



House of Commons
Transport Committee

School Travel

Second Report of Session 2008–09

Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence

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The Transport Committee

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1 Introduction

1. The availability of safe and affordable travel, both for access to education and for access to wider leisure and employment opportunities is vital for young people. Access to these activities will shape not only the early lives of children and young people but will have a continued impact into adulthood. Travel to and from school is only one aspect of the travel needs of children and young people. It is, however, likely to be the most frequent journey undertaken.

2. With a greater diversity of education or training pathways, young people should be able to access the most appropriate education provision. However, the cost and availability of transport can prevent this. School travel is not just an issue for young people but is also an important issue for society in general. Cars making the journey to and from school contribute significantly to CO₂ emissions and traffic congestion.¹ In addition, the school journey is a useful opportunity to tackle childhood obesity, as persuading young people to walk or cycle is a valuable part of a healthy lifestyle.

3. The travel patterns and preferences shaped in childhood can affect travel behaviour in adulthood, promoting healthy and sustainable travel for children will help to ensure that walking, cycling and the use of public transport become part of their adult behaviour. This is particularly true because children now spend less time on other physical activities such as outdoor play.

4. The National Travel Survey results for 2006 showed that more than 30% of children aged between 5–16 travelled to school by car. While we recognise that, in some cases, car travel is the most suitable method for children to get to and from school, there are a number of problems associated with high car use. As well as increased pollution and traffic congestion short car journeys also deprive children of the opportunity to exercise by walking or cycling.

Our inquiry

5. On 12 March 2008 we announced that the Transport Committee would inquire into School Travel. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 and *Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance* published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007 introduced a number of changes to the requirements on Local Authorities in respect of school transport. The Committee took written and oral evidence on the progress made to assess travel needs for pupils and promote sustainable travel, the suitability of existing travel arrangements and the provision of free school travel. We wanted to investigate the work already done to reduce car use for school journeys and also establish what future measures were necessary to support a move towards more sustainable modes of transport.

6. We wanted to learn more about the relationship between education policy and transport provisions. Some education policies, for example the policy of parental choice of school, or the introduction of 14–19 diplomas, have implications for sustainable travel policies as they

mean that students may be travelling longer distances. Planning policy and demographic shifts also affect the distance that children and young people travel.

7. Other key issues to emerge early in the inquiry were the availability and cost of transport for 16–19 year-olds in education or training, the raising of the school leaving age and the transport implications of the introduction of the 14–19 diploma. On 2 July 2008 we extended the scope of our inquiry to enable us to look at these issues. The extended scope also allowed us to look at the provision of transport and concessionary travel for children and young people more widely.

2 Travel for young people

8. In *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities* the Government states its aim for “all young people to enjoy happy, healthy and safe teenage years that prepare them well for adult life and enable them to reach their full potential – in short, to achieve the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes² and be on the path to success.”³ In order to support this aim, the document states that young people should be able to: “take part in activities that develop their resilience and the social and emotional skills they need for life, and enjoy their leisure time [and] make a real contribution to society, using their energy and dynamism to bring about change”.⁴

9. The availability of travel for young people is clearly an important issue. The UK Youth Parliament, UKYP, state that “At almost every local, regional and national event coordinated by UKYP, the organisation is made aware of the importance that young people place on being able to travel”.⁵ Cheshire County Council told us that “the Cheshire Youth Parliament identified transport as their number one priority. When offered funding their first action was to put it into a youth bus and rail concessions scheme.”⁶

10. Councillor Lawrence, giving evidence on behalf of the Local Government Association told us that a lack of available transport in general in rural and semi-rural areas would make it difficult for these areas to provide not only school transport but also prevent them from meeting their duties in respect of “the provision of access to positive activities for young people”.⁷

11. In urban areas, availability of transport is less of a problem. Instead the main concern is the cost of transport. One way of tackling this would be a concessionary travel scheme. The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport note

2 The Government set out five aims for all children and young people. These are: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, achieve economic well-being.

3 Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities*, July 2007, p 8

4 Ibid para 1.25

5 UK Youth Parliament *Fares Fare* pg 3

6 Ev 102

7 Q 342

that local authorities were given powers in the Transport Act 1985 to offer local concessionary travel to young people. As well as local authority concessions, many bus operators also offer reduced fares to young people as commercial incentives.⁸

12. However, as this is discretionary, the concessions offered can vary between local authorities and they are also vulnerable to budgetary pressures. The Passenger Transport Executive Group (pteg) told us that in Tyne and Wear Nexus, the region's Passenger Transport Executive, had been forced to withdraw its concessionary ticket for teenagers as a result of under funding for free local travel for older people and disabled people.⁹ This provided teenagers with a 50% discount on the price of a multi-modal season ticket. Similarly, when Greater Manchester was faced with the need to make a back-dated payment for a statutory concession, it raised the flat fare for children from 50p to 70p to reduce operator reimbursement for child travel.

13. Transport for London offers free tram and bus travel as well as concessionary fares on the Tube and DLR for under-18 year olds. The scheme for under-11 year olds was introduced in 2004. This was followed by an 11–15 scheme in 2005 and a 16–17 scheme in 2006. Mr Barry of Transport for London told us that the main benefit that was anticipated before the schemes were introduced was an improvement in young people's general access to school, to social activities and to leisure activities. Research that has since been carried out seems to indicate that free and concessionary travel "has increased [young] people's access."¹⁰

14. There is not universal support for a concession for children and young people. Living Streets expressed concern that, as had happened in London, a national free travel pass scheme could result in fewer children walking short distances. Operators were also wary of how the reimbursement mechanism for a young person's concession would work following problems with the introduction of concessions for the elderly and disabled people.

15. In 2008, we considered the case for extending the concessionary travel scheme to groups other than the elderly and disabled. We recommended that, in the event that the Government were to decide to widen the scheme, children and young people should be among the first to benefit.¹¹ The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport accepted that there were potential benefits in a concessionary scheme for young people, including ensuring that cost of travel does not prevent young people staying on in education or training up to age 18. It could also enable young people to access out of school activities.¹² However, Ministers were lukewarm at best about the introduction of such a scheme. The estimated cost to the Government of a scheme for 5–19 year-olds is around £1.4bn.¹³

8 Ev 80

9 Ev 118

10 Q 84 [Mr Barry]

11 Transport Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2007–08, *Ticketing and Concessionary Travel on Public Transport*, HC 84, para 100

12 Ev 80

13 Ev 80

16. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners claimed that a concessionary scheme for children and young people would be expensive and that it was essential to establish whether a concessionary scheme was the most effective way to ensure transport was not a barrier to education.¹⁴ Paul Clark MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport, also questioned how effective it would be to use money to fund a concessionary scheme saying:

I am not convinced that the social exclusion barriers that exist potentially for people who are over the age of 60 and people with disabilities [...] are necessarily the same social exclusion barriers that young people would face. A judgment has to be made about whether £1.4 billion is best spent on what is a relatively blunt tool. [...] it is quite a blunt instrument just to have a blanket concessionary fare when I am not convinced that the arguments are there or the case is made at this stage.¹⁵

17. We have previously concluded that there was a case for a concessionary fare scheme offering reduced fares to young people. Although we recognise there are a number of issues, such as cost and capacity that need to be addressed we are disappointed that Ministers seemed to have ruled out a concessionary scheme without having conducted any serious research into the viability of such a scheme.

18. Government policy recognises the importance of children and young people taking part in activities that develop their resilience as well as social and emotional skills. The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport must clearly identify how they are going to ensure that children and young people do not suffer social exclusion as a result of the cost and availability of transport.

3 Current School Transport Framework

Current Framework

19. Whilst the ability to travel easily is important to the development of young people for a whole host of reasons, none is more vital than the ability to travel to school, college or other institutions of learning. The legislative framework for the provision for school transport dates back to the Education Act 1944. This Act set the statutory distance over which free travel to school must be provided. The distances set were two miles each way for children of eight years old or younger and three miles for children over the age of eight years. These distances are often known as the statutory walking distances because they are measured along the shortest route which a child could walk with reasonable safety. Under the Education Act 1996 Local Authorities have a duty to provide free transport for all children of compulsory school age who are attending their nearest school when this is over the statutory walking distance. There are also discretionary powers for Local Authorities to extend the provision of free transport and provide transport for which there is a charge.

¹⁴ Q 454

¹⁵ Q 458

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 extended the provision to free school transport for some primary and secondary school pupils.

20. Sian Thornthwaite, a consultant specialising in school travel, told us that the journey to school was important not only because of potential health and environmental benefits. Research had shown that:¹⁶

affordable and available transport, whether it be bus or options for walking and cycling, has a key impact in terms of reducing exclusion and ensuring that young people are able to continue in education.

21. Throughout our inquiry, we heard from witnesses who claimed that the current statutory distances, set in the 1940s, should be reconsidered. Although the distances are not set out in legislation as distances under which it is possible for children to walk, the distances are measured along the shortest safe walking route. There was widespread agreement from our witnesses that the current two and three mile distances are no longer realistic walking distances and merely “an arbitrary limit which differentiates as to whether the financial burden falls on the parent or the local authority.”¹⁷ Sheena Pickersgill, Metro, also argued that the area through which children had to walk could make a difference to what was an ‘acceptable distance’, saying: “If they live next door to a busy road or a motorway I would think even a mile is too far sometimes.”¹⁸ However, the Minister told us that “there are no plans to review those walking distances.”¹⁹

22. The Education and Inspection Act 2006 moved away from the idea home to school distance should be the prime consideration for deciding which children were entitled to free school travel. Instead, the Act placed a duty on a local authority to provide free school transport for anyone who qualified as an ‘eligible child’. Eligible children are pupils aged 5–16 who:

- attend schools beyond the statutory walking distance where the local authority has not made arrangements for boarding accommodation or attendance at a nearer school;
- attend schools within the statutory walking distance but who have special educational needs or mobility problems which mean that they cannot reasonably be expected to walk;
- cannot be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school because of the nature of the route;
- are from low income families as defined in Schedule 8 of the Act (i.e. those children who are entitled to free school meals and those whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit).

16 Q 220 [Dr Thornthwaite]

17 Q 383

18 Q 110

19 Q 402

23. For children from low income families the provisions under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 require free transport to be provided in circumstances where free transport would not otherwise be provided. For secondary school pupils in this category it means free school transport must be provided not only for those attending their nearest school but to any one of the three nearest secondary schools where those schools are between two and six miles. Where a school is chosen on the grounds of religion or belief the upper limit is extended to 15 miles. For primary school pupils it means that free transport must also be provided to children from low income families if their school is over two miles away, even if they are over eight and therefore the three mile statutory distance would otherwise apply.

24. The Department for Transport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families claim that the most important benefit of the extended entitlement

will come from removing transport as a barrier to parents from low income backgrounds being able to express a preference for a school that best meets the needs, aspirations, and talents of their children. In turn, this should contribute to a reduction in social exclusion”.²⁰

However, the Yellow School Bus Commission argued that there is a “basic inequity [in] dividing the school population into those given free transport and those paying the local bus (or train) fare”.²¹

25. The statutory distances have not been updated since they were introduced in 1944. The majority of our witnesses were critical of the distances as they stand, and argued that it is no longer reasonable to expect children to walk three miles (around a one hour walk at a steady pace across level ground) to school. We agree. At present, the distances are arbitrary limits below which the Local Authority does not have to provide free transport rather than a realistic assessment of the distance at which it ceases to be appropriate to expect children to walk to school. **We recommend the Government review the distances that children are expected to walk or pay for their own transport—often referred to as ‘statutory walking distances’.**

26. The Education and Inspections Act requires Local Authorities to provide free school transport for pupils who cannot reasonably be expected to walk because of the nature of the route. **Local circumstances and infrastructure can affect profoundly the likelihood of parents allowing their children to walk to school. We therefore recommend that the Government consider, as part of a wider review of the statutory walking distances, if national limits are appropriate, or whether the decision to provide free transport to and from school should be left entirely to the discretion of local authorities.**

The extended free transport entitlement

27. The extended entitlement to free transport for children from low income families relies on two methods of defining low income families. One is children in receipt of free school meals and the other is children from families in receipt of the maximum level of working

²⁰ Ev 74

²¹ Ev 129

tax credit. Sian Thornthwaite, a consultant specialising in school travel, noted that there were problems with the way entitlement to free school meals was assessed and using this “as a gateway to an additional benefit of free transport” could mean that some of those who the extended school transport entitlement was meant to help were further disadvantaged.²² The other way of identifying children from low income families entitled to free transport under the Act was those from a household in receipt of the maximum amount of working tax credit. However, it was not possible for education authorities to access HMRC records and ensure that those children who were eligible were aware of the entitlement.²³

28. Ms Thornthwaite was also sceptical about the extended entitlement having the desired effect, arguing that for distances of 2–6 miles there are often choices in urban or suburban areas but this is usually not the case in rural areas. In order to offer a real choice in rural areas the upper distance for extended free school transport, currently six miles, or in cases where the choice is due to religion or belief fifteen miles, would have to be increased.

29. Evidence from David Brown, South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group supported the view that it is difficult for Local Authorities to identify children entitled to free transport under the new arrangements. He told us that in South Yorkshire the local authority had been able to access the national database of children in receipt of free school meals and advise those families of the extended transport entitlements but had been unable to do so for families in receipt of working tax credits.²⁴

30. It is possible that confusion about entitlement and the difficulties Local Authorities face in identifying eligible children and informing parents of the entitlement have led to a lower take-up of free transport than may otherwise have been the case. In written evidence the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport estimated that “around 30% of newly entitled pupils will take advantage of the new offer”.²⁵ However, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners told that Committee, in November 2008, that there had not been a great take-up but that was not necessarily out of line with expectations “because very often their local school is the school people want to go to”.²⁶

31. The mechanisms which Local Authorities are using to identify children who are eligible for the extended entitlement to free school transport are not sufficiently robust. We recommend that the Government put in place mechanisms to help local authorities identify pupils who are eligible for the new entitlement. The Government and local authorities should also ensure that parents and pupils are aware of the new entitlement.

32. We welcome the extension of provision of free school transport for pupils from low income families. We are, however, concerned that the maximum travel distance of six miles does not allow for a choice of schools in rural areas. **We recommend that the Government should establish how many eligible pupils in rural areas have more than**

22 Ev 166

23 ibid

24 Q 47

25 Ev 74

26 Q 403

one school within a six mile radius of their home. The Government needs to establish whether allowing pupils from low income families to receive free transport within a six mile radius, even if they do not attend their closest school, has had a positive impact on the availability of a choice of schools for those pupils.

33. Although we accept that the aim of ensuring young people from low income families are not educationally disadvantaged by the cost of travel is important, we are concerned that several witnesses suggested that there has been a reduction in the discretionary school transport provided by Local Authorities.²⁷ Ian Gwenlan of the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers suggested that this was partly a result of increased statutory duties on local authorities in respect of school transport.²⁸ **We recommend that the Government should establish to what extent Local Authorities have removed discretionary provisions since the extended statutory duties came into force.**

34. In November 2008 the Local Transport Act received Royal Assent. The Department for Transport claimed that the Act would:

- Give local authorities the right mix of powers to improve the quality of local bus services, as proposed in *Putting Passengers First* in December 2006 following an extensive bus policy review;
- Allow for the creation of an influential new bus passenger champion to represent the interests of bus passengers, and
- Give local authorities the power to review and propose their own arrangements for local transport governance to support more coherent planning and delivery of local transport.²⁹

35. Witnesses were cautious in predicting the success of the Act in promoting a more integrated approach to school travel planning as part of a wider transport network. Les Warneford of Stagecoach when asked in October 2008 if the Local Transport Bill would improve the working relationship between travel operators and Local Authorities, told us that “I think it is silent on that matter”.³⁰ However, Mark Hudson, 14–19 Rural Access to Learning Groups told us that he was hopeful that “the arrangements in the Local Transport Bill will help us towards ticketing and integrated fares”.³¹ The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport was more positive still, saying that the Act:

would actually allow passenger transport executives and authorities to become integrated transport authorities, so taking responsibility across the board for transport requirements, and would actually help to have a far better joined-up view of the delivery.³²

27 Q 233 [Dr Thornthwaite], Q 286 [Ms Roche]

28 Q 351

29 “Bus passengers to benefit from local transport bill – New passenger champion to be created”, Department for Transport press release, 8 November 2007

30 Q 212

31 Q 272

32 Q 408

36. Some witnesses were critical of the lack of impact of the last piece of legislation which affected school travel, the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Modeshift felt it had done little to promote sustainable travel, saying, “There appears to be little evidence that the Education and Inspections [Act] has yet significantly changed activity in terms of implementation of measures.”³³ **We would welcome a more joined-up approach to school travel but it remains to be seen if the Local Transport Act will achieve this.**

Funding

Table 1: Cost of, and funding for, school travel programmes

Existing funding	
Public sector spending on school transport in England 2008–2009 (<i>Figure in brackets: Spending on transport for students with Special Educational Need</i>) ³⁴	£938 million (£394 million)
Including: DCSF and DFT joint funding for the Travelling to School Initiative per annum	£7.5 million
Additional Travelling to School Initiative per annum funding from DCSF	£20 million
Cycling England budget for 2008–2011 (to promote and support cycling in general, rather than exclusively for cycling to school)	£140 million
<i>Annualised expenditure: 2008–2009 (2009–2010; 2010–2011)</i> ³⁵	£20 million (£60 million; £60 million)
Estimated cost for possible school travel schemes	
Annual cost of a nationwide yellow bus scheme for primary school pupils and a limited service for secondary school pupils ³⁶	£204–254 million
Estimated annual cost of nationwide Walk Once a Week scheme (based on cost of £2 per head ³⁷ and 7,583,000 pupils 3–19 in England ³⁸)	£15 million

37. Funding for school transport comes primarily from the Revenue Support Grant from central government to local authorities and through income generated by local councils. The grant is not ring-fenced for particular services. As long as they meet their statutory duties, councils have the discretion to use their funding as they see fit. There is also funding

33 Ev 137

34 Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Benchmarking tables of LA planned expenditure 2008–09*

35 “Ruth Kelly launches £140 million cycling fund”, Department for Transport press release, 21 January 2008

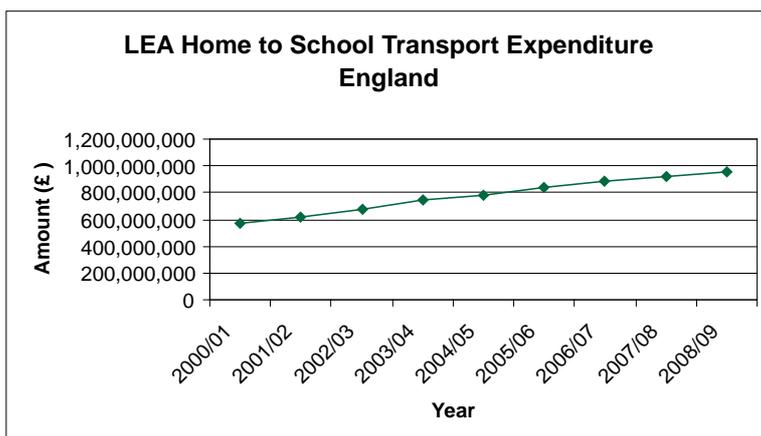
36 Yellow School Bus Commission, *Report and recommendations*, September 2008, p3

37 Ev 124 – figure given in evidence from Living Streets as the cost for the scheme in London. Some economies of scale would be expected for a national scheme.

38 Department for Children, Schools and Families, 3–19 pupil numbers used in 2008–2009 per pupil benchmarking tables.

for specific initiatives, as outlined in Table 1 above. The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport have jointly provided £140 million for the *Travelling to School* initiative. The Department of Health also funds, or partly funds, some initiatives, such as a contribution towards Cycling England and funding for *Healthy Towns* which, while not aimed exclusively at school travel, may contribute to supporting sustainable travel in general.

Figure 1: School travel expenditure of Local Authorities



Source: Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Benchmarking tables of LA planned expenditure 2008–09*

38. As Figure 1 above shows, the amount of expenditure for school transport has increased significantly since 2000. Total spending has risen by nearly £379 million comprising a £141 million rise for secondary school transport, a £111 million increase for primary school transport and a £132 million rise in expenditure on school transport for pupils with special educational needs. Despite accounting for over one-third of the total increase in school transport expenditure, SEN pupils make up only 2.8 per cent of all pupils across England.³⁹

39. Pupils with special educational needs are one of the groups given specific entitlement to free school transport under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. We heard that “Support for Special Educational Needs students to access learning opportunities represents a relatively small percentage of students but a significant proportion of overall expenditure”.⁴⁰

40. Some witnesses have argued that the relative difficulty in obtaining revenue funding compared to capital funding means that it is not necessarily the most effective measures that are implemented.^{41 42} First Group echoed this and said that:

a problem is that school transport initiatives require both capital and revenue funding. In transportation the availability of central Government grants or

39 Department for Children, Schools and Families, Statistical First Release 15/2008, *Special Educational Needs in England*, January 2008

40 Ev 93 [South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group]

41 Capital funding is provided for expenditure which will have a long term (and usually tangible) benefit. Revenue funding relates to running expenses and is funding which needs to be renewed for benefits to continue. For example, purchasing a bike shed would be a capital cost but annual bike safety training would be a revenue cost.

42 Ev 92

permission to borrow for capital expenditure means that physical elements of school plans have a higher chance of implementation e.g. local traffic management schemes around schools while other, potentially higher value measures (school bus improvements, travel behaviour initiatives) do not because they require ongoing revenue funding which is generally scarce.⁴³

41. There is also competition for funding, not just from other transport or education initiatives but from all services provided by local councils. On average, money for school transport makes up 0.5% of local authority budgets. Councillor Lawrence emphasised that school travel was only one of many competing priorities: “If an authority was asked to provide more money to facilitate the safeguarding of children as against the provision of support for travel plans, I do not think it would be difficult to see in which direction additional money would go.”⁴⁴

42. There are many suggestions for improving school travel but a limited amount of funding. Given the current economic climate, it is unlikely that large additional sums will become available for school travel initiatives in the short term. It is therefore all the more important that the Government ensures that money is spent in the most efficient way possible. We are concerned at the suggestion that some relatively inexpensive but effective projects that involve walking, for example the Walk Once a Week scheme that rewards children for walking to school with a sticker, are viewed less favourably, when it comes to funding, than other projects.⁴⁵ **Given budget pressures and the importance of spending public money wisely and efficiently, we urge the Government to work with Local Authorities to see how low cost projects requiring revenue funding can be supported effectively.**

43. We recognise that the Department for Transport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families are working together to fund school travel initiatives. **The Department for Transport must make effective use of all possibilities to fund projects jointly with other Departments, for example drawing on Department of Health Healthy Towns funding towards infrastructure improvements to encourage cycling and walking.**

4 Making school travel policy

44. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 placed a duty on local authorities to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel and to develop a strategy to improve infrastructure supporting sustainable travel. Despite this, the attitude of the Government to sustainable school travel is unclear. The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport have provided funding for the *Travelling to School* initiative and the DfT provides funding for Cycling England. However, education policies such as parental choice and 14–19 Diplomas seem to accept, if not encourage, significant amounts

43 Ev 151

44 Q 353

45 Ev 125 [Living Streets]

of travel as part of a pupil's education. The Government should clearly state to what extent they are prepared to persuade or compel schools, students and parents to use sustainable, active travel and whether they are willing to use an element of compulsion.

