption that a child is accompanied by a responsible adult.

Footway	An adequate footway is defined as one "At least 1 metre wide, even in surface and without ruts and potholes – suitable for walking on".
Road Width	An adequate width of road has been determined as "A minimum of 5.5 metres of usable road surface".
Weight of Traffic	<p>The term "Weight of Traffic" applies to the maximum two-way traffic volume on a road of up to 5.5 metres is equal to or less than 240 vehicles per hour and where the maximum proportion of HGVs is no greater than 5% of the total.</p> <p>In cases where the two-way volume of traffic exceeds 240 vehicles per hour, or the proportion of HGVs exceeds 5% of the total number of vehicles, then the minimum width of the road shall be 6.5 metres.</p>
Step Off	<p>The term "Step Off" refers to the facility for pedestrians to be able to step clear of the roadway onto a reasonably even and firm surface level with (or nearly level with) the roadway and of a minimum width of 1 metre.</p> <p>Such a "Step Off" must be capable of being accessed quickly and easily by pedestrians who may be in charge of small children or prams/pushchairs.</p>
Visibility	<p>The term "Visibility" means the distance of unobstructed vision when measured from the eye point of a driver (usually taken as being 1.05 m from the road surface).</p> <p>Further, this distance must be equal to, or greater than the appropriate minimum overall stopping distance as shown in the table in the Highway Code given the known 85 percentile speed of traffic on the road.</p>

A sequential assessment based on these definitions follows:-

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| 1. | Footway | If an adequate footway exists the route is safe. |
| 2. | Safe Visibility | Adequate sight lines must exist, bearing in mind the speed of traffic, ie is there time to see and be seen in order to take action. |
| 3. | Step-Offs | On narrow roads (with no footway) a step-off facility is required except on lightly trafficked roads with good sight lines. |
| 4. | Road Width/
Traffic Volume | With a minimum width of 5.5 metres and two-way traffic volumes below 240 vph (maximum % of HGV traffic no greater than 5) the route should be considered safe, assuming conditions 2 and 3 exist. Where the % of HGV traffic exceeds 5, or total traffic flows exceed 240 vph, the minimum road width should be 6.5 metres. |

N.B. In normal circumstances it is assumed that the pedestrian is walking to face oncoming traffic, although it may be safer to extend sight lines on some occasions by moving across to the outside of bends.