Centralised harmonisation v. local adaptation

45. Some witnesses expressed concern that the school transport provision and public transport provision could vary significantly between areas. Mark Hudson of the 14–19 Access to Learning Group said:

You cannot draw a line around England and say everywhere is the same. There is a different picture in each area so if you take major metropolitan areas where they have good networks you will find that public transport is available. We have found year-on-year in Nottingham for instance that we have had a 3% increase in travel on public transport (which includes students) which goes against the national trend but that is because we have good networks and low fares. If you move further south you find a lot of areas that are very rural with high fares and little public transport.⁴⁶

In assessing pupils' travel needs "progress has varied from authority to authority" as have the results.⁴⁷

46. The 14–19 Access to Learning Group, along with the Association of School and College Leaders supported a more centralised approach. Referring to their own 2007 research they said that "there is a postcode lottery on support for young people and transport. We feel that a national scheme would be appropriate but that model needs to suit both urban and rural learners".⁴⁸ However, other witnesses were much less enthusiastic about national schemes and wanted decision-making to happen at a local level. The Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership argued that setting targets for modal shift at a local as opposed to a national level was appropriate due to the complexity of the issues and the different situations in rural and metropolitan areas.⁴⁹

47. We accept that, in most cases, Local Authorities are best placed to make decisions about local transport needs. However, we are concerned that the "postcode lottery" young people face in respect of transport provision could be affecting their educational opportunities and achievements. In part it may be that significant local variations are a result of the lack of clarity over school travel policy on the part of the Government.

Joined-up working

48. There are a number of areas related to school travel where the work of several Government departments overlap. For example, schemes to persuade children to walk to school involve health and education as well as transport. We received evidence suggesting

46 Q 282 [Mr Hudson]

47 Q 331 [Mr Gwenlan]

48 Q 270 [Mr Hudson]

49 Q 27

that there is currently a lack of coordination between these areas. The National Association of Head Teachers acknowledge that:

There is a considerable amount of work to do in developing stronger relationships between education, transport and health authorities in all areas, including school travel. This will undoubtedly assist the ‘joined-up’ working that is needed in this area but it is also true that this will not happen overnight.⁵⁰

49. When asked what could be done to improve the transport network for young people Viv McKee of the National Youth Agency emphasised this point, arguing that:

the changes in expectations of the offer to young people both in terms of the 14 to 19 agenda and Aiming High which expect young people to be able to access services at a number of points at a number of times. Provision is not strategically planned and delivered to make this happen.⁵¹

14–19 diplomas were highlighted as an example of education policy which has significant transport implications but where there has been only limited coordination and planning between the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport.

50. However, there was some recognition that Government departments were trying to improve the way they work together on cross-sector policy and initiatives. Tony Armstrong of Living Streets told us that “There are increasing signs of good practice in terms of the focus of the DCSF and DH jointly running the obesity strategy and working closely with DfT on that. There are very promising signs.”⁵² Councillor Lawrence of the Local Government Association also suggested that proposed legislation to strengthen Children’s Trusts could help to promote more coordinated approaches to school travel if the duty to co-operate was strengthened.⁵³

51. The Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health and the Department for Transport must take a more pro-active, bolder approach in promoting joint working. It is vital to a successful school travel strategy that departments are able to work effectively with each other. Government departments should ensure effective coordination between transport, education and health interests when it comes to cross-sector work and policy.

52. We heard that co-ordination at a local level could also be improved. Living Streets, claimed that the current way of working allowed for too much duplication and “buck passing” between school travel and health authorities,⁵⁴ although they were aware that “one positive aspect of the current working practices is that School Travel Planners have become an active part of the healthy and sustainable schools programme.”⁵⁵ We heard that links

50 Ev 126 [National Association of Head Teachers]

51 Q 302

52 Q 250 [Mr Armstrong]

53 Q 391

54 Ev 125 [Living Streets]

55 Ev 124

between education and health authorities at a local level were also being developed through work on the *Healthy Schools* initiative.⁵⁶

53. The Association of Transport Coordinating Officers also told us that there is progress in encouraging joint working. They said:

It is increasingly common for public and education transport to be arranged within local authorities by an Integrated Transport Unit, in order to achieve efficiencies in provision and a consistent approach to standards and policies. The Local Transport Plan process has also encouraged the closer integration of education transport policies with overall transport policies, and the Education & Inspections Act requirement for school travel strategies has also encouraged further moves in this direction.⁵⁷

Les Warneford of Stagecoach, one of the UK's largest bus operators, also supported the use of Integrated Transport Units, arguing that integrated units worked well in most areas, noting that bus operators had good collaboration with such units.⁵⁸ Local Authorities without Integrated Transport Units need to seriously consider whether such an arrangement might be beneficial in their area to bring together different aspects of Local Authority transport planning.

54. One of the problems with encouraging more joined-up working is establishing what the cross-sector benefits are and how cross-sector initiatives should be funded. Councillor Lawrence of the Local Government Association told us that differences in funding structures between health, education and transport authorities could make it difficult to identify funding that could be used for joint schemes. He told us that, for example, in Primary Care Trusts, it could be difficult to identify money spent on children and young people specifically, while in education authorities it was often possible to break spending down by age cohort. There were also differences between local government and health authorities in terms of whether money could be carried forward from one year to the next.⁵⁹

55. We recognise that differences in funding arrangements can make joint work between transport, health and education difficult. However, we urge Local Authorities operating within multi-agency agreements to consider new ways of funding and running initiatives to integrate the transport, health and education objectives for school travel. The Government should support and promote innovative work in this area. Success requires co-ordination both nationally and locally.

Choice and planning

56. The school admissions process offers an element of choice to parents and students, allowing them to select appropriate provision and apply to their choice of school, which is

56 Ev 93

57 Ev 121

58 Q 210

59 Q 390

not necessarily the closest. A 2006 paper from the London School of Economics Centre for Economic Performance noted that:

Choice in education is an issue that ranks high on the political agendas of governments around the world and is increasingly being pushed hard in the UK. While many regard choice as a value per se, most proponents emphasise the improvement in educational standards that could result.⁶⁰

Underlying the arguments of supporters of the extension of choice in education is the assumption that this will improve educational attainment.

57. However, it can be more difficult to promote sustainable modes of travel when pupils are not attending a local school. TravelWatch North West claims that:

It is [...] often difficult for operators to serve schools where uncoordinated planning of housing and educational “re-organisations” have resulted in relocations or concentrations of sites in greenfield or dispersed locations. This is inevitable as long as parental choice, the *raison d’être* of the Act, replaces zoning.⁶¹

The Association of Train Operating Companies concluded that:

There also remains a fundamental tension at national level between transport policy and accessibility planning on the one hand, which encourage a reduction in the need to travel and the promotion of sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport; and on the other hand policies on education and health which promote choice, flexibility and specialisation, which lead directly to longer journeys and more dispersed patterns of travel that can not be effectively catered for by sustainable modes.⁶²

58. Some of the evidence we heard suggested that choice of school should be limited. Paul Osbourne of Sustrans told us that there should perhaps be “some limited choice of school near to where people live, but ultimately how are we going to address sustainability unless schools do not generate huge travel demand.”⁶³ However, other witnesses focused their comments on the need to make travel one of the factors that parents considered when choosing a school. Living Street suggest that “it is essential to change the current thinking whereby parents consider simply which school is “best” for their child without giving any thought to how the daily journey is to be achieved”.⁶⁴ Figures from the Department for Children, Schools and Families for 2008 secondary school entrants show that, although there are regional variations, on average in England 82 per cent of families received a place

60 Stephen Gibbons, Stephen Machin and Olmo Silva “The educational impact of parental choice and school competition”, *CentrePiece*, vol 11, issue 3 (2006), pp 6–9

61 Ev 105

62 Ev 122 [Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers]

63 Q 251

64 Ev 124

at their first choice school and 94 per cent received a place at one of their top three choices.⁶⁵

59. Allowing students and parents to access appropriate education and training is important if young people are to achieve their full potential. However, we recognise that longer journeys to and from school can reduce the likelihood of pupils using sustainable modes of transport. Planning should take into account the need for communities to have access to local education facilities and the need for schools and colleges to be accessible by foot, bike and public transport. **We urge the Government to work with local authorities to ensure that information about travel and the benefits of sustainable travel are included in the information provided to parents and young people when choosing schools. There is a tension between promoting choice of school and promoting sustainable school travel. The Government has, to date, done little to address the tension between choice and sustainability when it comes to schools. The Government must be more open about these tensions and address them explicitly in future policy making.**

5 Delivering sustainable school travel

Modal shift

60. As illustrated in Table 2 below, one third of all children travel to school by car or van. It is the second most prevalent mode of travel to school, beating public transport, dedicated transport and cycling. Creating a modal shift away from car use and toward sustainable modes of travel is vital. Not only would such a shift reduce carbon emissions but it could also help to ease congestion. The statutory guidance on the provisions in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that Local Authorities are responsible for:

- conducting an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools/institutions;
- the production of a strategy to develop the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority so that the travel and transport needs of children and young people are better catered for; and
- the promotion of sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Department for Children, Schools and Families, *Local Authority level data on secondary school places and offers received by parents on National Offer Day 2008*, 11 March 2008
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STA/t000778/index.shtml>

⁶⁶ Department for Education and Skills, *Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance*, May 2007, p 5

Table 2: How children travel to school

Mode of transport to school, Great Britain, 2002 to 2006	
	Total
Train, underground, light rail or tram	0.6%
Public bus, minibus or coach	7.8%
School or LA bus, minibus or coach	7.9%
Motorcycle, scooter or moped	0.1%
Car or van	33.1%
Taxi/minicab	1.2%
Bicycle	1.8%
On foot	47.0%
<i>Source: Department for Transport, National Travel Survey, 2002–2006 [computer file]. 3rd Edition. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], January 2009. SN: 5340</i>	

61. Car use on the journey to and from school has doubled in the past 20 years according to a survey from the Department for Transport.⁶⁷ As well as the environmental cost of car use, journeys to and from school increase traffic congestion at peak times. Sustrans claims that about one-fifth of peak hour traffic is made up of school journeys, with obvious consequences in terms of pollution and congestion.⁶⁸ We also heard from witnesses who were concerned about the potential danger of having a large number of vehicles clustered near school entrances.

62. Both the Department for Transport and the Department for Children, School and Families recognise that modal shift has the potential to realise a number of benefits including:

- reductions in emissions,
- savings in vehicle operating costs and travel time for parents whom previously drove their children to school,
- reduction in accidents, and
- time saved from reduced congestion”.⁶⁹

Rt Hon David Blunkett MP, speaking on behalf of the Yellow School Bus Commission, also emphasised the wide-ranging benefits which could be achieved through a modal shift.⁷⁰

67 Department for Education and Skills, *Regulatory Impact Assessment of the school travel provisions of the Education and Inspections Act 2006*, 2006

68 Ev 108 [Sustrans]

69 Ev 75

70 Q 219

63. We support the aim of the Government to reduce the proportion of children and young people travelling to school by car. However, where there are no suitable transport alternatives it is understandable that parents chose to take their children to school by car. The only way to achieve sustainable modal shift is to provide viable and attractive alternatives to car travel. We support every effort from the Government and local authorities to achieve this.

Availability and cost

64. The availability of transport to take children and young people to and from education and training is clearly vital to supporting their educational achievement. Chris Harrison from the National Association of Head Teachers warned us that suitable transport is not always available to young people and “that increasingly children’s options, access and opportunities are [...] influenced very heavily by the availability of transport rather than their particular interest or level of expertise, or their flow of direction for their future career options”.⁷¹

65. When asked about the availability of public transport, Mary Roche of the Rural 14–19 access to learning group told us that public transport in rural areas often is not economically viable, creating a major problem.⁷² Councillor Les Lawrence, Head of the Transport and Regeneration Board of the Local Government Association, questioned the ability of the bus network to meet the needs of learners doing 14–19 diplomas, saying that it would be more difficult for local authorities in rural areas to meet their statutory duties because of the lack of bus services in rural areas.⁷³

66. Evidence from the Department for Transport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families acknowledged this problem in relation to 14–19 Diplomas and additional funding has been provided to help rural areas meet the needs of 14–19 learners. The departments highlighted that:

... rural areas do face a particular set of transport challenges in delivering the Diploma entitlement – with dispersed populations and settlements and less well-developed transport infrastructure [...] We also announced £23 million for the 40 most rural areas in the country to develop local solutions and innovation. This will fund the post of a Transport and Access Coordinator in the 40 most rural areas and provide £1 million in capital to the 20 most rural areas.

67. Evidence from the departments on whether or not transport makes a difference to young people’s education seemed contradictory. While accepting that lack of available transport could be a problem in relation to 14–19 Diplomas they suggest that cost of transport is unimportant, claiming “There is no significant difference in levels of young people’s participation in education or training between areas offering free or subsidised transport provision and those areas which did not offer this provision”.⁷⁴ The departments

71 Q 172

72 Q 281

73 Q 345

74 Ev 77

also said that they were commissioning research on whether transport was a barrier to young people and would use this to inform policy decision in the longer-term.⁷⁵

68. While the departments appeared to dismiss cost as an issue for young people and their access to transport other witnesses saw it as a significant problem. Beth Walker of the National Union of Students (NUS) told us about research the NUS had carried out into travel to college. She told us that, of the students who replied to the NUS survey:

- 45% spent between £11 and £50 a week on public transport
- 45% did not feel the Educational Maintenance Allowance⁷⁶ payment covered the travel costs they incurred as part of their education

69. Despite evidence from the DfT and DCSF, we are concerned that the availability and cost of travel could be affecting the ability of young people to access suitable education and training, especially in rural areas. **We recommend that the Government undertake research to assess the cost of travel to education and training facilities for young people. For 16–19 year olds in areas where costs are close to, or exceed, the maximum Educational Maintenance Allowance payment we recommend the Government make additional funding available to provide a top-up for students from low income families. We recommend that, in addition to the Educational Maintenance Allowance, the Government consider financial support specifically for young people from low income families doing 14–19 diplomas.**

14–19 Diplomas

70. The 14–19 Education and Skills White Paper published in February 2005 set out the government's proposals for 14–19 education. One of the key changes was the introduction of 14–19 diplomas. The Diploma is a new qualification that combines theoretical study with practical experience and is part of the 14–19 Reform Programme being rolled out over the next five years. From September 2008 14–19 diplomas in the first five subject areas have been available.⁷⁷ Diplomas will cover 17 subjects, or lines of learning, and will be available in areas across England by 2011. All Diplomas will require students to achieve a minimum standard in English, maths and ICT, complete a project and do a minimum of 10 days' work experience. In their evidence to us the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport state that diplomas are “a critical element of the Government's objective to give every young person access to a broad curriculum offer to prepare them to succeed in education, work and life.”⁷⁸

71. A DCSF publication on 14–19 transport issues recognises that “14–19 developments present potential transport challenges for local delivery areas”.⁷⁹ They go on to add

75 Ev 77

76 The Education Maintenance Allowance is a weekly payment of between £10 and £30. It is calculated based on household income and is dependant on regular attendance at school or college.

77 Engineering, Construction and the Built Environment, Information Technology, Society, Health and Development, and Creative and Media.

78 Ev 78

79 Department for Children, School and Families, *14–19 Curriculum Offer: Transport-Related Issues and Solutions*, Research Report DCSF-RW045, p iii

“Diploma delivery will mean that young people are likely to spend time at different institutions”.⁸⁰ Cheshire County Council reported that:

For diplomas coaches have been booked to transport students to the college each week. As the specialist facilities can only accommodate small group sizes this will involve a shuttle service between schools; this has been planned and co-ordinated centrally and will be supported by a diploma student support co-ordinator – a part time post created to address the need for additional support for students required when undertaking off-site learning. This is financially unsustainable in the long term.⁸¹

72. There was some concern among witnesses that the transport implications of the diploma had not been considered at a sufficiently early stage. In October 2008, a month after the initial cohorts on the first five diplomas had started their courses, Kathryn James, National Association of Head Teachers, told us that NAHT were concerned that there had not been sufficient planning in terms of the transport needs for pupils taking the 14–19 Diploma and the transport implications of raising the participation age from 16 to 18.⁸² The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport said that the department was monitoring the transport requirements of the diplomas. He said that the work with local authorities to date had shown that “transport is not appearing to be a barrier to that provision”.

73. We are encouraged to hear that the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport are monitoring the transport requirements for diplomas in areas where they have already been rolled out. With the first year of diploma provision now underway this work must be a priority.

74. It is disappointing that better planning had not been put in place before the new diplomas were rolled out. The Government must ensure that future reforms of education provision take into account transport provisions and that work on meeting changed demand is integrated into planning at an early stage.

Cycling and walking

75. Cycling and walking to school have benefits for the health of pupils, the environment and the easing of traffic congestion. The benefits of cycling and walking are reflected in Merseytravel’s School Transport Policy which prioritises those modes of travel followed by public bus, dedicated school bus and then private car.⁸³ Living Streets also argued that “Our first priority needs to be to promote walking and cycling as the first option for travelling to school”.⁸⁴ Walking and cycling are both cheap, sustainable and healthy modes of transport.

80 Department for Children, School and Families, *14–19 Curriculum Offer: Transport-Related Issues and Solutions*, Research Report DCSF-RW045, p iiiii

81 Ev 101–102

82 Q 172 [Ms James]

83 Ev 115

84 Q 233 [Mr Armstrong]

76. Distance from school and safety are obviously key factors in whether pupils can walk or cycle but, where possible, the benefits of walking and cycling make them the best modes of travel to school. We heard, during the inquiry, of a number of initiatives to encourage children to walk or cycle to school. South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group lists a number of existing innovative schemes to promote walking and cycling to school:

- “walk once a week” schemes—operating in 59% of Sheffield’s schools;
- “Bike It” schemes—operating for four years in 30 schools in and around Doncaster;⁸⁵
- walking buses;
- road safety education—workshops provided by local authority road safety units, South Yorkshire Police, the Fire Service and the PTE; and
- cycle and pedestrian training—pedestrian training has been running in 30 Barnsley schools for over five years and Rotherham provided cycle training in 54 schools during 2007/08.

These schemes all require revenue funding to sustain them and as we have already discussed this can cause difficulties within the current funding regime.

77. We were disheartened to hear the suggestion that funding for walking and cycling infrastructure is lower in the UK than in some other northern European countries. Walking and cycling infrastructure has to compete with other priorities for Local Transport Plan capital funds. Although their capital costs are relatively low compared with highways or public transport services, walking and cycling initiatives often require revenue funding to maintain the benefits in the longer term. Mr Osbourne of Sustrans told us that:

...historically in this country we have seen average investment levels of about a pound per inhabitant on walking, cycling, and typically in continental Europe levels of investment are five times higher than that. Recent investment in the sustainable travel towns and cycle demonstration towns has sought to address this and set up some models in this country, but many towns and cities, and indeed rural areas, are badly lacking in the infrastructure that has been provided and there is an awful lot we can learn from our continental colleagues.⁸⁶

78. The Minister told us that both walking buses and cycling proficiency schemes received Government support. He said that in addition to funding to support walking buses⁸⁷ there was a £140 million cycling scheme to train up to 500,000 youngsters by 2012 in level 2 cycling skills, in order to give both children and parents the confidence for children to cycle to school.⁸⁸

85 According to Sustrans figures for 2006–2007 the percentage of children who never cycled to school fell from 80% to 55%. The greatest increase was in those children cycling once or twice a week where the percentage rose from 7% to 17%.

86 Q 220

87 Q 424

88 Q 426

79. **Walking and cycling are sustainable, healthy modes of travel that have a number of benefits for both individuals, the environment and the transport infrastructure. The Government should make a clear commitment to promoting walking and cycling as the preferred transport options where this is practicable.**

80. **We recommend that the Department for Transport re-examine how school travel budgets are allocated and how sustainable school travel is supported. The amount of funding available to support walking and cycling should be increased. Given the health benefits of walking and cycling, we recommend that the Department of Health, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport work together to ensure that sufficient funding is available to provide training and support schemes to promote walking and cycling to school as well as investment in infrastructure.**

Dedicated school buses

81. Local Authorities have discretion to choose how they fulfil their statutory duties in respect of free school transport for eligible children and young people. The mechanism used varies between authorities. Some provide travel passes to enable eligible children to use public bus or rail services whilst others provide dedicated school transport. Dedicated transport could range from a specially commissioned bus route using an ordinary bus to a full, door-to-door yellow bus-style scheme. If the statutory walking distance was reduced it is highly likely that more Local Authorities would be required to provide more dedicated bus services to meet their statutory duties.

“Yellow bus” schemes

82. Rising car use for the school journey and associated social, health and environmental costs have encouraged interest in the use of American-style yellow school buses in the UK. In the United States over half of all school children use a school bus whereas the figure in the UK is only 6%.^{89 90} Yellow bus-style schemes differ from other dedicated bus services in a number of ways. One element of a yellow bus-style scheme is the use of a special type of vehicle, built to high safety specifications and fitted with seatbelts. The use of specially trained drivers, trained escorts and the provision of a door-to-door or near door-to-door service are also important aspects of these arrangements.

83. Following an announcement by bus operator FirstGroup in June 2000 that it planned to introduce yellow school buses in Britain a Government pilot scheme began operating in February 2002. In October 2003, the Department for Transport published an evaluation of the pilot scheme. The evaluation of the pilot showed some evidence that such schemes could reduce car dependency on the journey to school: parents liked the safety and security, especially of having familiar, dedicated drivers. Both parents and pupils appreciated the convenience of a pick up/drop off point close to home and school. The prospect of dedicated bus services could attract children away from cars but could also

89 Sutton Trust, *No more school run*, June 2005, p 7

90 There are, of course, a number of factors which affect mode of travel. The lower use of bus travel by UK pupils does not necessarily mean more pupils are travelling by car but could mean that more pupils are walking or cycling.

discourage children from walking and cycling, and might have negative impacts on commercial bus services.⁹¹

84. In November 2007, the Yellow School Bus Commission, established by FirstGroup in July 2007, announced that it was launching a consultation on the future of home to school transport and the use of yellow school buses. A report of the Commission's findings was published in Summer 2008. The Commission recommended that:

- all schools should continue to promote walking or cycling for students living up to two miles from the school (for secondary pupils) and one mile from the school (for primary pupils);
- yellow school buses should be offered for all primary school children living more than one mile from their school, this should be phased in over five years, culminating in a revenue investment of £154 million per annum;
- yellow school buses should be considered for secondary school pupils living more than two miles from the school, where special circumstances, such as poor behaviour by pupils or poor service provision, existed;
- existing secondary school provision should be improved, and up to £100 million additional funding should be provided for this purpose, and
- schools should be given financial incentives to stagger start and finish times.

85. Rt Hon David Blunkett MP told us that yellow bus schemes could create significant modal shift away from car use and encourage children to walk to school, for example by linking up to walking routes.⁹² Christine Pickersgill told us that the MyBus scheme in West Yorkshire had been a success, saying that parents and children did not like the public bus network because the vehicles were “old and dirty, the drivers are grumpy, they do not come on time and when they do they cost a lot of money”.⁹³ The MyBus scheme has also helped reduce car use, with pteg claiming that between the start of the scheme in 2002 and 2008 there has been a modal shift away from private car journeys of 64 per cent among primary school children. The scheme had also reduced congestion around school gates.⁹⁴

86. However, some witnesses were critical of the possible impact of yellow bus services, particularly a universal scheme for all primary school children living more than one mile from school, as proposed by the Yellow School Bus Commission. Tony Armstrong of Living Streets told us that:

Our first priority needs to be to promote walking and cycling as the first option for travelling to school. By setting a limit of one mile I think you are actually capturing a

91 Steer Davies Gleave for the DfT, *Evaluation of First yellow bus scheme pilots*, October 2003

92 Q 223

93 Q 66

94 Ev 116

lot of people who could walk and cycle as part of their journey, so that is why we call for a two mile radius for primary [schools].⁹⁵

87. Yellow bus-style schemes are also expensive. Stagecoach said that dedicated school buses were costly to run. They could be used for as little as 308 hours per year based on two one-hour journeys every school day. Despite this, they still required a driver during the busiest times of the day, and operators had to pay for maintenance and overhead costs in just the same way that they would with a bus running all day.⁹⁶ The Yellow School Bus Commission accepted that “funding remains the major obstacle for a wider delivery of dedicated home to school transport.”⁹⁷ They suggest a charge, between £1–2 per day, for the service on those deemed able to pay. Rt Hon David Blunkett MP gave the example of Northampton where the ability to pay for the bus service was based on receipt of free school meals. There was also an appeals process so that parents who had difficulty paying could seek assistance, and parents who could afford to, paid more.⁹⁸

88. Evidence from the two Ministers seemed to acknowledge that yellow bus services could have a positive role to play as part of school travel strategy. Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners told us that the Department for Children School and Families did not believe that a “one size fits all” national dedicated bus scheme was the right way to proceed but there were benefits to such schemes.⁹⁹ Paul Clark MP told us that “well-designed schemes can potentially reduce car dependency and congestion”¹⁰⁰ but cautioned that there had been examples of a dedicated bus service reducing the number of children walking because they used the bus instead.¹⁰¹

89. The Government must collect and disseminate examples of good practice for running dedicated school transport and provide high-quality guidance on when dedicated transport is appropriate.

Dedicated transport services v. use of the general transport network

90. One of the arguments advanced in support of widespread provision of dedicated school buses was that members of the general public were concerned about the behaviour of young people on public transport. Stagecoach claimed that unruly pupils on public buses discouraged other users. In particular, they argued that the growing number of elderly and disabled passengers travelling on their services were concerned about the behaviour of children and students on buses.¹⁰²

91. However, no evidence documenting a significant level of criminal, rather than merely disruptive, behaviour by young people on public transport was presented to us. Ms

95 Q 233

96 Ev 133 [Stagecoach]

97 Ev 131

98 Q 255

99 Q 446

100 Q 455

101 Q 407

102 Ev 113 [Stagecoach]

Sheridan of Modeshift argued that “wherever you get large groups of children you are going to get noise, you are going to get banter, and what a lot of people perceive to be antisocial behaviour is at its heart just kids being kids.”¹⁰³ This view seemed to be supported by Mr Barry of Transport for London, who told us that “In absolute terms the number of complaints we get about low-level antisocial behaviour has gone up; if you move across to actual criminal activity, that is coming down”.¹⁰⁴

92. In general, our witnesses supported the idea of tackling behaviour and perceived anti-social behaviour rather than segregating transport services. Les Warneford, representing Stagecoach told us that:

Society has to get used to old folks and young folks on the same bus and we need to make sure the education system lets the young folks understand that they cannot just take it over, but I do think there has to be a better sanction against the real troublemakers.¹⁰⁵

Although we accept that some users of public transport are concerned about travelling with large groups of young people on buses, we believe that using the public transport network can help young people to develop valuable life skills. It is also cost-effective compared to the cost of dedicated bus services. Where behaviour is a concern we urge Local Authorities, schools and bus operators to work together to resolve these issues.

93. Apart from not wishing to separate young people from adult passengers there was also concern that a widespread school bus service, such as a yellow bus scheme, could damage the existing public transport network by making some routes unviable. Les Warneford told us of the situation in Kent where school transport was integrated into the general transport network. He said if the school transport for the area was undertaken by yellow bus operators “the entire Kent public transport network would collapse.” Ms Thornthwaite, a school transport consultant, echoed concerns about the potential for yellow bus schemes to damage the local public transport network. She said that there were areas “where most of the rural public transport network is on the back of registered school services and there is a danger if we have segregated school services we could lose the rural public transport routes”.¹⁰⁶

94. We recommend that decisions on the form of school transport provision should continue to be made at a local level and be based on local circumstances. High quality dedicated school transport services, such as yellow bus schemes, can make a positive contribution to a more sustainable school transport system by reducing the use of cars but may be expensive. Local authorities should consider the impact of dedicated transport such as yellow buses on the local transport system before introducing them. Government must collect information and examples of good practice and provide appropriate guidance.

103 Q 146

104 Q 83

105 Q 190

106 Q 253

School Travel Plans & School Travel Advisers

95. The Travelling to School initiative, which was launched in 2003 by the Department for Transport and the then Department for Education and Skills, includes measures designed to reduce congestion and increase the use of sustainable modes of transport for school travel. Funding has been available since April 2004 for local authorities to appoint School Travel Advisers to work with schools to develop School Travel Plans (STPs).

96. A review of the effectiveness of the initiative was published in November 2005. It concluded that it was “not possible to say for certain from this work whether the Travelling to School Initiative is meeting its aims of reducing the proportion of children travelling to school by car, and increasing walking, cycling or use of public transport.” The review went on to say that, in most schools with STPs, there had not been a statistically significant reduction in car use. Only 14% of primary and 40% of secondary schools included in the analysis had achieved a significant reduction in car use while 14% of the primary and 56% of the secondary schools analysed saw a significant increase in car use during the period of analysis.¹⁰⁷

97. All schools are supposed to have a School Travel Plan by 2010.¹⁰⁸ One incentive for schools to have a plan is that a one-off capital grant is available for approved plans.¹⁰⁹ Travel Plans are required in order to access certain funding streams, for example Cycling England’s school cycle training grant.¹¹⁰ SYSTEG argued that:

Travel Plans must be about more than just financial reward for schools to produce one—they must bring about positive behavioural change accompanied with robust monitoring of this. The effectiveness of an STP is often dependent upon securing the right person within an individual school. [...] difficulties arise when enthusiastic STP champions (staff member, parent, governor) move on.¹¹¹

98. The Minister told us, in relation to the 2010 target of all schools having a School Travel Plan, that “we are not there” although 70 per cent of schools did have a School Travel Plan.¹¹² However, Ian Gwenlan, Association of Transport Coordinating Officers questioned whether this was a realistic target. He told us that because the target included independent schools it was going to be difficult to achieve. This was partly because independent schools were “very difficult to engage.”¹¹³

99. There were also questions about the effectiveness of school travel plans. Chris Harrison of the National Association of Head Teachers believed that the Plans had been useful for

107 DfT, *Travelling to School Initiative Report on the Findings of the Initial Evaluation*, 29 November 2005

108 DfT, *Travelling to School: a good practice guide*, September 2003, p 54

109 £5000 for primary schools and £10000 for secondary schools

110 Ev 90

111 *ibid*

112 Q 430

113 Q 344

schools, especially when it came to tackling issues like parking¹¹⁴ Sustrans claimed that STPs had been effective in reducing car use by 8–15%.¹¹⁵

100. However, none of the witnesses from local authorities or local transport plan partnerships seemed confident of achieving this scale of modal shift. Janet Mills of Cheshire County Council told us that their target was to reduce car use by just 1%, from 34 per cent to 33 per cent by 2011 and¹¹⁶ Sarah Dewar from the Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership told us that although Merseyside had achieved a 2.4% cut in car use in schools with a travel plan but the target for Merseyside was still only a 1.1% reduction in car use for school journeys by 2011.¹¹⁷ Much of the evidence we received suggested that the effectiveness of STPs could vary between schools and areas.

101. The funding provided to employ school travel advisers to work with schools on their travel plans is due to end in 2010. Ms Dewar told us that, currently, funding for school travel advisers was part of the Local Area Agreement, and authorities received an allocation dependent on the number of schools within individual areas. She said that “there is a risk to the funding not being allocated to School Travel Advisers and therefore the crux of the School Travel Plan programme not being funded beyond 2010”.¹¹⁸

102. Although praising the effectiveness of school travel plans in their written evidence, Ministers were unwilling to commit to funding School Travel Advisers post-2010. Paul Clark MP told us that the Department for Transport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families was still considering what, if any funding will be provided after 2010 because by that stage school travel plans would “be part and parcel of the school routine”¹¹⁹ He did give us an assurance that a decision on funding would be made “well before the expiry of 2010”.¹²⁰

103. School Travel Plans and Advisers are a means to an end – promoting sustainable school travel – rather than an end in themselves. It is vital the Government monitors the effectiveness of School Travel Plans. To do this the Government needs to make clear how it will measure success. A review of what has been achieved is needed before making a decision about funding School Travel Advisers post-2010. While school travel plans can be effective and school travel advisers can be a useful resource for schools we are unconvinced that additional funding can be justified unless changes to mode of school travel can be demonstrated. We question the value for money of a scheme which aims to produce a modal shift of only 1% between 2004 and 2011.

104. We were concerned that the DfT and DCSEF, despite having included independent schools in the 100% target did not seem to be aware of the difficulties in engaging this sector. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools and Learners told us that “A

114 Q 119

115 Q 222

116 Q 5–12

117 Q 4

118 Q 30

119 Q 343–344

120 Q 343–344

lot of the independent sector are actually involved”¹²¹ while an official from DCSF told us that “It has come to our attention that in some areas independent schools have not engaged in the same way as maintained schools, but I think it varies quite a lot at local level”.¹²² The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport told us that involvement from the independent sector was not widespread.¹²³

105. The Government must establish to what extent independent schools have been taking effective measures to promote sustainable school travel. As there are not the same incentives for independent schools to complete a school travel plan as there are for maintained schools, the Government should consider whether there is another way to encourage independent schools to promote sustainable school travel.

6 Conclusion

106. There is no single ‘magic bullet’ solution to improving school travel. Indeed, part of the problem is that different groups have different ideas about what good school travel looks like. Parents and students want safe, convenient travel to suitable education or training. Local authorities must ensure that their statutory duties are fulfilled and that they can meet transport costs from their budgets. Groups promoting sustainable travel want more people to walk or cycle. The Government needs to bite the bullet and be unambiguous in addressing the tension between these different priorities. If sustainable school travel is the top priority, it must say so clearly and consistently in all its policy pronouncements. Likewise, if choice is its top priority, that must be made clear.

107. It is vital that the use of walking and cycling is encouraged where appropriate. The percentage of funding allocated to initiatives to support walking and cycling needs to be increased and the importance of promoting walking and cycling in the first instance, ahead of other methods of travel should be emphasised. Where this is not possible, use of public transport followed by the use of dedicated buses should be encouraged.

108. The introduction of 14–19 Diplomas means that some students will now be studying at a number of locations. Students could need to travel to a number of colleges and work places as part of a single diploma. The Government must monitor the impact of diplomas on travel needs and must also monitor the transport schemes run by colleges.

109. While being able to access education and training is obviously vital to the success of young people it is important to remember that learning and development also occur outside school or college. Where leisure activities exist for young people, transport should not pose a barrier.

110. The basic aim of school travel must be to support the learning of young people whilst also considering their safety, health and personal development. While there are

121 Q 438

122 Q 441

123 Q 444

benefits to reducing car use and encouraging walking and cycling where appropriate, no single mode is suitable for everyone to use. Government and local authorities should work with schools, parents and students to encourage them to consider the impact of different forms of transport. Safe and suitable alternatives to car use for children and young people must be provided, be they public transport, dedicated school buses, walking schemes or safe cycling.

List of recommendations

Travel for young people

1. We have previously concluded that there was a case for a concessionary fare scheme offering reduced fares to young people. Although we recognise there are a number of issues, such as cost and capacity that need to be addressed we are disappointed that Ministers seemed to have ruled out a concessionary scheme without having conducted any serious research into the viability of such a scheme. (Paragraph 17)
2. Government policy recognises the importance of children and young people taking part in activities that develop their resilience as well as social and emotional skills. The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport must clearly identify how they are going to ensure that children and young people do not suffer social exclusion as a result of the cost and availability of transport. (Paragraph 18)

Current School Transport Framework

3. We recommend the Government review the distances that children are expected to walk or pay for their own transport—often referred to as ‘statutory walking distances’. (Paragraph 25)
4. Local circumstances and infrastructure can affect profoundly the likelihood of parents allowing their children to walk to school. We therefore recommend that the Government consider, as part of a wider review of the statutory walking distances, if national limits are appropriate, or whether the decision to provide free transport to and from school should be left entirely to the discretion of local authorities. (Paragraph 26)
5. The mechanisms which Local Authorities are using to identify children who are eligible for the extended entitlement to free school transport are not sufficiently robust. We recommend that the Government put in place mechanisms to help local authorities identify pupils who are eligible for the new entitlement. The Government and local authorities should also ensure that parents and pupils are aware of the new entitlement. (Paragraph 31)
6. We recommend that the Government should establish how many eligible pupils in rural areas have more than one school within a six mile radius of their home. The Government needs to establish whether allowing pupils from low income families to receive free transport within a six mile radius, even if they do not attend their closest school, has had a positive impact on the availability of a choice of schools for those pupils. (Paragraph 32)
7. We recommend that the Government should establish to what extent Local Authorities have removed discretionary provisions since the extended statutory duties came into force. (Paragraph 33)

8. We would welcome a more joined-up approach to school travel but it remains to be seen if the Local Transport Act will achieve this. (Paragraph 36)
9. Given budget pressures and the importance of spending public money wisely and efficiently, we urge the Government to work with Local Authorities to see how low cost projects requiring revenue funding can be supported effectively. (Paragraph 42)
10. The Department for Transport must make effective use of all possibilities to fund projects jointly with other Departments, for example drawing on Department of Health Healthy Towns funding towards infrastructure improvements to encourage cycling and walking. (Paragraph 43)

Making school travel policy

11. The Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department of Health and the Department for Transport must take a more pro-active, bolder approach in promoting joint working. It is vital to a successful school travel strategy that departments are able to work effectively with each other. Government departments should ensure effective coordination between transport, education and health interests when it comes to cross-sector work and policy. (Paragraph 51)
12. We recognise that differences in funding arrangements can make joint work between transport, health and education difficult. However, we urge Local Authorities operating within multi-agency agreements to consider new ways of funding and running initiatives to integrate the transport, health and education objectives for school travel. The Government should support and promote innovative work in this area. Success requires co-ordination both nationally and locally. (Paragraph 55)
13. We urge the Government to work with local authorities to ensure that information about travel and the benefits of sustainable travel are included in the information provided to parents and young people when choosing schools. There is a tension between promoting choice of school and promoting sustainable school travel. The Government has, to date, done little to address the tension between choice and sustainability when it comes to schools. The Government must be more open about these tensions and address them explicitly in future policy making. (Paragraph 59)

Delivering sustainable school travel

14. We recommend that the Government undertake research to assess the cost of travel to education and training facilities for young people. For 16–19 year olds in areas where costs are close to, or exceed, the maximum Educational Maintenance Allowance payment we recommend the Government make additional funding available to provide a top-up for students from low income families. We recommend that, in addition to the Educational Maintenance Allowance, the Government consider financial support specifically for young people from low income families doing 14–19 diplomas. (Paragraph 69)
15. We are encouraged to hear that the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport are monitoring the transport requirements for

diplomas in areas where they have already been rolled out. With the first year of diploma provision now underway this work must be a priority. (Paragraph 73)

16. It is disappointing that better planning had not been put in place before the new diplomas were rolled out. The Government must ensure that future reforms of education provision take into account transport provisions and that work on meeting changed demand is integrated into planning at an early stage. (Paragraph 74)
17. Walking and cycling are sustainable, healthy modes of travel that have a number of benefits for both individuals, the environment and the transport infrastructure. The Government should make a clear commitment to promoting walking and cycling as the preferred transport options where this is practicable. (Paragraph 79)
18. We recommend that the Department for Transport re-examine how school travel budgets are allocated and how sustainable school travel is supported. The amount of funding available to support walking and cycling should be increased. Given the health benefits of walking and cycling, we recommend that the Department of Health, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport work together to ensure that sufficient funding is available to provide training and support schemes to promote walking and cycling to school as well as investment in infrastructure. (Paragraph 80)
19. The Government must collect and disseminate examples of good practice for running dedicated school transport and provide high-quality guidance on when dedicated transport is appropriate. (Paragraph 89)
20. We recommend that decisions on the form of school transport provision should continue to be made at a local level and be based on local circumstances. High quality dedicated school transport services, such as yellow bus schemes, can make a positive contribution to a more sustainable school transport system by reducing the use of cars but may be expensive. Local authorities should consider the impact of dedicated transport such as yellow buses on the local transport system before introducing them. Government must collect information and examples of good practice and provide appropriate guidance. (Paragraph 94)
21. School Travel Plans and Advisers are a means to an end – promoting sustainable school travel – rather than an end in themselves. It is vital the Government monitors the effectiveness of School Travel Plans. To do this the Government needs to make clear how it will measure success. A review of what has been achieved is needed before making a decision about funding School Travel Advisers post-2010. While school travel plans can be effective and school travel advisers can be a useful resource for schools we are unconvinced that additional funding can be justified unless changes to mode of school travel can be demonstrated. We question the value for money of a scheme which aims to produce a modal shift of only 1% between 2004 and 2011. (Paragraph 103)
22. The Government must establish to what extent independent schools have been taking effective measures to promote sustainable school travel. As there are not the same incentives for independent schools to complete a school travel plan as there are

for maintained schools, the Government should consider whether there is another way to encourage independent schools to promote sustainable school travel. (Paragraph 105)

Conclusion

23. The basic aim of school travel must be to support the learning of young people whilst also considering their safety, health and personal development. While there are benefits to reducing car use and encouraging walking and cycling where appropriate, no single mode is suitable for everyone to use. Government and local authorities should work with schools, parents and students to encourage them to consider the impact of different forms of transport. Safe and suitable alternatives to car use for children and young people must be provided, be they public transport, dedicated school buses, walking schemes or safe cycling. (Paragraph 110)

Formal Minutes

WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2009

Members present:

Mrs Louise Ellman, in the Chair

Mr John Leech
Mr Eric Martlew
Mark Pritchard

Ms Angela C. Smith
Sir Peter Soulsby
Graham Stringer

Draft Report (*School Travel*), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 110 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 18 March at 2.30 pm.]

Witnesses

Wednesday 2 July 2008

Page

Mr David Brown, Chairman, South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group; **Ms Sarah Dewar**, TravelWise Co-ordinator, Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership; **Mr Steve Williams**, Strategic Manager, Public and Mainstream School Transport, and **Ms Janet Mills**, Sustainable School Travel Team Manager, Cheshire County Council

Ev 1

Mr Neil Scales, Chairman, Passenger Transport Executive Group, **Ms Sheena Pickersgill**, Director of Corporate Services, Metro, **Mr Ben Plowden**, Director, Smarter Travel Unit, Transport for London, and **Mr John Barry**, Head of Network Development, London Buses, Transport for London

Ev 11

Wednesday 15 October 2008

Mr Derek Bodey, Chair of the ASCL Learning and Skills Committee, Association of School and College Leaders; **Ms Kathryn James**, Senior Assistant Secretary, and **Mr Chris Harrison**, Head Teacher, Oulton Broad Primary School, National Association of Head Teachers; **Ms Emma Sheridan**, Chair, Modeshift

Ev 19

Mr Les Warneford, Managing Director, Stagecoach UK Bus; **Mr Steven Salmon**, Director of Policy Development, and **Mr Giles Fearnley**, President, Confederation of Passenger Transport; **Mr Leon Daniels**, Commercial Director, UK Bus, FirstGroup

Ev 28

Wednesday 22 October 2008

Mr Paul Osborne, School Travel Director, Sustrans; **Mr Tony Armstrong**, Chief Executive, Living Streets; **Rt Hon David Blunkett MP**, Chairman, and **Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Tex Pemberton OBE**, Commissioner, Yellow School Bus Commission; and **Dr Sian Thornthwaite**, Independent Consultant

Ev 34

Mr Mark Hudson, Head of Transport, and **Ms Mary Roche**, Policy Manager, Rural 14–19 Access to Learning Group; **Dr David Collins**, Resident, and Principal of South Cheshire College, Association of Colleges; and **Ms Elizabeth Dainton**, Research Development Manager, RAC Foundation

Ev 41

Ms Viv McKee, Director of Policy and Research, National Youth Agency; **Ms Barbara Hearn**, Deputy Chief Executive, National Children's Bureau; and **Ms Beth Walker**, Vice President (Further Education), National Union of Students

Ev 47

Wednesday 26 November 2008

Councillor Les Lawrence, Chair of Children and Young Peoples Board, Local Government Association, and **Mr Ian Gwenlan**, Chair of Education Transport Sub-Committee, Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers

Ev 52

Paul Clark MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport, **Ms Jessica Matthew**, Deputy Director, Cycling and Sustainable Travel, Department for Transport, **Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Children, Schools and Families, and **Ms Hilary Spencer**, Deputy Director, 14–19 Policy and Local Delivery Division, Department for Children, Schools and Families

Ev 61

List of written evidence

1	Joint submission from the Department for Transport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families	Ev 72, 76, 81, 87
2	South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group	Ev 89, 93
3	Cheshire County Council	Ev 97, 100
4	TravelWatch NorthWest	Ev 103, 107
5	Sustrans	Ev 108
6	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF)	Ev 112
7	Stagecoach Group plc	Ev 113
8	Passenger Transport Executive Group (pteg)	Ev 114, 118
9	Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO)	Ev 119
10	Living Streets	Ev 122
11	National Association of Head Teachers	Ev 125
12	Peter J Walker	Ev 126
13	Yellow School Bus Commission	Ev 128, 134
14	Modeshift	Ev 135
15	Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership	Ev 140
16	Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) School Transport Committee	Ev 143
17	RAC Foundation for Motoring	Ev 145, 148
18	FirstGroup plc	Ev 150, 154
19	Transport for London	Ev 156, 160
20	Sian Thornthwaite	Ev 164
21	Sustainable School Travel Team, North Yorkshire County Council	Ev 167
22	Danielle Adams	Ev 168
23	Eric Smith	Ev 168
24	Bexhill Rail Action Group	Ev 169
25	Nottinghamshire Transport Services	Ev 170
26	The National Youth Agency	Ev 175
27	National Children's Bureau	Ev 177
28	Cycling England	Ev 180
29	Association of Colleges	Ev 183
30	Passenger Focus	Ev 186
31	Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority	Ev 188
32	Ryedale Sixth Form Partnership in North Yorkshire	Ev 190
33	NECTAR (Peter J Walker)	Ev 192
34	National Union of Students	Ev 194, 196
35	Association of School and College Leaders	Ev 197
36	Commission for Rural Communities	Ev 198

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Second Report	School Travel	HC 351
First Special Report	Ending the Scandal of Complacency: Road Safety beyond 2010: Government Response to the Committee's Eleventh Report of Session 2007–08	HC 136

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Eighth Report	Freight Transport	HC 249
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Tenth Report	Delivering a sustainable railway: a 30-year strategy for the railways?	HC 219
Eleventh Report	Ending the Scandal of Complacency: Road Safety beyond 2010	HC 460
Twelfth Report	The opening of Heathrow Terminal 5	HC 543
First Special Report	Galileo: Recent Developments: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2007–08	HC 283
Second Special Report	The London Underground and the Public-Private Partnership Agreements: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2007–08	HC 461
Third Special Report	The future of BAA: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2007–08	HC 569
Fourth Special Report	Ticketing and Concessionary Travel on Public Transport: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2007–08	HC 708
Fifth Special Report	Department for Transport Annual Report 2007: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2007–08	HC 1102

Sixth Special Report	Freight Transport: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2007–08	HC 1103
Seventh Special Report	The Draft Marine Navigation Bill: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2007–08	HC 1104
Eighth Special Report	Delivering a sustainable railway: a 30-year strategy for the railways?: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2007–08	HC 1105
Ninth Special Report	The Blue Badge Scheme: Government and Westminster City Council Responses to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2007–08	HC 1106
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First Report	Work of the Committee in 2005–06	HC 226
Second Report	The Ports Industry in England and Wales	HC 61-I & 61-II
Third Report	Transport for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: The Draft Transport Plan	HC 199
Fourth Report	Department for Transport Annual Report 2006	HC 95
Fifth Report	The Government's Motorcycling Strategy	HC 264
Sixth Report	The new National Boatmasters' Licence	HC 320-I & 320-II
Seventh Report	Novice Drivers	HC 355-I & 355-II
Eighth Report	Passengers' Experiences of Air Travel	HC 435-I & 435-II
Ninth Report	The draft Local Transport Bill and the Transport Innovation Fund	HC 692-I & 692-II
First Special Report	Passenger Rail Franchising: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 265
Second Special Report	Roads Policing and Technology: Getting the right balance: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 290
Third Special Report	Bus services across the UK: Government Response to the Committee's Eleventh Report of Session 2005–06	HC 298
Fourth Special Report	Local Transport Planning and Funding: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 334
Fifth Special Report	The work of the Civil Aviation Authority: Government Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 371
Sixth Special Report	Transport for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: The Draft Transport Plan: Olympic Delivery Authority Response to the Committee's Third Report of Session 2006–07	HC 484
Seventh Special Report	Department for Transport Annual Report 2006: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2006–07	HC 485

Eighth Special Report	The Government's Motorcycling Strategy: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2006–07	HC 698
Ninth Special Report	The Ports Industry in England and Wales: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2006–07	HC 954
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First Report	UK Transport Security – preliminary report	HC 637
Second Report	Financial Protection for Air Travellers: Second Report Abandoning Effective Protection	HC 636
Third Report	Going for Gold: Transport for London's 2012 Olympic Games	HC 588
Fourth Report	Departmental Annual Report 2005	HC 684
Fifth Report	Future of the British Transport Police	HC 1070
Sixth Report	How fair are the fares? Train fares and ticketing	HC 700
Seventh Report	Parking Policy and Enforcement	HC 748
Eighth Report	Piracy	HC 1026
Ninth Report	The work of the Department for Transport's Executive Agencies – DVO Group and the Highways Agency	HC 907
Tenth Report	Roads Policing and Technology: Getting the balance right	HC 975
Eleventh Report	Bus Services across the UK	HC 1317
Twelfth Report	Local Transport Planning and Funding	HC 1120
Thirteenth Report	The work of the Civil Aviation Authority	HC 809
Fourteenth Report	Passenger Rail Franchising	HC 1354
First Special Report	The Performance of the London Underground: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2004–05	HC 431
Second Special Report	The Departmental Annual Report 2004: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2004–05	HC 432
Third Special Report	Integrated Transport: the future of light rail and modern trams in the UK: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of session 2004–05	HC 526
Fourth Special Report	Search and Rescue: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2004–05	HC 586
Fifth Special Report	Rural Railways: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2004–05	HC 587
Sixth Special Report	Tonnage Tax: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2004–05	HC 611
Seventh Special Report	Financial Protection for Air Travellers: Government and Civil Aviation Authority Responses to the Committee's Fifteenth	HC 639

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Eighth Special Report	European Community Competence and Transport: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2004–05	HC 976
Ninth Special Report	Financial Protection for Air Travellers: Abandoning Effective Protection: Government and Civil Aviation Authority Responses to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2005–06	HC 996
Tenth Special Report	Going for Gold: Transport for London's 2012 Olympic Games: Government Response to the committee's Third Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1152
Eleventh Special Report	Departmental Annual Report 2005: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1517
Twelfth Special Report	Future of the British Transport Police: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1639
Thirteenth Special Report	How fair are the fares? Train fares and ticketing: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1640
Fourteenth Special Report	Parking Policy and Enforcement: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1641
Fifteenth Special Report	The Work of the Department for Transport's Agencies – Driver and Vehicle Operator Group and the Highways Agency: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1615
Sixteenth Special Report	Piracy: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2005–06	HC 1690

Oral evidence

Taken before the Transport Committee

on Wednesday 2 July 2008

Members present

Mrs Louise Ellman, in the Chair

Mr David Clelland
Clive Efford
Mr Eric Martlew

Graham Stringer
Mr David Wilshire

Witnesses: **Mr David Brown**, Chairman, South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group; **Ms Sarah Dewar**, TravelWise Co-ordinator, Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership; **Mr Steve Williams**, Strategic Manager, Public and Mainstream School Transport, and **Ms Janet Mills**, Sustainable School Travel Team Manager, Cheshire County Council, gave evidence.

Chairman: I would ask Members if they have any interests to declare.

Clive Efford: I am a member of Unite.

Mr Clelland: I am a member of Unite.

Mr Martlew: I am a member of Unite and the GMB.

Graham Stringer: I am a member of Unite.

Q1 Chairman: I am a member of Unite. I would like to welcome our witnesses here this afternoon and I would ask you to introduce yourselves, please. Could you give your name and who you are representing?

Mr Brown: My name is David Brown and I am the Director General at South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, but today I am here as the Chair of the South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Working Group.

Ms Dewar: My name is Sarah Dewar. I am the TravelWise Co-ordinator for the Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership.

Mr Williams: Steve Williams from Cheshire County Council, the Manager of the Public and Mainstream School Transport Unit.

Ms Mills: I am Janet Mills from Cheshire County Council, School Travel Team Manager.

Q2 Chairman: Thank you very much. What progress would you say has been made by local authorities in carrying out the new duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and also to support sustainable travel? What would you say has been done up to now?

Ms Mills: I think in some respects when the Education Act came out and held authorities to do it, a lot of the authorities were on the way with it through the School Travel Plan work that was already being done. As far as Cheshire County Council are concerned, we were working towards it and it enabled us to step up a gear really, and to put more work into it. A lot of the work over setting the routes and getting children to and from school was done through the School Travel Plans, certain work through that.

Ms Dewar: For Merseyside we had a School Transport Policy as part of the Local Transport Plan, and we have now updated that and each of the partners has developed their own strategy under that umbrella strategy. What I think it has allowed us to do is to develop the work, similarly to Cheshire, that we had been doing on School Travel Plans but also to broaden that out and encompass the travel policies of the local education authorities more within that. It has enabled more joint understanding between the local education authorities and the transport sections of the councils and Merseytravel as the PTE and PTA, and I think good progress has been made in terms of assessing the difficulties and the issues that we have to face, setting out how we are going to address those, and certainly joint working across the Merseyside area between those authorities in improving access to information for parents is very much more under way.

Mr Brown: It has acted as a focus for us to bring together all the elements that need to work together. We have been working on the audits particularly, and understanding what infrastructure and services are there available. We have used the funding we have received to actually do that in a very systematic way so that we are better prepared to put in place those plans. We are also much more proactive in promoting the options for people, particularly as new admissions come on board. We have used it as a focus to get both the PTE and PTA but also the various elements of the local education authorities together so that we can link the policy strategy on the ground.

Q3 Chairman: Do you expect to see a move away from the use of private cars?

Mr Brown: It is clearly one of the big aims for us, both in our Local Transport Plan and also in the local strategic partnerships, to encourage people to use non-car modes to and from school. We have in South Yorkshire a number of deprived areas that have low car ownership and, as people become more prosperous, they are using their car even for short journeys to and from school, so we are trying to use this as a focus to make people more aware of not just

the transport but the wider benefits of not using cars for short journeys or journeys to and from school. We are hoping to see, and we have had some early experience where we have School Travel Plans in place, and we have promoted the use of public transport, we are seeing schools with active and proactive School Travel Plans, the use of car is lower than those schools that do not have a School Travel Plan. So we are seeing some slight change but we think it will be more in the medium to longer term that those benefits will start to be seen more clearly.

Q4 Chairman: Would any other witnesses like to comment? Merseyside, do you expect to see a change in the use of cars?

Ms Dewar: Yes, absolutely, and the primary focus for how we are going to achieve that is the School Travel Plan programme. What we achieved over the previous five years with schools we were working with on School Travel Plans was a 2.4% cut in car use against a 5% increase in other schools in the area. So we are already seeing a significant change on that. I would caution that we are experiencing over the coming period however that, as we work increasingly with secondary schools with more complex journey patterns, with longer travel distances and with flexible learning, and also with a steep increase in car use, more so than in primary schools, those issues are presenting a significant challenge in terms of achieving mode shift. Our target is to cut car use by 1.1% by 2011 and, again, that is against a very strong background of car growth. So it is going to be very challenging for us to do but that is the intention.

Q5 Chairman: Cheshire, what are your predictions about what is going to happen?

Ms Mills: Again, our predictions are similar to Merseyside. Our targets are to reduce car use by 1% over the coming years of the lifetime of the LTP but it is the outside influences that we are struggling with: again, increased car use and the increased journeys that the children are making to and from school and the increased distance that they have to go. It is all those outside influences that we are fighting against. Just supporting what David Brown was saying about the Travel Plans, if you look at individual schools with strong Travel Plans, they are very effective and they are working without those outside influences, so we can certainly see pockets of good practice going on.

Q6 Graham Stringer: Just following the last two answers, we are told by the oil companies that petrol sales in this country have dropped by 20% over the last two or three months. Do you not think in that context that reducing car usage by 1% is very limited? Those figures must have been arrived at when petrol was at 88–92 pence a litre.

Ms Dewar: From the point of view of the change we wanted to see, in the context that we are in, actually, despite the price changes, increases in car use are continuing.

Q7 Graham Stringer: Do have evidence for that? When I drop my son off at school the roads are clear now whereas not very long ago there were traffic jams all over the place. There appears to have been a real change in behaviour.

Mr Brown: The targets that we set with our Local Transport Plan were for 2006 to 2011, so they were set a while ago, and clearly, the last six months' activity will impact on non-essential journeys. We saw in 2000, or whenever we had problems with the fuel supply at that point, a significant increase in the number of people using non-car-based modes. It is about taking advantage of that situation to promote the fact that it is more economically advantageous to walk or to cycle. What we are finding is it is a fairly complicated issue, and it is a very intensive process, because you almost have to go to every child and every parent to explain the wider benefits. We do have areas where people still aspire to own cars and are reducing other areas of expenditure as opposed to reducing their car travel. So it is a balance. At the moment, with fuel prices been very high, it is an opportunity for us to encourage non-car-based modes, but our targets were set in the LTP.

Q8 Graham Stringer: That is the real point I am making. With such a hike in petrol prices, do you not think you should change your targets? The chances are you will overshoot them without doing anything. They must be out of date now.

Ms Mills: Yes, but we monitor the way children get to school on an annual basis. That is now carried out through the school census. In respect of this most recent change in petrol prices, I think it is a bit too early but it is certainly something that will be looked at. I and some of my colleagues have been saying it would be really interesting to go out and monitor how the numbers are doing over the last couple of months to see if there has been an increase, but obviously we are having to rely on good will within schools, and going to the schools to carry out yet another survey can be difficult for us. That is why we need to keep to the annual survey.

Q9 Mr Wilshire: I just want to pursue this 1% very briefly, because I share Mr Stringer's curiosity about petrol prices. You said 1%—1% of what? What is the percentage of families who are taking children by car at the moment against the overall school numbers, so we can see what 1% amounts to? What is the figure?

Ms Mills: It is a reduction in the number of vehicles being used on the school journey, single occupancy.

Q10 Mr Wilshire: Do we know what percentage of schoolchildren actually come by car out of the total school attendance numbers?

Ms Mills: Yes.

Q11 Mr Wilshire: Which is what?

Ms Mills: At the moment in Cheshire it is about 34% come by car.

Q12 Mr Wilshire: So we are trying to reduce the 34% by 1%?

Ms Mills: Yes.

Mr Wilshire: Which makes it look an even smaller figure.

Q13 Mr Martlew: Just a slightly contrary view. The reasons for parents taking their children to school are complex. With some of them it may just be distance, some of them are frightened they will be knocked over on the roads as they walk or cycle, and thirdly they do not want them on the school buses. That could mean that while motorists will reduce their travelling in other ways, they will still stick to the school run because they think it is a priority.

Mr Brown: I think that is one of the issues. The fuel price at the moment is a fairly short-term issue that has hit hard on people trying to scale back expenditure, but that is against a backdrop of people owning cars and travelling more, and dispersed patterns of education and employment. We often see people dropping children off on the way to work and therefore they would still be doing the journey. There is a historic and sustainable growth in the use of the car against which this fuel increase is a small-scale blip that may not continue. What we need to do is demonstrate and persuade people to use non-car-based modes for ever, not just while the price is high, because if the price of fuel were ever to decline, people would go back to using their car. It is about getting them to understand that you need to transfer to non-car modes on a permanent basis.

Q14 Chairman: Local authorities have been given £4 million a year to gather and assess information on this. Is that enough money?

Ms Mills: On the strategy side, I think probably the answer to that is yes on the part of Cheshire County Council, but at the moment it is being used to support the School Travel Plan grant that is also coming through at the same time. From Cheshire's point of view, they are working well together, but once the funding for the School Travel Plan money drops off in 2010, that may be more problematic, because the sustainable transport money is supporting the School Travel Plan money.

Q15 Chairman: Anything different from other witnesses?

Ms Dewar: The same, echo.

Q16 Chairman: How do you think local authorities should approach their general duty of promoting sustainable travel? What should be done that is not being done?

Mr Brown: The thing we have identified in South Yorkshire is that there are a number of things which are initiative-based, so we end up with short-term funding for things like School Travel Advisors, which may or may not be there in the future, and we end up with changes to educational opportunities for people, which puts pressure on the transport network. We also have not quite joined up across the piece why not using your car to get to school is important in social, environmental and health terms as well. Putting all those things together is what we are trying to address in South Yorkshire, because it

covers so many policy areas and delivery areas. It is quite a long-term game because it is very resource-intensive in understanding individual patterns and individual needs, because in every individual family a child's needs will be different from somewhere else. Try to pull all those things together in a complex, long-term way is the challenge we are trying to address. That leads into the long-term issues around funding and making sure we can see over a five-year period that the resources to do that work are there in the longer term so that we can then measure the impact over a five-year basis rather than a one-year initiative basis.

Q17 Chairman: How do the Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies link with the School Travel Plans?

Ms Mills: From our point of view, they are very integrated. They have to be, because one really supports the other. The information that we get for the Strategy actually comes from the work of the School Travel Plans. So they work hand in hand with each other. I think there should be more emphasis within the Strategy on modal shift perhaps, rather than the focus on the documents that local authorities have had to put together. That would be of more use.

Q18 Chairman: You think that focus is included in the School Travel Plan?

Ms Mills: The focus on modal shift is within the School Travel Plan.

Q19 Chairman: What about in the Strategies?

Ms Mills: It is in there, but I think there should have been more emphasis on the modal shift perhaps rather than the document itself, which I think there has been a lot of focus on.

Q20 Chairman: Are there any other views on that?

Ms Dewar: In terms of what the local authorities should be doing in taking the Strategies forward, the Strategies are a good framework for how we do it but, as Janet was saying, the Travel Plan is the delivery mechanism for at-the-face improving the accessibility to schools and getting the information across to parents and youngsters alike. The shift in terms of the travel to school initiative where DCFS were requiring Travel Plans for all schools needs to move into mode shift, as Janet was saying. That is what the school strategies do allow us to do and fits in more closely with Local Transport Plan targets, which are for mode shift around the journey to school. Added to that, the strategies pull together some of the education authority policies as well, and bring those together, but they do not build so much on some of the wider aspects that we need to look at to really increase particularly walking and cycling to school, which are looking at the environment we have created around schools for people to walk and cycle in safety, and to convince parents that there are safe ways for them to do that. I think that is part of looking longer term to the long-term culture shift that David was talking about. If we look at trying to achieve sustainable school travel patterns like they have in the rest of Europe, it is that long-term shift

in everything, not just the schools and the local authorities, but also the environment people are walking and cycling through and prioritising walking and cycling in those journeys that really needs a lot more emphasis than we are currently able to give it.

Q21 Chairman: What other changes would any of the witnesses like to see to make School Travel Plans relate better to wider transport strategies? Would you like the remit to be changed or the guidance to be changed? Is there anything specific that you would like to see?

Ms Dewar: In terms of School Travel Plans, they deal very clearly with all these issues at the school level. The gaps are where that is recognised in wider local authority policies. So with the Building Schools for the Future programme coming forward, we absolutely have to make sure that the infrastructure is put in place as part of those developments, that does not just allow for some cycling and walking but that presumes the majority of travel to that school will be by sustainable modes and makes provision for bus access and prioritises that over car access. We have to look at how the education authorities are prioritising sustainable travel within their policies. We also have to look at how health authorities are prioritising walking and cycling to school within their health programmes. There is still a very strong emphasis on PE and sport and organised activity delivering physical activity, when actually the Chief Medical Officer's evidence suggests that walking and cycling as part of a daily routine on the journey to school can provide much more long-term health benefits. In those broader policies is where the change is needed rather than in School Travel Plans.

*The Committee suspended from 3.00 pm to 3.11 pm
for a division in the House*

Q22 Clive Efford: Why do you think we are finding it so difficult to make the desired progress in terms of reducing the number of short journeys that are made by car to schools?

Ms Mills: I think it is, again, outside influences. As I said before, I think there are some schools that have done some tremendous work. We have a school in Cheshire with 97% of the children walking. That is in just a normal catchment area and normal children; there is nothing different about them. It varies depending on how much promotion is put in and how much influence the school has on it. Why are we struggling? I think because of all the outside influences. When we do surveys and we ask people why they drive them to school, it is about stranger-dangers, it is danger from traffic, it is because they are dropping children off when going on to other places. There are a lot of different reasons that people cite. Still 80% of primary school children who live within a mile are walking to school, so again, it is the distances that people are travelling that are making people go by car.

Mr Brown: One of the things that we have come across is that when we are working with schools we work well with the teachers and head teachers, and the schoolchildren are very enthusiastic and buy into the whole point about walking or cycling to and from school, but the people that make the decision about how they will do that are the parents. We have found on a number of occasions where the schoolchildren are very supportive and wanting to walk and cycle, it is actually then engaging their parents. We do that at arm's length, because we can directly engage with the schoolchildren and the teachers, but the parents are the people who make those decisions and it is quite hard to engage them on the wider benefits of walking and cycling.

Q23 Clive Efford: What has worked in terms of getting people to alter their mode of transport for taking children, particularly on short journeys, to school?

Mr Brown: We have had a number of initiatives in South Yorkshire in some basic things about how to walk to school, how to do that in a safe manner, how to cross the road in a safe manner, how you only have to do that one day a week to make a difference; you do not have to do it every single day. We have done what used to be called in my day cycling proficiency tests, teaching people how to cycle to and from school in a safe way and, if they are making short journeys by public transport, literally teaching people how to use the bus, because there are a large number of children that have never travelled by public transport. It is teaching them the basics about how to get on and off the bus safely, how to behave, how to use the ticket, et cetera. When we have brought all those together in a targeted way in schools, we have seen quite significant groups of people not only using their legs to walk or cycle or use public transport but that is good education for them as they go into secondary schools and beyond.

Q24 Clive Efford: You mentioned a school that had 97% of pupils walking to school. Have you made any assessment of how they have achieved that high level?

Ms Mills: It is an eco-school with a very enthusiastic head teacher. I picked this up just by looking at the mode shift figures this week because I knew I was coming here today. I pulled up this particular school's numbers and there it was. I thought, "I'm not sure that is right" but last year it was exactly the same. It is the very enthusiastic head teacher. She is very eco-minded and that is the promotion.

Q25 Clive Efford: What sort of shift has she achieved, from what position to get to that high level of 97%?

Ms Mills: It is a new school so it has always been that way. Historically, the school has always been that way.

Q26 Clive Efford: What, beyond measures to tackle congestion, could reduce the number of car trips? What measures could transport authorities take?

Ms Mills: I think the infrastructure is key to a lot of the schools, the highway infrastructure and making a safe journey to and from school, so linking up the School Travel Plans with funding from the LTP to improve the crossing points. A lot of schools really focus in on that. "We cannot let our children walk in until it is safe to cross that particular road." That has worked in Cheshire.

Ms Dewar: I think the crunch point to it, as with all travel behaviour change issues, is that it is not any one thing; it is the whole package, and it is the whole package put together consistently over time. We know that School Travel Plans attempt to do that. The School Travel Plan attempts to pull together road safety work, walking promotion, cycling promotion, cycle training, bus behaviour programmes and promotion work. If you can get all that packaged together, together with a really effective school champion, someone within the school community who is prepared to work with the School Travel Advisor and engage with the parents and children and teachers across the school, you have a recipe for success. That is very resource-intensive. It takes a lot of time for the School Travel Advisor, working with people from all sorts of other agencies, such as Sustainable Schools and Healthy Schools, working with colleagues in the engineering departments to look at the safety improvements that may need to be made, ensuring it is linked into the training programmes. If we can really focus on that and make sure the funding is in place for that advice to continue to support schools, and the funding is in place to ensure real basics, like cycle parking in schools, which is still woefully inadequate in all schools; even where they have received a grant, there is not enough parking in place to achieve the level of cycling we ought to be seeing in the schools, and if we can get that combination right and stick at it and make it a long-term programme, not a short-term initiative, we can make a real change.

Q27 Clive Efford: Should the Government set targets to encourage modal shift for education authorities and transport authorities?

Ms Dewar: I think at the moment the targets are set through the Local Transport Plan process and so the targets are agreed at a local level. I think that is probably appropriate because it is a complex business and there are different issues that are faced in different areas of the country, from rural areas and metropolitan areas to what is happening in London. I suspect that one blanket target would not work, but I certainly think that, although we were talking about the level of targets earlier, we need to be challenging ourselves if we want to achieve a significant change in the journey to school patterns over time. We do need to keep challenging ourselves and pushing that to the top of the agenda for transport authorities, education authorities and health authorities as well, to take this on board as a joint approach.

Q28 Clive Efford: Is it realistic to expect schools to complete their Travel Plans by 2010 and, if not, what excuses would be acceptable for not meeting the deadline?

Ms Dewar: From our perspective and our experience in Merseyside, we will have engaged with all schools by 2010, and that is a really good part of the process and a good way forward. The danger with that initiative and with that deadline, as it has been described, is that School Travel Plans are not complete. A School Travel Plan will never be complete. If it is a good School Travel Plan it should be a constant, ongoing process within the school to engage with parents and to engage with students on their journey patterns and their behaviour, particularly within schools, where there is a change every year of the patterns of journeys being made and of the school community. Working to that target is fine, but I think the real issue is about whether or not those School Travel Plans are achieving mode shift across the whole of the journey to school for that area. That should really be the focus of the work that we are trying to achieve.

Q29 Clive Efford: What is the role of the School Travel Advisor to facilitate and implement Travel Plans?

Ms Dewar: Certainly, they are absolutely central and essential to it. All of the feedback that we get from schools is that what makes this initiative work for them and different for them is the fact that they have the ability to turn to someone who can take them through the process of what they need to do, who can channel them into the right places for information and best practice, where to go to solve a problem, and to guide them through what needs to be done and to actually act as a motivator for that school, to take them through that process and to achieve a really good standard of Travel Plan, and then to implement it and make it happen, and to keep re-inspiring the school over time to come up with new initiatives and new ways of tackling it. They are fundamental to achieving this.

Q30 Clive Efford: What is the position in relation to the Government and funding for School Travel Advisors?

Ms Dewar: At the moment the funding is moved into the Local Area Agreement and so an allocation is made to each authority based on the number of schools within that area. Obviously, work is being done to ensure that the school travel issue is high on the Local Strategic Partnership's agenda, but there is a risk to the funding not being allocated to School Travel Advisors and therefore the crux of the School Travel Plan programme not being funded beyond 2010.

Q31 Mr Wilshire: Could I just take you back to where Mr Efford started about, in a way, the real world and parents using cars. Many years ago, when I was a teacher, we did not have concepts like sustainability, we did not have modal shifts, we did not have plans, we did not have strategies, we did not have School Travel Advisors and lots of agencies to consult, yet significantly more people came to school other than in cars, so all the theoretical stuff seems to have not got us very far. It brings me back to the question: does not somebody who manages to

acquire a car say it is simpler, cheaper, quicker and easier to take the children to school and drop them off than anything else anything else, and why should they not do that if that is what they choose to do? If you think they should not, what are the real things that you are going to say to parents? I am not talking about strategies that you have amongst yourselves, but what is it you can actually say to a parent to persuade that parent that it is not fun to use the car now they have it? Because that is what is happening, and they will go on doing it and they will see it as their right to go on doing it. How do you actually deal with that in the real world, without getting into jargon?

Mr Williams: On that particular question, we have considerable issues about dealing with the perceptions that are around, the perceptions of possibly the reality of the cost of bus travel being quite high. In some areas that is probably a reality, in some areas it is just a perception, and it is a factor that is obviously taken into account. It is strange that, despite the fuel price increases, people still seem to be accepting the fact that you just put the fuel in and take the children to school.

Q32 Chairman: Can I stop you there? Are you saying there has been no change at all in children going to school by car since the recent fuel hikes?

Mr Williams: I would suspect that there has been some degree of shift. We have not measured that as yet, because it is a fairly recent phenomenon, in undertaking research on whether there has been any shift. Anecdotally, we think that there has been a small shift but we cannot quantify that as yet. Just moving those perceptions on, there is the ever-present perception of safety, both on and off the bus. People do seem to think that there is an anti-social person on every street corner that might attack their child as they are walking or cycling to school. There is a perception about safety on the buses, and I think we all know that issues do take place on buses, probably on a daily basis, but is it to the point where it is an epidemic? I do not think it is. I think there are relatively isolated incidents, although people may say they are regular incidents. I would say the bus is a relatively safe means of travel in terms of personal safety for youngsters to use. They are the messages that we have to try and get across, but actually getting those across to influence people is remarkably difficult. Probably most of it is all right out there really, but we are not perhaps winning that battle to get that message across to deal with the modal shift aspect. There are a number of initiatives around how to deal with modal shift in a county context. The delivery of school travel services for us is partly through a raft of eligible schools contracts, where people who live over the three-mile distance qualify for assisted travel. What we do with those resources is try and be as flexible as we can. If there are spare seats on those buses, we will sell those spare seats at a subsidised rate to others who may want to use the bus but fall outside the eligibility criteria. We also have minibuses based at some schools.

Chairman: Can I focus on the question, which was about how you are dealing with this issue of cars.

Q33 Mr Wilshire: Could I just press you? You have said it might be cheaper and it might be safer than cars—I am not at all sure you can persuade me that it is safer than cars—but you did not mention the quickness, the speed and the easy nature of getting the car out and taking them down. Are they not issues, that it is quicker and easier to take them by car, and what are you going to do about that?

Mr Brown: I think there are a number of benefits, because it is a perception that it is quicker to get into the car but actually, if you get to the school gates and you have to circle around to try and park and you have to park quite a long way away, I think it is demonstrating to people it is actually quicker to just walk out of your door and walk a small distance to school. It is clearly healthier for both parents but also the children, and can be seen, as Sarah said, as part of physical exercise that we want children to be doing, as they used to do in previous generations. It is as safe, if not safer, to walk to and from school. We should be encouraging people to walk and to cycle because of the environmental benefits, which the children clearly are very aware of, but it is also economical; if people are walking or cycling, it is cheaper, and it is actually very sociable. We have found walking buses is actually a social activity and develops social skills that children do not necessarily get if they are in the back seat of the car listening to the radio. So there are a wide range of benefits, but you almost have to do that on a one-to-one basis, because at a high level we find people agree with all of that, and then when we say “Would you leave your car at home?”—you do not have to do it every day. You might do it one day a week or two days a week and actually even that has a 20% or 40% benefit to everyone that—people will say, “No, I meant I agree with it at the high level but I do not necessarily agree that I would change my behaviour.” So you do have to have School Travel Advisors to get into the detail with individuals to understand individuals’ needs.

Q34 Mr Wilshire: Could I just pursue this question of the one-to-one basis? This is the other point that I think for me comes out of this, that the only serious example we have been given thus far is an enthusiastic head teacher—not an advisor, not a strategy, not a policy, not County Hall turning up and saying “You must do this”, but a new teacher saying “I am going to do it.” Is not the one-to-one basis best done in the school? It does not need plans. I cannot get my mind round why we need all this paraphernalia.

Ms Mills: I think it is the support that schools welcome. I may have used that as a sort of flagship event, but the majority of schools need support from Travel Advisors to actually know what is out there. I could list some of the initiatives of the local authorities, which include parking away from the school. If you do have to drive, park in a local car park. There is Park and Stride, where pupils can walk to school. There is the walking bus that you mentioned. There is the cycle train. There is Walk on Wednesday. There are all these initiatives that the school really has not got time to cope with on their

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own. They are very focused on educating the children, so they need that external help to come in and support the majority of the teaching staff within the school.

Q35 Mr Martlew: Just on this, but following a different tack than Mr Wilshire, what I am hearing today from yourselves is that good parents let their children walk to school, or they walk with them or they cycle; bad parents bring the children by car. That is what you are saying, is it not? That is what the implication of the message is.

Ms Mills: I do not think that is true because we still support some people who travel by car.

Q36 Mr Martlew: But in general you are saying good parents do not bring their children by car. You can understand why parents will get a bit upset by that.

Mr Brown: I do not think it is as simple as saying it is good and bad parents. Where we find people that are informed parents, they might make a different choice. We are not saying that, just because they drive their children to school, they are bad parents but what we find is they do not necessarily understand all the implications of doing that, therefore making them more informed—

Q37 Mr Martlew: Do you think that is (inaudible)?

Mr Brown: No, I think through the School Travel Plan, advisors, and the work we have done with schools, being able to explain . . . The children pick up on it very quickly, that large numbers of cars milling around outside as they are trying to cross the road is not a very healthy approach, and actually, it is not the children who make the decision; it is the parents, and trying to explain the broader benefits both to them and their children is the important aspect we try and deliver through School Travel Plans.

Q38 Mr Martlew: You have a School Travel Plan, which is to reduce the amount of children being brought by car, therefore, if people are not complying with that, they are not complying with what the school wants. Is that what you are saying? “You should be but you are not going to do it, so you are a bad parent”?

Ms Dewar: Just to back up what colleagues are saying, it is not about bad parents or good parents. It is about making sensible choices when there are choices to be made. There are some children who are travelling distances to schools through some of the choice programmes and so on that we have where they have no alternative but to bring the car to school, and there are some who are travelling very short distances where they do have an option or where they maybe have an option one day a week.

Q39 Mr Martlew: So they are the bad parents then.

Ms Dewar: We have done a lot of research into the psychology behind why people make the transport decisions that they do in Merseyside, and what we try to do with all the campaigns we run through schools is to address the reasons why people are making those decisions, and that is because they

want to be in control of their journey, they want it to be affordable, they want it to be reliable. What we need to do is to demonstrate to them that cycling or walking or using public transport for some of those journeys can also meet their needs whereas they often perceive that it does not. In that way we can tackle the people who have an alternative choice, and enable them to make that choice, which in many cases is better. A lot of the feedback that we get from parents through the School Travel Advisors is that when parents do actually take the time to walk with their children, they find a whole host of benefits that they did not anticipate. So it is not about being critical; it is about recognising that, as a society as a whole, we have become car-dependent and to change that trend we have to start reinforcing some of the benefits of sustainable transport that we have lost sight of.

Q40 Chairman: Thank you. I think we have had a full exploration of that issue. What work have you done on assessing the impact of the new eligibility entitlements for free school transport on school buses? Has any specific work being done on making predictions about the changes?

Mr Brown: One of our districts, Rotherham, has indicated that they have had 46 families take up free school travel because they are now eligible, and they are all associated with children that receive free school meals. They have had none linked to the tax credit.

Mr Williams: We are in a similar position in Cheshire. The financially disadvantaged families are being identified through our admissions teams within Children’s Services and any eligibility issues for transport are coming out of that process. We provide that service through a service-level agreement with Children’s Services, so we are notified of the individuals concerned and we are well advanced in making provision for that for September 2008.

Q41 Chairman: You have made predictions and you think you can cope with that?

Mr Williams: Yes. The information is coming through at the moment. It is virtually complete now for September. We have made transport provision for those people who fit into that category.

Q42 Chairman: What about Merseyside?

Ms Dewar: There is a mixed degree within the five authorities looking at it in terms of the progress that is being made, but it is moving towards it. There is a degree of concern about the resourcing for that within the areas, I think, but at the moment it is not more progressed than that.

Q43 Chairman: Should the criteria for free school transport be decided nationally or locally? Do you have any views on that?

Mr Williams: That is a very interesting point. I think we know what we are working to at the moment, whether that is good or bad. It could be that all sorts of varying policies may emerge around the country but generally, if there are local needs to be met

through local policies, perhaps that is the way it should go. I would probably confine my comments to that at this stage.

Q44 Mr Martlew: Just on this, and I probably should have been aware because I voted for the Act in 2006. It is coming in from September this year? The new concessions are there from September?

Mr Williams: One or two aspects came in in 2007 in terms of the preparation needed but the actual delivery will start in September.

Q45 Mr Martlew: Sitting here is a Member, it did not register that this was happening, and I suspect in my area it did not register because the local authority did not tell anybody, to be honest. I think an issue of finance was mentioned. Has that been the case in your authorities? Has there been a lot of publicity about this? Obviously, youngsters going to secondary school would have taken a decision, and some of them would have taken a decision on cost, probably in March or even earlier. Was there a lot of publicity given to this new scheme or not?

Mr Williams: I would have to say I would be satisfied that there was, in terms of the booklets that go out to parents and schools, et cetera, setting out the provisions of the new policy, and they are very widely distributed within the communities, particularly in Cheshire: they are available within schools, they are sent out to parents, there is a whole range of distribution methods to try and target the information so it gets to the right audience. So I would have to say yes.

Q46 Mr Martlew: My experience of that is it would tend to be the middle class parents that read these booklets and therefore take advantage of the provision. You would agree with that. Was there any local publicity in the press or anything about this?

Mr Williams: I think it is fair to say it was publicised in the press locally. Also, there are Choice Officers who assist in getting these messages through, and I think they are aware of the families that they need to target, particularly those who, as you say, might not necessarily read this information. They know who these people are because they are working in that environment and they can target where that information goes to ensure they are aware of any new rights or opportunities that come their way.

Q47 Mr Martlew: Is that the same for the other authorities?

Mr Brown: In South Yorkshire my colleagues in the local authority said for low income families that receive free school meals we have visibility of that database and can therefore do the blanket thing and approach them, but with people on maximum Working Tax Credit, we do not have visibility of who those people are, and therefore directly contacting them and making them aware of it is a more difficult issue for us.

Q48 Mr Martlew: What about the one where you can actually choose a different school within six miles?

Mr Brown: We have done the same as Cheshire. It has been included with all the information that has gone out to people, but again, we have not gone back to people, because my understanding is we do not have visibility of who the families on maximum Working Tax Credit are. Having visibility will allow us to do more direct contact with those families.

Q49 Chairman: What about the statutory walking distances to school? Do you think the distances, which were set a long time ago, are still appropriate? Does anybody think there should be any changes?

Mr Brown: Our belief is that they were set a very long time ago, when people were used to walking up to three miles to school. We do not think that is wholly acceptable in modern life. People do not walk two to three miles to school and therefore we think they are outdated, but clearly, any changes to the actual distances will have financial implications in the funding of home to school transport for people. We think and the sense is that two to three miles as a walking distance is an outdated concept.

Q50 Chairman: What would you like to see?

Mr Brown: What we would like to see is the ability to be flexible about what the distance would be, but clearly, that would need to be secured with additional funding because, if you halve the distance, as an example, that has a funding impact for local authorities having to put on more home to school transport.

Q51 Chairman: What do you think would be a reasonable distance if the funding were to go with that? Are there any definite views? No.

Ms Mills: That is such a difficult question.

Q52 Mr Wilshire: Could I take you to a specialist topic which has been drawn to our attention by someone who sent us some evidence, and that is special needs education. I spent a short amount of my teaching time in a special educational needs school, and remain convinced that special schools for people with special needs still makes sense. But what we have now, as I understand it, is a situation where the policy is to disperse these children into mainstream schools, which scatters them, and if any group of children, irrespective of the views of parents on the use of cars, is going to generate serious transport needs, it is this group of children. As we understand it, the cost of that is becoming quite significant and begs the question at the moment which budget head you take the extra money from. In your experience, is that becoming a real problem and, if it is, what solutions would you suggest we might pursue to try and stop other budgets being hurt by the transport needs of the special needs children?

Mr Williams: I would confirm that yes, the costs of the provision of special needs transport are increasing, partly for the reason that you have quoted, about the dispersal of pupils to more mainstream establishments. That fragments the demands for transport, so you have to provide more specialist transport, often on an individual basis, to

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get a child to a particular unit or school, so you lose the economy of scale of taking them to a special unit in perhaps a minibus, and that inevitably increases the costs because you need more vehicles. There are also imbalances in the provision. If you take Cheshire, for example, there are certain specialist facilities in one area of the county that are not replicated on the other side of the county, which cause long, cross-county, expensive journeys. I think it is probably fair to say that in the overall plan, whilst transport costs have increased, one would assume that there have been some economies made in terms of the provision aspects.

Q53 Chairman: Have economies been made?

Mr Williams: I honestly do not know because, as the transport deliverer, I am not too sure of the other side of the fence but we do pick up—

Q54 Chairman: As the transport deliverer, is that not part of your remit?

Mr Williams: I was just about to say, we do pick up on a reduction in transport demands to some establishments, and that is balanced by the more fragmented ones. What you save on transport is exceeded by the additional costs. If special units are closed down, presumably there are some savings in the maintenance of those buildings, the actual operation of those centres, et cetera.

Q55 Mr Wilshire: Is the net cost going up or being offset, in your experience?

Mr Williams: In transport terms, I would say it is continuing to rise, although it has slowed up.

Mr Wilshire: There was a comment made to us that this is generating a problem, because you cannot cut back on special needs transport, so you are having to find more, which has to come from somewhere and which presumably at the moment comes from the general budget for transport, which puts more pressure on everything else. You are confirming in your experience that is correct.

Q56 Chairman: Is that correct?

Mr Williams: Yes.

Mr Brown: Yes.

Q57 Mr Wilshire: You have the same experience?

Mr Brown: I think that is absolutely right. The point Steve is making is that there may well be a saving in terms of closing special units but that is not in the transport budget. The transport budget goes up for SENs and therefore that is a greater call on the wider transport budget. One of the things we have tried to do is to have quite a lot of independent travel training, so working with people currently receiving specialised transport requirements to give them training in their ability to travel independently and therefore not require specialist transport needs. Again, I come back to the earlier point that that is very resource-intensive and some people will never have the ability to travel independently, but it is clearly a prize worth achieving because you could potentially save on transport costs, but the individual is then equipped with lots of skills which

are useful in the wider environment, not just being able to travel independently but making independent travel choices.

Q58 Mr Wilshire: But knowing the sort of children involved in this, training those sorts of children for independent travel is hardly a routine school travel business at all. Even that is using a budget, which means you have to cut back on other transport things. Is that fair?

Mr Brown: You are absolutely right. It is resource-intensive. We have done this in Sheffield and Rotherham. We are looking, obviously, in the medium term because clearly the travel provision is very expensive and therefore working with people to actually reduce that in the medium term is seen as a benefit, but also those individuals get a wider benefit, and again, it is a case by case basis, because you could have 10 people currently receiving SEN travel but actually the travel training will only work for two or three of those people, or eight or nine. It will not work across the board because you have to understand them and get them to make those individuals—

Q59 Mr Wilshire: Have you tried arguing with your treasurer's department that, if they are making general savings from closing establishments, some of that saving ought to be added to your transport budget? Have you tried arguing that?

Mr Brown: My colleagues in the local authorities have said that is a conversation that is ongoing, and I think that is a wider point, that in policy initiatives that are brought on board and decisions that are taken, the transport cost or benefit is rarely seen as an up-front cost or benefit. Decisions are taken, and subsequently transport has to be addressed. So in the business case for closure of specialised facilities I am not sure that the actual on-cost of additional transport is ever factored in. I cannot say that there have been huge, robust conversations with treasurers, but I do not think the transport element is ever built into the overall decision.

Q60 Mr Wilshire: What I would like to try and see if I can pin you down on is, is this issue just a minor matter which we need not concern ourselves with, or is it quite a serious, substantial matter, where we could usefully address this if there is a problem here?

Mr Brown: My belief is that it is, but it is not restricted to SEN. It is where people are being given wider choices in where they will go to school, in the ability to do diplomas at different schools, Building New Schools for the Future. All of those in one way or another will impact on the transport costs of getting people to and from those establishments, and I think it is a much bigger issue, because that cost, and the benefit of doing it right, is not captured when the original policy is set and those things are implemented. It is always an add-on, which is a financial cost, but really what you lose is the benefit of addressing that.

Q61 Chairman: I would like to ask you now about innovative bus schemes. Does the Yellow Bus scheme offer a good way of moving people from their cars to school buses?

Ms Mills: I think it can do; because the yellow buses look good, parents are willing to use them and get on board. So they do attract people on board, but there is the expense of getting them to be utilised in the downtime, when they are not used on the school run, so there are other issues there.

Q62 Chairman: Cheshire was disappointed that its Pathfinder application was not accepted. Why do you think that happened? Do you think the Government was not clear about what it wanted?

Ms Mills: I think there was a level of mixed messages perhaps from local authorities to the Government, and the other way round, as to what could physically be achieved and what they were expecting to be achieved. I got the impression they had an expectation that there were schemes packaged up and ready to go, and that was certainly the feedback we got, that perhaps Cheshire, although they have the ability to do Pathfinder, does not necessarily have an on-the-shelf scheme. I think also charging was another issue. There was an expectation that the Pathfinders would be looking at charging pupils £1 a day, and that is not really an achievable or realistic figure to run school transport on. Those are some of the reasons. Obviously, they will have their own as well.

Q63 Chairman: What do you think the impact on school transport will be of the new diplomas?

Mr Brown: I think it is one of the points I was making earlier, that clearly, as people are given the choice to do diplomas and move around within establishments, the focus at the moment is the educational aspects of that, giving people the choice to do different diplomas. The transport aspect I do not think has been fully addressed, about how people will move between sites on certain days of the week. I understand something has come out either today or in the last couple of days saying that local authorities should employ people now to put in place the transport arrangements for 14- to 19-year-olds. Again, that is a stand-alone initiative. I do not think we need another person looking at transport for another group of students. That should be built into the overall programme. To be perfectly frank, that is quite late in the day, when it is going to start in the next few weeks. Encouraging people to do diplomas is absolutely fine, but again, the transport element, both in the logistics and the cost, has been left to the very end, and that will make or break whether the thing is successful or not.

Ms Dewar: I absolutely agree that the planning of it and, again, the transport implications are at the end of the decision-making process, and I think some of the things that we need to do to address that are very much to take it as part of the travel planning process, to look at that and to address it. What we have been doing in Merseyside as well is looking at expanding our cycle training programme into secondary schools, because many of the journeys that are being made as part of the different flexible learning pathways and the diplomas as well can be met by cycling whereas they are difficult to meet by other modes of transport, and that would be a very resource-efficient way of doing that. We have been working with the councils on how to implement that. The other aspect that would be useful to look at is through accessibility planning, and under the local transport plans we have been identifying where the gaps are in terms of access to all sorts of different services, including education, and as part of that it would be very helpful if we were able to look at the different transport providers and deliverers that there are in an area and be able to pool some of those resources. We have social services with vehicles that are used at some times of the day and not at others, we have the same with ambulances, the non-emergency cases, we have all sorts of accessible minibuses that are around, and support for being able to pull all of those different resources together and look at how we can utilise them effectively for all sorts of different transport requirements is a huge undertaking but it has potential benefits for those sorts of journeys that are very difficult to meet by conventional public transport networks.

Q64 Chairman: What is the impact of increasing numbers of before and after school activities and clubs on school transport?

Mr Williams: In our experience it has been fairly minimal at this point in terms of putting a burden on providing additional transport services; where the demands have come we have been able to cope with that through our own networks on the commercial and supported networks that exist. It is an issue that seems to have been dealt with by the schools rather than placing a demand on us is what I am finding and it is not brought out as an issue in terms of us having to deal with it on a day-to-day basis through additional provision. What is out there seems to be being coped with and I suspect the reality is as well that there are quite a lot of parents who drive to those activities in the morning and pick children up in the afternoon as well, but there is no great strain placed on our resources at the moment as far as Cheshire is concerned.

Chairman: Thank you very much for all coming and answering our questions.

Witnesses: **Mr Neil Scales**, Chairman, Passenger Transport Executive Group, **Ms Sheena Pickersgill**, Director of Corporate Services, Metro, **Mr Ben Plowden**, Director, Smarter Travel Unit, Transport for London, and **Mr John Barry**, Head of Network Development, London Buses, Transport for London, gave evidence.

Q65 Chairman: Would our witnesses like to introduce themselves for the record, please, starting on my left here?

Mr Barry: I am John Barry, I am the Head of Network Development, London Buses, part of Transport for London.

Mr Plowden: I am Ben Plowden, I am Director of Transport for London's Smarter Travel Unit and school travel planning sits in my department.

Mr Scales: I am Neil Scales, the Chairman of Passenger Transport Executive Group.

Ms Pickersgill: I am Sheena Pickersgill, Director of Corporate Services at Metro, which is a PTE in West Yorkshire.

Q66 Chairman: Thank you. Would you say that the general transport network is suitable for use by children on their journeys to and from school?

Mr Scales: It can be, Chairman, if it is handled in the correct way and the children behave themselves, and that requires some effort on behalf of our colleague operators. If they tend to disrupt the journey and result in a bus being taken out of the network, if it has been damaged or whatever, then it can have knock-on effects for the whole network, so dedicated transport for schools tends to be used in the metropolitan areas a lot and they tend to be very effective. My colleague Sheena Pickersgill will tell you more about the yellow bus initiative in due course, I am sure.

Ms Pickersgill: In terms of the general network, that is where the development of the yellow bus scheme came from really because what we were looking at as parents ourselves really was what is available at the moment for children to use to get to school and what would it take really for parents to actually start to put children onto public transport, in particular buses, to get to school from a young age, from the age of four. My view is that there is still a lot to do. We have got the scheme up and running in West Yorkshire with 150 yellow buses that are dedicated buses with dedicated drivers, and that is the key. The research we have done in West Yorkshire with young people, and speaking to young people and their parents, the feedback they have come back to us with is we do not like the usual network of buses because they are old and dirty, the drivers are grumpy, they do not come on time and when they do they cost a lot of money. That is the general feedback we are getting from young people. We have done research since and obviously we continue to do that, and that feedback helps us to look at what would enable young people to get onto buses to get to school and we developed all of these things with a dedicated driver and a dedicated bus—high quality is key. There is a broader issue in terms of the training of drivers out in the industry in terms of bus driving to make sure that drivers are equipped with the skills to deal with young people. I know my colleague here mentioned behaviour on buses but what we have found is that when we have trained bus drivers and put a dedicated driver on, because they

develop a relationship with the children those behaviour problems disappear. We have had instances where operators have refused to put buses on routes because of the bad behaviour but as soon as we have put in these elements it has changed and the behaviour has changed as well.

Q67 Chairman: What is the position in London? You are in a different situation, are you not, because of your concessionary schemes?

Mr Barry: The situation in London is different because we in Transport for London have responsibility and control of the bus network so we plan and secure all the services in the public transport network and that gives us a slightly different position from colleagues in other cities. The provision of routes and capacity for children travelling to school is an integral part of our bus network planning and is taken into account in our regular review programme for the bus network and we collect data, we liaise with the boroughs, we liaise with schools and other people who are interested and try to find out what people want and how we can deliver it. We also have responsibility for ensuring that the network is of sufficient quality for people to want to use it, and there are various aspects to that. Some of the ones that are more relevant to discussions today would be driver training, where we put in place a requirement for bus drivers to have passed through a certified programme of training in areas like customer care and so on as part of our contracts. We also have a schools education programme which we call the safety and citizenship scheme, run by our colleagues based in the Transport Museum, and they have traditionally concentrated on Year 6 pupils to help them prepare for independent travel by public transport. More recently we have expanded this into the lower years of secondary school, Year 7 particularly. There is also of course the fact that travel by children is free of fares in London which has encouraged usage, and the final thing I would say on this particular question is that we of course have a responsibility to work with others within TfL—it is a large organisation so we have to work across all aspects of what we are doing including school travel planning and so on, and with people outside TfL—I have already referred to liaison in transport network planning but also of course we have links with the police services, with the schools and with the boroughs.

Q68 Graham Stringer: Can I just follow up the points Mr Barry and Mr Scales made. It is a bit of an open goal sort of question but it is as to whether having a regulated bus system would help with modal change around schools.

Mr Scales: Without a doubt, and then we would have the benefits of what our colleagues in Transport for London have. We would be able to plan better, we would be able to have a network resource rather than individual corridors. To give you an example of Merseyside: we have 603 schools on Merseyside and

we have to engage with them all, and that has to be done on a piecemeal basis depending on which of the 37 operators are operating in the county. If we had a better way to plan the network, like a franchise network, it would help enormously, Mr Stringer.

Q69 Graham Stringer: I was expecting that answer, but is there any way you would be able to quantify it—because that would be very helpful to the Committee I expect—in terms of what you could save either against a yellow bus scheme or against franchising, having to pay. Is there any way of estimating that?

Mr Scales: We have not done any detailed work on that, but our colleagues in Greater Manchester PTE operate a similar scheme to that in Metro and they have done very well on that. Would it help the Committee, Chairman, if I produced a note and we submitted it later on, if we try and make an estimate to help Mr Stringer?

Chairman: Yes, it would help us very much.

Q70 Graham Stringer: Could I just ask Ms Pickersgill, are there particular areas where the yellow bus schemes work well? Is it in denser populations, suburban, semi-rural or rural areas; in which area do they work best?

Ms Pickersgill: We have introduced the yellow buses across all areas, urban and rural areas, and they have worked equally well really across the board. The reason why they have worked well is because we have introduced something that has not been there before if you like, particularly for young children, primary school children, so we have addressed some of the issues that the gentleman was talking about earlier about why as a parent should I not use my car. The issues that we have addressed there are the things that parents are concerned about around safety and we have the dedicated buses, registers of children who get on, all of those things. We have introduced the yellow buses across a range of areas but there are of course issues where you have children who walk to their primary schools where the buses are not needed as much as they are in areas where the children are coming in from greater distances. Because we have had a limited number of buses we have obviously had to look at the geography, where the children are travelling from and then try and target those in terms of greatest need—where there has been travel to faith schools, for example, and in rural areas as well. My feeling for this is that we need to make a step change in the provision of transport for young people, and although today we are talking about education transport, I do firmly believe we need to look at transport as a whole for young people and to look at how, through transport, we can actually address some of the other agendas that we are all concerned with, whether it be antisocial behaviour or educational attainment, that perhaps people do not think about in the different departments in local authorities. One of the areas we are looking at in Metro and in Mersey Travel as well is the cost of offering free transport to young people, not just for school travel but across the board, and the first thing

that comes back is that would be very expensive. Of course it would, we have the figures for that, but what is the cost of not doing it?

Q71 Chairman: This is a very important area but could you keep to Mr Stringer's question.

Ms Pickersgill: Sorry, I was going off at a tangent.

Chairman: It is important and it is something we will be looking at. Mr Stringer.

Q72 Graham Stringer: What are the biggest disadvantages of the yellow bus scheme; what problems have you had?

Ms Pickersgill: From my point of view the main difficulty is that we as a transport authority are not able to operate the buses, they are operated by private sector bus operators, different bus operators. We have set the standards in terms of what it is we want, so we as an authority have trained all the drivers initially but it is keeping on top of that and making sure the procedures that we put in place continue to be followed. The other difficulty you have got is when you are introducing something new that is a step change, you are in conflict sometimes with existing services—existing commercial services, existing coach services that were going on—and what you are trying to do is introduce something that is different and pushing up standards but then you do get different operators coming back with the challenge, as you would expect, that that will affect my business potentially. The argument back of course is if we can get young people onto buses now, we want them to stay on buses in the future so we are trying to give them a good opportunity. Another problem that we have identified that we are working closely on is the issue of the down time of the buses, and although that is increasing in terms of using the buses in between the school runs you again are up against the schools having the choice of other coach operators that they already work with and those sorts of issues. If we could keep working on that I am sure we could overcome all those issues because the benefits far outweigh the problems that we have come across.

Q73 Clive Efford: In terms of school travel plans, what has worked in achieving modal shift from cars, particularly for short journeys?

Mr Plowden: In the London case it has been about working with individual schools and identifying what their particular issues and challenges are, so that what applies in Outer London will not be the same as, say, Inner or Central London. To go back to the questions around is this about making judgments about parents' view on life, it is not about the moral judgment regarding parents—and indeed there is no degree of compulsion about the offers that we put in front of them—it is working out what the particular challenges are in terms of where the kids live, how they get to school currently, what would they like to do in terms of changing how they travel to school, particularly with older children around cycling and with younger children maybe around walking, then putting in place a mixture of safety improvements—for example, extra pedestrian

crossings if that is shown up in a school travel plan, cycle parking where that is an issue in terms of secure cycle parking—parents being concerned about bicycles being stolen—cycle training, one of the previous witnesses mentioned understanding patterns of journeys to school. You really need to do all of those things simultaneously in the light of the particular circumstances of the school in question so that each plan is tailored to the circumstances of the school rather than saying there is a one size fits all approach. Typically what you will find is that that is how you get the greatest level of buy-in from the school community, whether it is the head teacher, the governors, the parents or a combination of all three and obviously the pupils as well. It enables you to then adjust the provision that you are making in terms of funding, training and so on in the light of the circumstances of the school in particular.

Mr Scales: The school travel plans have worked. What we have seen on Merseyside is a reduction by 2.5% in car use in the schools that have adopted a school travel plan; that is against some schools that have not got a school travel plan where it has increased by 5%, so there has been a 7.5% switch. You have to keep on going, you have to keep on doing things like encouraging cycling and more sustainable forms of transport. By the end of this year we will have trained 32,000 Year 5s and Year 6s in Bikeability—it used to be called the cycling proficiency test when I was a lad but the marketeers have got hold of it. Thinking of something the Chairman said, that links with things like child obesity so it has got a cross-cutting theme, it is not just a single shot, we are trying to join it up.

Q74 Clive Efford: When you say sustainable transport, it is a term that is thrown around but what do you mean in terms of sustainable transport that achieves modal shift for people who were travelling by car on short journeys?

Mr Scales: We use a hierarchy, the same as our colleagues in Transport for London, so it is walking, cycling, public transport and then car at the bottom so it is an inverted pyramid with walking at the top. The kids actually get the environmental message once you get it into the curriculum and they are much more interested in saving the planet and being more sustainable than perhaps their parents are, and they are actually getting the message and moving with it. The only problem we have got with it is probably that it is resource-intensive and 2010, when all schools have got to have a school travel plan, might be a bit of a challenge to actually achieve. We have 603 schools in our county of Merseyside; my colleague Mr Plowden has something like 20,000 schools in his area.

Q75 Clive Efford: When you have got all these individual travel plans for each school how do you make the initial attention around the school travel plan sustainable, how do you get beyond it being just a short-lived benefit that then just drifts away?

Mr Scales: You have to work with the school. As one of the earlier witnesses said, if you get somebody who is like a zealot who will really go for it you can

get a huge modal shift, so you have to find somebody in the school that you can work with and you have to keep it going. You have to use Bike Week, use Walking to School week, get the parents engaged and it does work, but it is resource-intensive, Mr Efford, and you have to just keep going at it.

Q76 Clive Efford: Do you think schools engage with travel plans?

Mr Scales: Yes, they do, and if you are providing a resource to help them they will embrace it and use it and one of the issues that we have got is that they are so tied up with SATs, they are so tied up with their own commitments where they have to do masses and masses of paperwork, to get somebody from the outside that will help them through the complex nature of public transport and all the other messages we are trying to get over really does work. As my colleague Sarah Dewar said, each year the origin and destination side changes—the origin of the pupils changes but the destination is obviously the school so you have to keep on refreshing it.

Mr Plowden: Partly because of the circumstances in London we have achieved an average of a 6% shift away from single occupancy car journeys to a mixture of walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing which we include in the sustainable bracket because parents are looking at combined journeys. In answer to the question around keeping it going, we have just started an accreditation programme where schools are invited to reach a certain standard of school travel planning—essentially it is gold, silver and bronze—and where they bid in to achieve a certain standard, a bit like a kitemark system, and if they achieve the standard they are recognised with an award; it is just a way of keeping the interest up after the initial burst of enthusiasm has potentially passed by.

Q77 Clive Efford: Is the funding for school travel plans adequate and does it need to be altered in any way to improve the performance in the future?

Mr Scales: In Merseyside we top-sliced the local transport plan and we budget and use that for our travel advisers to the tune of something like £500,000 a year. Our colleagues in London are differently funded and I am sure Ben will be able to tell you about that.

Mr Plowden: We spend about £12 million a year on school travel planning, most of which goes through the local education and transport authorities, and part of that money is used to match-fund the funding from DCFS around supporting school travel advisers. My understanding is that that funding is due to end permanently in 2010 and there is a grave significant question around how we ensure that schools or local authorities keep the process of funding school travel advisers in place after that time, because clearly that would be quite a substantial reduction in resources for many local authorities in London. At the moment, therefore, we are match-funding departmental funding but as I understand it, as I say, that departmental funding

will end in 2010 and there will be a question beyond that about how you maintain that network of local advice and support in schools.

Q78 Clive Efford: How much does parental choice impact on the success of school travel plans?

Mr Plowden: I would say very significantly and in response to one of the questions that Mr Wilshire asked earlier on a whole lot of things have changed in the last 20 or 30 years around many aspects of the way everybody lives their lives, and one of those is the increasing distance that people choose to send their children to secondary school. It is still the case at the moment that most kids live within a reasonable walking distance of their local primary school and the school they actually go to, but that is significantly less true once you get to secondary school where people exercise choices over much larger areas outside local catchments. To reiterate a point which one of the previous witnesses made, the extent to which some of those educational policy decisions have their transport implications taken into account at the point of a decision being made, I think, is open to question because clearly what makes sense from an educational point of view may have substantial transport resource implications down the line which other parts of the public sector have to pick up in terms of cost.

Q79 Clive Efford: Do you think that when the Government drew up its policies on choice it took the implications of the impact on journeys to schools into consideration?

Mr Plowden: I would not necessarily want to speculate and I think it is also quite difficult to imagine that particular policy now being changed, but I do think that as we go forward there is a question around for example the new diplomas and the extent to which they will impact on transport and travel choices. It is very important that the transport implications of the decisions made in this case by the Department for Education and the education departments in local authorities—for example on where new schools are built—take into account the actual costs, particularly the revenue costs, of the requirement to then service those new institutions by potentially more complex and dispersed patterns of movement for the people that go to them.

Q80 Clive Efford: What about the new diplomas for 14 to 19 year olds; do you think they will have an impact on school transport provision?

Mr Plowden: It is too early to tell but they are bound to have some implication because, again, as Mr Brown said earlier on, people will be travelling across local authorities and across local authority boundaries to access a variety of different educational schools and colleges. That may be easier but not entirely easy for Transport for London to absorb given the nature of our network, but it may be the case in other parts of the country where it is less easy to have the system integrated.

Q81 Clive Efford: What have been the implications for London's transport network of the free travel that TfL have introduced for under-19 year olds?

Mr Barry: As you would expect there has been a very significant increase in the number of children and young people on the buses, up by three-quarters over the last four years—there were 380 million trips by children and young people up to the age of 17 on the bus network in London in 2007/08. As I said, that is up by about three-quarters compared to three or four years ago. It cost in revenue terms about £55 million per annum so there is a significant cost.

Q82 Clive Efford: Where does that cost come from, because the buses are running anyway?

Mr Barry: That is the revenue cost; that is the difference between charging a fare and not charging a fare.

Q83 Clive Efford: That is how much young people were paying when they were travelling on London's transport network. What about complaints, has there been a significant impact on the number of complaints you receive about behaviour on buses?

Mr Barry: That has been an issue. In absolute terms the number of complaints we get about low-level antisocial behaviour has gone up; if you move across to actual criminal activity, that is coming down, in particular criminal activity where under-16s are suspects, but there is still a reasonably significant number of issues about antisocial behaviour. Some of that is perception: who is to say why someone has got a particular complaint about a particular issue and some of it is to do with large groups of children per se rather than anything they are particularly doing. The implications for us have been that we have had to make sure, as I said in response to the previous question, that we have good working links with organisations like the police, the safer transport teams, with the schools themselves and so on, and so one thing that we do is we seek to influence and do influence the day to day targeting of police and community support officer presences at various places in the transport network. That is part of a wider programme for us to have that link with the police service, but quite a lot of what they have been doing in recent months has been connected with complaints about antisocial behaviour by young people.

Q84 Clive Efford: What are the benefits do you think of having introduced the free travel for people under 19?

Mr Barry: I recall that when the schemes were introduced, going back to 2004 for under-11s, 2005 for under-16s and the year after that for 16 and 17 year olds the main benefit that was foreseen was an improvement in young people's general access to school, to social activities, to leisure activities and so on, and the research that has been done since then about people's attitudes to the free travel scheme seems to bear out that that seems to have happened, where they support it people think it is a good thing for that reason, it has increased people's access. We have had a look at what it is done on how children

choose to travel to school and the data varies—it is slightly difficult to interpret because of course bus use for travel to school was high already in London before this happened but when we surveyed 14 and 15 year olds after the scheme had come in around four in 10 of the people that were surveyed said that they had reduced their car use, usually as a car passenger, to go to school. The modal share figures for London seem to bear out that things are moving in what we might call the right direction in reducing car use so the modal share for buses in London for the journey to secondary schools is now 46% whereas it was 36% in 2001. We have to treat those figures with a little bit of caution because these are done by sample surveys on a rolling basis, obviously, of households in London, so you have to let them build up for a few years before you can say that there is a definite result, but we are fairly confident as you would expect, having made it free, that the mode share for the buses has gone up. In primary schools the situation is a bit different because of the shorter distances—bus use is never very high there—it was 13% in the most recent survey but that is up from 7% back in 2001.

Q85 Clive Efford: Is it too early to tell whether it has actually altered attitudes for the long term in terms of putting the option of public transport before other options as these young people become adults?
Mr Barry: It probably is too early. I cannot quote you any data on that, we have not researched that specifically, and it probably is too early to research it anyway. Come September the scheme has been in place for three years, so it is still in terms of your question relatively short term.

Mr Plowden: When we have done work with current car users in terms of their willingness to consider using other forms of transport, typically the group which is most willing to consider particularly bus use is people who had used buses when they were younger, particularly in their childhood and teenage years, which was obviously much more common a generation ago than it is now, and they are the ones who tend to find that experience easiest to take on again because they have memories of it when they were young, it is not something they have never done before.

Q86 Clive Efford: I have to ask you about the issuing of travel cards for young people; have you sorted out the backlog for young people trying to get hold of their Oyster cards?

Mr Barry: I believe so. The take-up now for the 11 to 13s, the new batch of children that were required to have a card from June 1, is above 60% and that is approaching the highest we think it might go, so I do not believe there is an issue.

Q87 Clive Efford: There are no plans to revise the policy?

Mr Barry: There is nothing for me to say here today about it; we do not have any plans to change that policy.

Clive Efford: Are Routemasters dangerous for young people?

Q88 Chairman: We are straying slightly.

Mr Barry: Are Routemasters dangerous for young people?

Q89 Chairman: Yes, just a quick answer, please.

Mr Barry: The short answer is no, buses are not dangerous for young people.

Chairman: You have got the answer there. Mr Martlew.

Q90 Mr Martlew: Just to follow up some of the points you made, one of them is that as a result of the free bus system in London there appears to be a reduction in the number of people walking, is that correct, especially from primary schools. You said there is probably double the number of children at primary school using buses.

Mr Barry: It is true to say that some of the people using the bus were walking before, that is correct.

Q91 Mr Martlew: So it actually adverse to what you wanted—what was said earlier was that people should be walking, cycling, using the bus and then the car.

Mr Barry: I do not think the share of walking itself has gone down though from 2001 to 2006.

Q92 Mr Martlew: You said that before the free buses were introduced there were 7% of primary schoolchildren who used to go by bus and now it is 13%.

Mr Barry: That is right.

Q93 Mr Martlew: That says to me that they are now jumping on the bus because it is free.

Mr Plowden: I am not sure that we know where the shift to bus has come from. We can certainly let you have the information.

Q94 Mr Martlew: What we would accept is that if you give free buses people who used to walk will jump on the bus, there is a downside to it.

Mr Barry: In the primary schools over that period there has been a reduction in car use but the amount of walking has stayed about the same. As I said before, that is from our rolling household survey so you have to be a bit careful because although 7% to 13% is a big proportional change, those are small shares within the total and one has to be a bit careful about these rolling surveys. I would agree, obviously, that some of the shifts onto buses must have come from walking but I do not have information here today about the chain of changes that may have gone on.

Mr Plowden: We can certainly let you have that.

Q95 Mr Martlew: Mr Scales, you mentioned Bikeability when you were talking about school transport plans. Are we just talking about letting youngsters jump on their bike and ride to school, because that would be very dangerous would it not?

Mr Scales: We teach them not just to jump on the bike and just go round the playground, we teach them how to operate properly on the roads and navigate around roundabouts and all the rest of it.

What we are trying to do is not just be part of the school travel plan, as I said before it is part of tackling child obesity and just getting them more active. We will have trained about 32,000 by the end of this year.

Q96 Mr Martlew: Sorry, I have not explained myself. In most school transport plans do the youngsters have to actually do this training before they are allowed to cycle?

Mr Scales: That is right.

Q97 Mr Martlew: Is that usually compulsory?

Mr Scales: We say it is because there is no point in putting kids on the road and them being a danger to themselves and the traffic, so we say do the Bikeability programme and then you are safe to go on the road.

Q98 Mr Martlew: Is there a rule that you have to do it before you can come to school, that is all I am saying?

Mr Scales: No, because you will get some parents who are really into cycling and will train the kids up anyway, so those parents we do not have to capture, we have already got them, it is the ones that we have not got.

Q99 Mr Martlew: Are there any rules on what protective clothing or headgear they should wear?

Mr Scales: Yes, we say the proper headgear and we train them properly in how to use the cycle safely and also how to maintain the cycle so that they are not a danger to themselves from the cycle itself. We have experts that go into the schools and do all the training and they are taken out on the road in convoy. So it is not a case that they are just let out on the road, we do it very professionally and very safely and the Bikeability actually does that in levels. The guys who do this do nothing else but cycle training so they are experts.

Q100 Mr Martlew: It is not the old police constable like it used to be.

Mr Scales: No, these are professionals. The other thing we do on the hard side is if you take Merseyrail Electrics, our train operating company, they will carry bicycles free all day, so will the ferries and the rest of the PTEs are putting bike stands into schools as well, so we are trying to get it out into the community. It is the point that Sarah Dewar made earlier, it is about blurring the edges, it is not just a single shop school travel plan, you have to keep on refreshing it all the time. We are working with the district councils on safer walking routes to school, making sure you design out bad bends in kerbs, putting all the physical stuff in as well because there is a direct correlation between kids that are killed and seriously injured on the roads and areas of multiple deprivation.

Q101 Mr Martlew: There certainly is.

Mr Scales: What we are trying to do is joined-up government really and trying to spread it across all different areas rather than just concentrating on one of them.

Q102 Mr Martlew: On another tack, these are fairly complicated systems of changing people's habits; what about just staggering school hours? Is this part of the plan?

Mr Scales: That would help a lot. If we could actually get school hours to be staggered across the PTE sector we would probably save a lot of bus provision and if you can save a lot of bus provision you can spread your resource further, so we are working within the PTE Groups, so in the metropolitan areas, and talking to head teachers and just getting them to stagger the school opening and closing hours by 10 to 15 minutes would make a hell of a difference because you would need less buses in the peak, and they are very spiky peaks. If you can flatten the peaks out you need less buses.

Q103 Mr Martlew: You give me the impression this is a difficult thing to do.

Mr Scales: Yes. They are not entirely receptive to our overtures, they are more interested in what is best for the schools, so we have to keep on putting our point of view forward very forcefully.

Q104 Mr Martlew: Is this the experience of the rest of you?

Mr Barry: It is certainly for us.

Chairman: If it is the same you do not need to repeat it, only if it is something different.

Q105 Clive Efford: How much would you have to stagger the opening hours by?

Mr Scales: 15 to 20 minutes. Five minutes in the bus world is a long time.

Ms Pickersgill: We have had some experience in West Yorkshire with the yellow bus scheme where we have actually worked with schools to stagger hours. It has not been quite as successful as we wanted it to be in some areas and we have had to do a lot of persuading but certainly in the early days when we were coming forward with the yellow bus scheme schools were very willing to actually work with us to look at how they could stagger hours.

Q106 Chairman: You have had some success in that area.

Ms Pickersgill: We have had some success there, yes.

Q107 Mr Martlew: This is because the yellow buses are dedicated, are they not?

Ms Pickersgill: That is right, and they wanted the yellow buses so they were willing to sit down and talk to us, yes.

Mr Scales: They have also had some success in Greater Manchester.

Q108 Chairman: Has anybody done any specific work on the impact of the new school diploma and the new entitlements for free travel on school buses?

Mr Scales: Not in the PTE Group, Chairman.

Q109 Chairman: Do you think that the terms of free school transport should be decided nationally or locally?

Mr Scales: Nationally. We are quite interested in free school travel but one of the things we are interested in is for term time only, to get them to and from school, rather than like our colleagues in Transport for London who have extended it beyond that. We think it should be a national scheme because then you have much more consistency of purpose across England rather than pockets like the metropolitan areas that are doing it, or maybe the shires are doing it. A national scheme would be a lot better, Chairman.

Q110 Chairman: What about the current statutory walking distance? Do you think that is still acceptable?

Mr Scales: It was set in the 1944 Education Act. I think the earlier witnesses covered the point, Chairman, it is a bit out of date really and what is right now might be something more flexible.

Ms Pickersgill: I would agree with that. The travel distances need to be updated; even when we are talking about distances of a mile it depends where the children live. If they live next door to a busy road or a motorway I would think even a mile is too far sometimes, it really does depend on the areas that we are talking about and where children are walking. The eligibility criteria can sometimes impose a lot of bureaucracy and there are costs associated with that.

Q111 Mr Martlew: I may be wrong but have local authorities not got discretion so if there is a busy road they can actually decide to put a bus on, they have the discretion.

Ms Pickersgill: Yes. The question in terms of how far it is reasonable for children to walk, the two miles at eight or three miles over, they are long distances actually for children of that age.

Mr Martlew: Arguably the children are healthier now than they were in 1944.

Q112 Chairman: Do you think those limits should be changed?

Ms Pickersgill: I think they should be reviewed, definitely.

Q113 Chairman: What would be the impact of a national concessionary scheme for young people on school travel?

Mr Scales: In terms of cost, Chairman, or in terms of usage?

Q114 Chairman: Either.

Mr Scales: We have done some estimates and we think that travel would go up by about 23% or 24% which mirrors what our colleagues in Transport for London have found. Again, if it would help the Committee we can prepare you a note and get it to you pretty quickly.

Ms Pickersgill: We have done some initial work in West Yorkshire that verifies that figure; we came out with about 24% and we have done some work looking at the cost to as it were introduce free travel. We worked out that it would cost us about £17 million a year, but that is free travel for everything not just free travel in relation to school transport.

Q115 Chairman: What about travel for special needs pupils? It costs a lot of money, it is clearly extremely important, do you think more thought should be given to how it is delivered?

Mr Scales: We have examples like MyBus in West Yorkshire, Chairman, which is for educational needs schools serving about 60 students, Centro have about 180 vehicles, but as some of the earlier witnesses have said we are trying to work with special needs kids to try and get them to use the public transport network. If you can do that they can become more confident, they can use the network better and then they end up more rounded individuals. As Mr Brown said you might have 10 kids and do individual travel plans for them and it might only work for three of them, so it is resource-intensive and the cost of providing special needs transport is going up.

Ms Pickersgill: If I could add to that, we have put some work in looking at the special educational needs transport. Particularly with My Bus, when we spoke to parents of children with special educational needs their view was that they really wanted their children to travel with other children where they can so we have done some work to get children onto the yellow buses as well. We have two buses in particular that support special schools, but in addition to that we are looking at our taxi budget because we do spend large amounts of money, as I am sure other areas do, on taxi services. We spend £5 million on taxi services for 1750 SEN children, which is a lot of money, and is an average cost of £2,900. What we are doing is looking at how can we work with the parents and children to get the children onto the yellow buses. We are working very closely with the districts and where it has worked really well is where we have had the independent travel advisers. In one area in particular, Calderdale, it has worked well and we are looking at how we could perhaps roll that out because we are starting to see savings on taxi budgets now.

Q116 Chairman: How much of a saving?

Ms Pickersgill: I am sorry, I have not got the figures, I should have brought them for you. I can get them to you for the individual districts where they have managed to identify savings there through a new approach and integrating the children.

Mr Plowden: We have had experience, Chairman, in the same area which is including SEN schools and their pupils in our wider programme. For example, at one school, Hackney, we have actually managed to get a substantial number of children who were previously carried by SEN transport to cycle to school. That has required quite intensive activity but again to pick up the point which was made earlier, that is probably a net saving for the local authority

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in question and of course in terms of the life skills that that brings in terms of their subsequent independent mobility as they leave school and go into adult life, it is something that is incredibly important for the whole of their life. In so far as you can deal with it to the level of detail that is required,

it does potentially have huge benefits, both for the children and also in terms of the on costs that otherwise might arise in having to carry them in SEN transport.

Chairman: Thank you very much for coming and answering our questions.

Wednesday 15 October 2008

Members present

Mrs Louise Ellman, in the Chair

Mr David Clelland
Mr Philip Hollobone
Mr John Leech
Mr Eric Martlew

Mark Pritchard
David Simpson
Mr David Wilshire

Witnesses: **Mr Derek Bodey**, Chair of the ASCL Learning and Skills Committee, Association of School and College Leaders; **Ms Kathryn James**, Senior Assistant Secretary, and **Mr Chris Harrison**, Head Teacher, Oulton Broad Primary School, National Association of Head Teachers; **Ms Emma Sheridan**, Chair, Modeshift, gave evidence.

Chairman: Good afternoon to our witnesses for coming here to this session. If we could start off with some housekeeping. If I could ask Members if they have any interest to declare. Mr Clelland?

Mr Clelland: A member of UNITE.

Mr Martlew: A member of GMB and UNITE.

Q117 Chairman: I am a member of UNITE. Could I ask the witnesses, please would you like to introduce yourselves, starting from the end here. Just give your name and who you are representing.

Ms Sheridan: My name is Emma Sheridan. I am here as the Chair of Modeshift.

Mr Bodey: I am Derek Bodey, Principal of Saint Brendan's Sixth Form College in Bristol and here representing ASCL.

Mr Harrison: I am Chris Harrison. I am the Head Teacher of Oulton Broad Primary School in Suffolk and I am here representing the NAHT.

Ms James: I am Kathryn James, Head of Education, Policy and Politics at the National Association of Head Teachers and representing the NAHT.

Q118 Chairman: Thank you very much. How successful are School Travel Plans and what would you say they have actually achieved? Who would like to start with that one?

Ms Sheridan: Basically, they are as successful as the amount of input and enthusiasm which is put into them. By and large across the country we are seeing massive successes from everything, from casualty reduction, reduced congestion outside the school run, modal shift away from private uses of the car, increases in walking, increases in cycling, increases in the take-up of public transport, improved behaviour on public transport and an interaction with young people on public transport with the general public, improved relationships with the police. You name it, basically. It can achieve a wide range of things. Because School Travel Plans are unique to the individual school and the circumstances and the issues and concerns which face that school, it is not necessarily exactly the same outcome at every school but obviously the principal concerns, because they are largely transport funded, is a modal shift away from the car and the real results we are seeing now is an average of about 4 to 6%

decrease within a two to three year period. At individual schools that can be anything up to as much as a 30% decrease in car use.

Q119 Chairman: What are the factors which produce success for School Travel Plans? Do local authorities give them a lot of support? Are there any particular factors associated with success, or with weaknesses?

Mr Harrison: In my own authority we have a number of lead officers particularly for School Travel Plans, who are very good at being able to facilitate the grant application which can support a school, and we actually receive a very good grant application which has enabled, for instance, my school to be able to remodel some of the waiting areas and to remodel some of the arrangements for how children actually come to school and leave school each day. So being able to coordinate that approach and being able to see best practice and gather best practice from other parts of the country has been a useful aspect of their work. School Travel Plans themselves have been very useful, I think, for us in being able to address issues to do with things like parking, which is traditionally always a difficulty outside schools, but also healthy living in terms of children making informed choices about walking to school being better than sitting in a car, et cetera.

Q120 Mr Leech: Is there any evidence to suggest there is a difference between popular schools and unpopular schools? I am defining "popular schools" as ones which are full but tend to take children from the very near locality as opposed to ones which perhaps are not full and then end up being filled up by children coming from further afield.

Mr Harrison: Yes. Quite often where there are schools which are popular you will find people are travelling a lot further and effectively the choice is formed by the ability to be able to drive your child there, because if you are not from the area traditionally served by the school then your place is always dependent upon usually two things, attendance and punctuality and you making your own arrangements for getting them to and from school, and increasingly that means people driving their own children to school so that makes the problem worse.

Q121 Mr Leech: So are you saying the popular schools are more likely to be less successful about getting modal shift?

Mr Harrison: They may well have more parents bringing their children from a further distance.

Mr Bodey: I think the real issue here is actually about access to transport options. I think School Travel Plans can do a lot to encourage walking and cycling and those things, but if it is actually about whether it is going to be the car or public transport depends upon the accessibility of the transport and the cost of the public transport. That is going to be the deciding factor in terms of the choice that parents and children, and students, will make.

Ms James: I think there is also an issue in terms of specific need because where School Travel Plans are very useful is in—I was going to say a generalised approach but that is possibly being slightly unkind, but when it comes down to the specific need, particularly if you think about children with special educational needs or, as Chris was saying before, children who are coming from quite a distance, there are more difficulties around that and parents will want to make their own individual choice of school, both for children with special educational needs but also for children anyway. They want a particular school. As you know, admissions is a very traumatic area of education generally. School Travel Plans can work in the majority of cases for a school, but not necessarily in terms of the specifics.

Q122 Mr Hollobone: In Northamptonshire, if your child does not go to his or her designated school the local authority has no responsibility for getting that child to the school they do go to. Do you think arrangements should be changed whereby local educational authorities have responsibility to provide transport to any local authority school that a child may go to?

Mr Harrison: I would think they would be reluctant to take on an open-ended cost, but in my own area we have two secondary schools where, interestingly, they are part of a complete reorganisation plan which has actually necessitated the scrutiny of exactly where children are living in each of the two school catchment areas and interestingly in two schools which have about a thousand in each school, which are separated by less than two miles, 50% of one catchment area go to one school and the other 50% go to their nominated school. The exact opposite picture happens with the second school. So you have actually got half of both schools' catchment areas effectively doing this each day. That would create a significant challenge, I think, in terms of meeting an open-ended cost for transport.

Mr Bodey: I think it is a question of whether you actually believe in choice and if you want to encourage such curriculum developments as the diplomas it will result in more youngsters having to travel, because if they are going to access a particular line it may not be provided in their local school. If that is actually going to be a realistic choice for young people, then their transport needs will have to be met beyond necessarily their designated school. That applies even more post-16 where youngsters

are not constrained by their natural catchment, if you like, and will move quite significant distances. Again, it is about whether you believe in providing choice or not. If you provide choice you need joined-up local transport.

Ms Sheridan: I was just going to say that obviously one of the biggest barriers, issues that we face in trying to promote sustainable transport to school is the issue of parental choice regarding which institution their children go to. In an ideal world from a sustainable transport point of view children would go to their local schools and that would be easier. We do not live in that world and one of the things we are trying to do through the School Travel programme, through work we are doing at primary school level, at secondary school level particularly with the introduction of the 14–19 agenda, and starting now with nursery schools and at that point where parents are picking their primary schools is to actually try to make transport part of the choice rather than it being something people think about as an afterthought, you know, “We’ve got our school, now how are we going to get there?” One of the big things School Travel planning can bring to that is to actually bring that issue of transport in right at the point where parents and young people are saying, “Which school do I want to go to?” so that it is a consideration up front and they are aware of what their transport options are, be it walking, cycling, taking the bus, or if absolutely necessary taking the car, so that the choice they make is an informed choice rather than just on 1 September saying, “We’ve got to get to school. Oh, dear, how are we going to get there?” and just habitually get in the car. School Travel planning has a lot to offer local authorities, parents, young people and schools in helping them to meet those choices and to make some sensible, responsible choices.

Q123 Mark Pritchard: I have a question for Ms James. Would it be a logical and accurate statement to say that the number and the level of journeys undertaken by school children increases risk?

Ms James: Gosh! My inherent thinking process is to say, yes. As a parent, I have to say that I would have been concerned when my children were small, in terms of the increased number of journeys, that of course there is an increased level of risk. I do appreciate that we have to be careful because as a society we are almost at the stage of saying, “Don’t go beyond the front door, and the front gate is the absolute limit unless you are wrapped in cotton wool and protected in bubble wrap.” There is an element of that that we have to counteract. In answer to your question about risk, I think it must do in that wherever we go in terms of our own travel we are increasing our risk the more journeys we take.

Q124 Mark Pritchard: Absolutely! So with the advent of the so-called “super school”—and in my own constituency in Shropshire parents are complaining to me that their children are having to take more journeys—rather than taking one or two buses to go to school, some are having to take three or four. So in reference to your earlier reply, I think

within the space of two questions we have at least concluded—other Members can take their own views—that super schools pose a high risk to the safety of our children?

Ms James: In terms of what Emma said before, in terms of making an informed choice, I think that also plays a part in this. Parents make their choices of school on very different bases and I think they must have that ability. Someone asked before about whether in fact the journeys to school were actually going to both increase the risk and also maintain the choice. I think it is essential that parents have that choice. I do not think it is reasonable for us to expect the local authority to actually pick up the cost of the travel in terms of where a parent chooses to go somewhere other than the natural closest link. Ideally, it would be wonderful, but in fact it is probably not going to be at all practical in terms of cost either.

Mark Pritchard: I did not actually propose local authorities paying for it, it was just the logic of more journeys creating more risk and therefore whether it is logical to have super schools on this specific point, what this inquiry is about.

Q125 Mr Martlew: I have got several different questions. The first one relates to the last, that in fact the cost of school transport limits some people to the choice of school. We do not have that situation in London, do we, because there is free transport? The fact is that poor parents do not get the choice because of the cost of travel. Is that not the case?

Mr Harrison: I think it is two things. It is not just the cost of the travel, Chairman, it is also the availability of the travel.

Q126 Mr Martlew: Yes, but let us just concentrate on the cost. Let us talk about the cost. There are poor families who cannot send their children to the school of their choice because they cannot afford the transport. Is that not correct?

Mr Bodey: I would say that is correct. It is an inevitable consequence of having to pay, but there are ways around that and it does not necessarily have to be free to get around that. What you do need is a level playing field, such as there is in Bristol. If you have a bus pass, it will take you to any of the providers for the same cost and provide you with weekend travel.

Q127 Mr Martlew: So you equalise it out?

Mr Bodey: You equalise it out.

Ms Sheridan: I think generally that is an issue for some families, but what a lot of local authorities are now doing under the guise of the new duties required under the Education and Inspections Act is looking at those different issues and looking particularly at low income families and where and for which schools and in which areas in particular that is posing a problem, and with the new sustainable modes of travel strategies which are currently being written and developed and consulted upon at local authority level measures are starting to be put in place to address those issues. We are not going to solve it overnight, but there is a genuine will at local

authority level to work to fix these issues and to make sure that wherever possible and within budgeting constraints transport is not a barrier to young people accessing the education they deserve.

Q128 Mr Martlew: Can I just go on to another thing which confuses me? There is a statutory limit for free travel, or whatever, which is a bit confusing. I am recently even more confused because I have a case where in this computer age you can Google an address and Google the school and I find that this school is outside two miles for a primary school, but the local authority bases its sums by some other way. What system does the local authority use for measuring distances between schools and home? Is it just the cheapest way they do it so that they can get out of paying, or what?

Ms James: It actually varies from local authority to local authority, particularly within some of the Inner London authorities, if I can use them as examples, because I can quote that. They literally are in some cases actually counting the steps up to flats to make sure which is closer and what the distance is, but some will do it as the crow flies, but those are questionable in terms of admissions.

Q129 Mr Martlew: So what you are saying is that there is no common national system for measuring the distance?

Ms James: No.

Mr Bodey: No.

Q130 Mr Martlew: Do you believe that there should be?

Mr Bodey: Yes, there should be.

Q131 Mr Martlew: My final question is, are schools inflexible? In my own experience I came across a situation where the train arrived five minutes too late and the school refused to let those children travel by train and they simplistically believed it was easy to change the train timetables. Anybody who knows how they do train timetables knows that it is not! Is there not an inflexibility with schools about when exactly children should be there?

Ms James: Forgive me, but it is almost simplistic to say there is an inflexibility. If you look at the situation of extended schools, for example, and the extended school day and the way that transport can bring children into school—and since my son writes train timetables I do understand exactly what you are talking about –

Q132 Mr Martlew: He must be very clever!

Ms James: It is very, very difficult, but also do not forget that there is an expectation on a school that the majority of pupils will be in lessons at particular times and there must be arrangements to make.

Q133 Mr Martlew: It brings me on to the question of using yellow buses and whether we should have different schools starting at different times. Is that sensibly put?

Ms Sheridan: If I could just go back to your previous point, I would actually say I do not believe that schools are inflexible at all. I think experience has taught me, and certainly our members, that actually schools have been very flexible, very supportive of different ways of addressing the transport needs and issues. There may be the occasional individual school which is unprepared to change, there always is with any group, but we have certainly found that schools have embraced this and have on several occasions changed school uniform policy and have changed timings to accommodate where we have not been able to change a train time, change a bus schedule, or whatever, although sometimes it works the other way and we are actually able to, through the Travel Plans process and opening the lines of communication between those in the education community and those in the transport community. Sometimes we can change bus timetables and train timetables. I think it is unfair to slight all the schools based on one example. On the issue of yellow buses—and this is very much a personal opinion as it is quite a contentious issue across the country—where they work they work very well, but they should not be seen to be the answer to all problems in all places.

Q134 Mr Clelland: Just sticking with local authorities, do you have any evidence that local authorities use transport provision as a lever to encourage students to remain within the local authority schools and local authority colleges?

Mr Bodey: Certainly in terms of college transport, if you went onto the Travel Plans for authorities in my area you will see that some of them will allow supported travel outside of the authority and others will not, and some of them will allow it for certain courses and not for others, and that is a direct disincentive.

Q135 Mr Clelland: How do you see the proposed regional transport provision based on travel to learn areas working in practice?

Mr Bodey: It will work in practice provided the local authorities agree that their boundaries are not the exact boundaries of the authority.

Q136 Mr Clelland: So you are not confident the local authorities will be able to work across the authority boundaries to ensure that students have proper access to transport?

Mr Bodey: I think without some direction it is likely to be patchy.

Q137 Mr Clelland: So would it be better then perhaps, particularly for the 16–19 age group accessing further education or even sixth form colleges, to have a regional transport policy rather than a local government transport policy?

Mr Bodey: I would go further and say why don't we have a national policy? We have the infrastructure to work out how people should be remunerated because we have done it for people over the age of

60. There is no reason why that same methodology should not be applied to young people, not necessarily free but at a fixed national rate.

Q138 Mr Clelland: Do you mean make it specific to school travel, because you have related to the over 60s travel but that is for travel anywhere at any time for anything?

Mr Bodey: Again, the majority provider in my area has taken that commercial decision to provide students up to the age of 19 with a pass they can use not simply to get to college but actually to use to go to the cinema and visit friends for a flat rate. The infrastructure is there. We have cracked it in terms of doing it for the over 60s and we could apply the same methodology to produce a national scheme for all people staying in education. If we are going to have people staying in education and training until the age of 18, then there needs to be some sort of national scheme to support that.

Q139 Chairman: How important are School Travel Advisors?

Mr Bodey: I have no experience of School Travel Advisors.

Mr Harrison: The only view I have is in areas within my own authority, which is that they are making or they tell me they are making good use of the grant they have got available, which I understand is for two years, but at the end of the day I think their concern is about sustainable options. They are looking at not quite the Cumbria option of scooters to enable people to move between 14–19 consortia and partnerships but they are using some kind of minibus feeding into a central hub structure in order that children are not restricted by the length of the school day. So it is the fact that study provision beyond the end of the traditional school day takes them to five o'clock, half past five, six o'clock in the evening and in rural areas particularly that then becomes a real challenge and in fact it may even restrict the access and the opportunity to courses simply because of a lack of availability of the transport option either there or back, which of course leads back to those parents who are best able to support their children by driving them around themselves.

Q140 Chairman: The funding for School Travel Advisors is due to end in 2010. Does that cause you any great concern?

Ms Sheridan: It causes us great concern. The effectiveness of School Travel Advisors has been quite substantial and the fact that this is just one programme of a lot of initiatives going into schools. This is a programme where schools had someone whom they can genuinely turn to, someone who was there to hold their hand, someone who was there to help them, advise them and carry them through the process. There is job insecurity which has been caused in the profession by the continual vagueness of funding. We had two year funding and then at the very last minute it was another two year funding, and now they are saying it is going to end in 2010. We are already in the profession starting to see

people leave their posts now and seek alternative employment because they need that job security. Without continued future funding from some source there is a very real risk that the programme could die.

Q141 Chairman: Do any of you think that it is not important to continue with School Travel Advisors?

Ms James: I think given that the 14–19 reforms are literally underway we will not have all of the diploma lines set up. We will have the raise in participation age hitting the books, as it were. As long as there is a joined-up approach, I think that is what is absolutely essential, because it is not just travel, it is the planning across an authority, it is the education planning, it is health provision, it is the whole lot joined up. But I think it is an essential provision, at least while the 14–19 reforms are put on the books.

Mr Bodey: I think one of the difficulties with the system—and in fact I can say I have got no experience because I am coming from the college sector and it is a school LA-based post which has no responsibility to the college sector, so there are more post-16 students in the college sector than there are in schools and yet we are not part of actually trying to solve the picture.

Q142 Mr Hollobone: What kinds of school travel schemes do you consider the most effective in reducing the use of private cars to get pupils to school?

Mr Bodey: I think there is a lot of work that can be done in terms of encouraging local students/pupils to walk and cycle but it is actually accessibility to cost-effective public transport that is actually going to get people out of their cars. It has got to be reliable, it has got to be cost-effective and it has got to be delivering them to where they need to be and it is about actually planning those routes.

Ms Sheridan: I think it depends very much on the individual school and the individual area. Some initiatives work better in some places than others. At primary school level we have seen massive success where we have combined education with incentives for the children. At a secondary school level it is much more about communicating with young people on their level, listening to them, finding out the problems that matter to them and with them it is very much access to public transport which is reasonably priced, which is accessible but feels safe to them and that they do not feel in danger on it. Once you get into moving on from secondary to college, as Derek said, it is very much about that transport network being there, being able to actually get there and to get there on time. But throughout all of it I think you are very much looking at the fact that it is not good enough to just throw infrastructure at something, it has to be backed up by education at the same time. The two have to go hand in hand.

Ms James: I think in terms of educating the parents as well because there is a lot of parental choice, particularly at primary level but also at least in the early stages of secondary. Where the schemes are

working well there is a lot of parental participation as well, so there is parental education that is going on.

Q143 Mr Hollobone: In your collective experience is the use of the private car to get students to school going up, going down or staying the same?

Mr Harrison: In my own school it is going up, despite having a School Travel Plan, despite working very hard at it. It is particularly going up at the moment because I have no evidence other than the fact that we keep a record of parents' contact numbers during the school day for emergency usage and the amount just in the last few months, this term and last term, of parents who are particularly working in more than one part-time job, and when they are working in more than one part-time job it is because they are having to be in one place and somewhere else and somewhere else. So the amount of driving to school to drop their children off is happening more and more, but I happen to have a school where for the traditional area the school is not in the centre, it is right on the periphery of it. From one end to the other end of my traditional area served is a mile and a half, which for parents with very young children is challenging.

Q144 Mark Pritchard: A lot has been discussed on cost and dealt with in Mr Martlew's excellent question on that. On the issue of social inclusion with one million children playing truant each year, has there been any research that you are aware of linking truancy with ability to pay, and if not do you think there should be?

Ms James: Not that I am aware of.

Q145 Mark Pritchard: Do you think it would be helpful, given that cost is a factor in people's choice of transport and whether they are perhaps able to access school? I know that when I went to school I did not really want to walk further than twenty minutes, and then you hear about my grandfather, who walked apparently 40 miles every day or something to school, but in rural areas in particular the distances are longer. The transport is not there for a lot of rural communities and I just wondered whether you thought that would be helpful. The cost, of course, is high.

Ms Sheridan: I think any research which further helps us understand the issues of why people travel or choose to travel the way they do and any research that will help us ensure that more children will attend school is doubtless of absolute value.

Q146 Mr Martlew: Coming back to the use of yellow buses or the equivalent, as I rapidly approach the age when I am going to get a bus pass my idea of hell would be to get on a bus with secondary school children at half past eight in the morning! We are in the situation where we have free travel now for pensioners and although officially it only starts at 9.30 a lot of local authorities have it before. Is there any evidence that this mix creates problems and

would it not be better if the children were taken separately to school? It would create a lot less blood pressure amongst the elderly!

Ms Sheridan: I think wherever you get large groups of children you are going to get noise, you are going to get banter, and what a lot of people perceive to be antisocial behaviour is at its heart just kids being kids. I think you do not necessarily achieve anything by segregating people. Children will not learn and people will not learn how to behave on public transport with other people if they are never exposed to it and never have that choice. Huge success has been found in a lot of areas where communities have worked together with schools through School Travel Plans being facilitated by the School Travel Advisor, worked with youth workers and worked with local community groups to engender an understanding and therefore a respect between both sides of those kinds of disputes and I think it is only through that that we can actually change those attitudes.

Q147 Mr Martlew: That is all very nice, but my experience is that a lot of the elderly people decide to travel later because of that perceived problem.

Mr Bodey: I think nonetheless it is a perceived problem and I think it is actually important as a society that we do not segregate. I think it is actually important that we learn to live with each other and actually learn to cope with each other and to respect each other. I think there is an element of education about the behaviour of young people, but if they are not exposed to actually living in the adult world and they are always segregated from it they will not grow up into functioning adults.

Q148 Mr Martlew: So what you are saying is that the segregation which the yellow bus would achieve is detrimental for society?

Ms Sheridan: Potentially.

Mr Bodey: I think there is a potential danger that it will actually cause dysfunction.

Mr Harrison: I think that the yellow bus concept may be appropriate for some ages of children, but when you get into 14–19 and you have a range of partners delivering different lines and diplomas you cannot have that many yellow buses. I entirely concur with Mr Bodey because I think it is about developing something within society which is a community resource and that that community resource should not just be for schools and should not just be for any distinct group, it is rather that the school day is extending and extending schools is about moving from 8.00 until 6.00. So children are moving around in communities between 8.00 and 6.00 and you cannot segregate the elderly between 9.00 in the morning and 3.00 because these days with 14–19 year olds there is always going to be movement. An element of the healthy schools strand is actually about minds and attitudes as much as it is about the food they eat, and how you work with the people within your community is a key challenge, a key strand to the work we do.

Q149 Chairman: It has been said that using yellow buses would free up capacity on public transport. Are you aware of the problems on public transport caused by students and pupils?

Mr Bodey: Certainly in my case, Chairman, we cause difficulty for the regular users, but the way to solve that is about increasing the capacity of public transport, it is not about segregation and putting yellow buses on the road.

Q150 Chairman: You think there is a problem, though, in your experience?

Mr Bodey: There are bound to be problems in terms of peak travel and the number of people wishing to access a limited service. The bus company will tell you that the most expensive bus to put on is a rush hour bus because their whole fleet is already out in operation. If you want a bus at three o'clock in the afternoon it is relatively easy and cheap, but it is about increasing the capacity of public transport so that all users benefit. It is not about segregating for what is an expensive option. Yellow buses are much more expensive than putting another public bus on and in many cases in my area it would be solved by having a double-decker instead of a single-decker on the bus route.

Ms James: I think it is worth saying, though, something Emma said before, that there is not one solution which fits every option and there are some cases where actually yellow buses, or let us call them dedicated school transport, are actually the only really feasible option and that is not ideal. There are particular issues, I think, within inner-city areas where public transport is used and there is congestion, but I think Derek is right, that actually somehow society education must go on as well.

Ms Sheridan: I think we need to be careful as well about not just assuming that just because there is congestion at peak hours on bus travel that is solely down to the school run. Pretty much everybody goes to work. You are not going to tell people not to go to work because the buses are overcrowded, so I think we need to be careful about not necessarily blaming all of the problems which occur on peak hour bus journeys on young people. Also, as we said, there are other ways in which we can free up capacity. We are doing a lot of work with schools whereby we are encouraging those children who are coming on public transport, where they are travelling relatively short journeys, to get off the bus and to walk or cycle, which is freeing up capacity as well. So there are lots of different options and is about choosing the right option for each individual school or local area rather than a one-size-fits-all, because we have tried that with different things in the past and it does not always work.

Mr Bodey: There is an alternative way of looking at it. As a college we run some coaches for students from areas where the public transport does not reach. There are members of the public who would like to get on those coaches but they cannot because of the licensing regulations, so we could actually be looking at a planned provision of public transport which is more effective for everybody.

Q151 Mr Martlew: Tell me more about these licences. Perhaps our next witnesses can. I have people who come in from the rural areas, students, not the same as 12-year-olds, but the public cannot get on those buses?

Mr Bodey: I cannot run a public bus service without being a registered bus operator and a licensee. I can run a private coach for members of my community without such a licence.

Q152 Mr Martlew: Even though it would be a private bus operator who would be operating it?

Mr Bodey: Even though it would be a private bus operator who is running it, yes. There are other examples of that incongruity. I have a park and ride outside my college door. It would make eminent sense if my students could use the park and ride from the city centre out, because those are empty in the morning, and use them in the evening to get back in because they are empty then as far as the general public is concerned, but the licensing agreement and the law will not allow it.

Q153 Chairman: Can you tell us about the School Census Mode of Travel work? Are you involved in that and can you give us any views on how that work is progressing, its accuracy?

Ms Sheridan: Once all the glitches are ironed out, it will be a fantastic source of information. It is a fantastic source of information, the fact that we can extract that data now and cross-reference it with postcodes, with free school meals information, which allows us to see whether or not low income families are being unduly barred from education because of transport. So once we get to the point where we have a full dataset it will be extremely useful information. With the collection of any new source of data there is always a few glitches in the first couple of years and I know there are a lot of local authorities which were concerned about the accuracy of the data, particularly in the first year. Local authorities are working extremely hard with schools and with the DCSF to ensure that the quality of that data improves year on year and we are seeing really useful information coming out of it, particularly with regard to cross-borough, cross-boundary travel, where now if we can take the data from two neighbouring authorities we can see where the difficulties are with transport, where we have people travelling halfway across the authority to get to the school when two minutes over the boundary there is a school they could go to. It is early days, but I think potentially it has a lot of benefit.

Mr Bodey: It is very useful data, but it ignores the colleges. It is a school-based system again.

Q154 Chairman: It does not collect information from colleges?

Mr Bodey: Not from colleges at all, no.

Q155 Chairman: There is no other body that is collecting the equivalent information from colleges?

Mr Bodey: No.

Q156 Chairman: In your written evidence you said that post-16 leavers of colleges often complain that the local authority systems are set up to take young people to local authority owned schools with sixth forms but not to colleges that are seen to be competing with them. Can you tell us any more about that and how significant an issue that is?

Mr Bodey: It will vary, as these things always do, from locality to locality, but there is a perception amongst some local authority members that there should be provision within their authority for their young people, as they see it, and they wish to ignore the choices that are being made by young people to travel to colleges which may well be outside of the geographical authority or to schools outside the geographical authority. It is a bit of sort of localism, if you like. It does get in the way of choices which are being made by young people to access their education.

Q157 Chairman: Is there any way you think that could be dealt with?

Mr Bodey: It could be dealt with if there was actually a national scheme which provided access to transport on an equal basis. Young people would then not be constrained by the policy of the local authority as to how they made their choice. They would be able to choose the provision that actually in their judgment best suited them and get there accordingly.

Q158 Chairman: Is this a widespread problem in your experience?

Mr Bodey: It is certainly a widespread problem in my neck of the woods and will occur elsewhere.

Q159 Mr Hollobone: Do any of you have any views about daylight saving time and whether the regime should be changed in this country?

Mr Bodey: I am going to be saying, from a voice behind me, that we supported that!

Q160 Mr Hollobone: Could you expand on what you would like to see?

Mr Bodey: Can I ask Martin to answer the question? It is not allowed?

Q161 Mark Pritchard: When you say “we”, you specifically –

Mr Bodey: As an organisation. In principle, anything that will actually enable us to cut energy usage is going to be a good thing.

Q162 Mr Hollobone: The question I was primarily asking was from a safety point of view. Children travelling to and from in the dark is clearly not a desirable thing, but given where Britain is in the world it is unavoidable unless we change the time zone in which we operate. I put the question to see if you have got any views on that.

Ms Sheridan: I think what is more important is that children are taught how to travel safely at all times of the day or night. That is more important.

Ms James: I would echo that. Given the nature of the school provision, it is not a 9.00 to 3.00 or 9.00 to 4.00 day, it is an 8.00 to 6.00 day and beyond, because the nature of the extended school is such that children will be there well and truly beyond normal school hours, so almost the issue of safety becomes more paramount in terms of training rather than in terms of daylight savings.

Q163 Mark Pritchard: In my day it was the Green Cross Code and the Green Man, or whatever. That has been revived in some areas. Do you think we need to see a sort of beefed-up modern version of the Green Cross Code which takes into consideration all the other different modes of transport that perhaps are being used more frequently over a longer distance?

Mr Harrison: I think that would today be seen as part of the healthy schools agenda and part of the whole healthy schools approach. I think my memories of the jolly green giant and everything were very much that if you undertake cycling proficiency at the end of it you are safe. The reality is that we have moved on now and you would be perhaps safer to instil with children and bring them to a position where they took a much wider view of looking after themselves on the way to and from school and whilst they were in school, and whilst they are at home for that matter. It is about being safer and having a growing understanding of keeping themselves safer rather than just being safe. I think maybe changing so that it is light at four o'clock when children go home is—as Kathryn has already said, increasingly schools are 8.00 until 6.00 so many children do arrive just about in the dark and they go home in the dark.

Ms Sheridan: I think road safety and personal safety as well as the road safety angle is crucial and that is why it lies at the core of school travel planning. No school travel planner would go into a school and encourage walking or cycling, or the use of public transport if it was not safe for children to do so and it is a core part of School Travel Plans action plans that road safety education is built in. Within the schools primarily it is largely through the healthy schools agenda, through the “be safe, be healthy” agenda. School Travel Advisors work very closely with road safety professionals to deliver increasingly innovative campaigns and programmes aimed at everything from young people at nursery right through to the upper end of secondary level. So it is very important and it is something that we promote actively.

Q164 Mark Pritchard: Just briefly and finally, as Mr Bodey points out, you have touched on cycling. Do you think it should be compulsory for children under 16 to wear helmets while cycling to school?

Mr Bodey: I will answer that as a cyclist because that is how I get to work. The evidence is mixed, but I would still say it comes down in favour of wearing a helmet, as I did. I was going to comment on this whole question of education. I think young people, some of the young people who come to my college, are very poor at being able to assess risk in a whole

variety of activities and a large part of that is because we have protected them throughout the whole of their life to date. We have actually prevented them from taking risks and what we actually need to do is to get back to where people can take risk in a controlled way and they understand what risk is and they can make the right judgments. A lot of that is about the education in terms of learning how to cycle safely and how to walk and how to live on the roads. We need to get that right at a primary level in order that actually we are solving the problem all the way through. I should not be saying this in view of the economic situation should I really, but we have a risk-averse society when it comes to human beings and behaviour in that we do not allow people to learn by taking risks and that is a vital part of education.

Q165 Mark Pritchard: Perhaps Ms James might like to comment, given that she is Head Teacher, on the cyclists?

Ms James: On wearing a helmet, actually from a personal as well as a professional standpoint, yes, I do think that children under 16 should wear helmets. I know there has been mixed evidence, but largely the evidence comes down on minimising risk in terms of the safety provided.

Mark Pritchard: Thank you.

Q166 Chairman: How far do you think parents consider travel when choosing secondary schools? Does anybody have a view?

Ms James: I think the level of interest is increasing and I do think that is partly down to the work of the School Travel Advisors and the School Travel Plans which have been put in place. I still do not think that it is of paramount importance to them.

Mr Bodey: It is actually about, I think, the choice of school often comes first and you solve the travel afterwards, but there are also people who will make their choice of school because of travel. They will just simply say, “Well, this is a secondary school and that’s good enough, and away we go,” because they will not actually take enough interest in the quality or standards of the schools. So it is mixed.

Q167 Chairman: Do you think parents would take more consideration of travel issues if transport was spoken about more in schools and more information was given to them? Would that make any difference?

Ms Sheridan: I think it would if it was given at the point of choosing the school. Quite often the transport information is given to parents but by the time they receive it they have already chosen or the young people have already chosen what school or college they want to go to. Again, through some of the duties that are required under the Education and Inspections Act that is starting to happen more with transport information being more and more included at the admissions choice stage, but I would say there is probably still quite a lot of work to do there.

Mr Bodey: I think for a lot of people it is about actually the economics of the situation and there will be a lot of parents who choose their local school that

much more thoughtfully because of the cost of getting somewhere else. If we want to actually make choice a more viable option, particularly for the poorer people in society then we have got to do something about accessibility.

Q168 Chairman: What has been the most effective way of persuading people not to use their cars in bringing students to school?

Ms Sheridan: Getting them to try another way, if you can get someone to try a different way just once.

Q169 Chairman: What is the best way to encourage them to try?

Ms Sheridan: Again, it goes back to the issue of no one solution being right for all cases. It very much depends on the individual school. It depends on the transport networks they have around them, whether or not they have cycle lanes around the school, whether or not their catchment area is very local or whether it is very large. It is very difficult to hone in on one particular thing because it is not a one-size-fits-all issue.

Mr Harrison: If I may, I would echo the point particularly about where you locate the school in the first place. When you do have the opportunity, as we have with BSF coming up and building schools for the future and the refurbishment of our buildings or of our school stock, I think some consideration could be given to where you actually physically locate those schools because if you go for the cheapest option it will be the land which is the furthest away probably from where most of the people are living, which automatically raises the issue of travel to and from school each day. So I think there is a correlation between the two.

Ms James: I was only going to actually echo what Mr Harrison said, so do continue.

Q170 Mr Martlew: I feel there may be a consensus here, but then again I could well be wrong. At present we have the situation—if we can talk about secondary schools as opposed to primary—where children, if they live so far away, get there free and if they do not live that distance they have to pay the full cost. Is there a sort of view that there should be a standard cost, a small fee for everybody so that that will put out the difficulty of people who cannot afford to go to that school? Is there a consensus amongst yourselves on that?

Mr Harrison: I think with some of the challenges that are coming up we are into a mixed economy of what schools and the education experience looks like and I think we are only just beginning to see the journey that 14–19 will map out for us all. If you have a nominal cost or a nominal charge –

Q171 Mr Martlew: Say 50p.

Mr Harrison: If it was 50p, with some of the 14–19 strands and options it will be 50p to one and then 50p later to another and 50p to another, and then 50p home. So you will be incurring a whole range of different costs according to which options children or young people are going for and I would not really want to –

Q172 Mr Martlew: If you quote the worst case scenario nothing will happen, will it, Mr Harrison?

Mr Harrison: The worst case scenario would be what is happening now, I think, which is that increasingly children's options, access and opportunities are often influenced very heavily by the availability of transport rather than their particular interest or level of expertise, or their flow of direction for their future career options.

Ms James: I would like to pick up on something that Chris has just said in terms of the 14–19 issue, which is of particular concern to us. While we recognise that actually there is a lot of significant work that has gone on with local authorities and with schools and across the organisations in terms of planning and in terms of travel planning, we are very concerned that actually there has not been sufficient planning in terms of the various transport needs with regard to 14–19 and the raising of the participation age. Your question of cost is a primary example because, of course, if people are having to meet between providers there is the time element, the congestion element and there is the cost element that it would concern.

Ms Sheridan: I think it sounds on the face of it quite a nice idea, that everybody across the whole country pays a certain amount to get to the school. I think one of the things you really have to bear in mind is the difference in the actual real cost on the ground, particularly in rural areas where it can be significantly more expensive to run specific routes to specific institutions. Those expenses may not exist particularly in high urban areas and that would have to be determined within the enforcing.

Q173 Mr Martlew: But these are the areas which tend to get free travel as opposed to the urban areas where people have to pay, so the cost is already borne by the local authority?

Ms Sheridan: Not necessarily in all cases, but there is a real issue of how to fund these things, particularly in rural areas. The other option is if you reduce those travel costs across the board, the money has got to come from somewhere to pay for them and local authorities are already very cash-strapped, particularly when it comes to transport provision.

Mr Bodey: I think whether it is at 11 or whether it is at 14, given the choice that is coming into the curriculum from 14 onwards there needs to be a national scheme which is equal across the country, which meets the needs of all travellers in the choices they make for their educational provision because it is going to be a very mixed picture as to how people travel.

Q174 Chairman: How do you think these proposed sub-regional transport provisions will work based on travel to learn areas? Do you think that is going to be effective?

Mr Bodey: It could be effective provided they actually do come into existence and that actually it is not about localism, it is about actually looking at that region and planning across. That is exactly what my students benefit from in the Bristol area, the West of England submission-region, but there will always, nonetheless, even then be boundary effects. That is the danger of setting up any cluster arrangement that

is not part of a national scheme, that when you reach the edge of that boundary you are still going to have students, pupils, who will be wanting to make a choice to go outside of that travel to work region for very good educational purposes and finding that they are discriminated against.

Q175 Chairman: Has the School Census Mode of Travel work given you any useful information on current patterns of school travel across local authority boundaries?

Ms James: Yes, as Emma said before, an incomplete picture. I think the potential for the information is very good. I think the question then is how we make use of that information because we can have realms of management information. It is actually making use of it and making sure that that serves the needs of the schools, the pupils, the parents and the community in general.

Q176 Chairman: Have any of you had any information from that work?

Ms Sheridan: Some excellent work has been done in the South West and is starting to be done in London to look at that data on a regional basis. It only really comes into its own if you look at it outside individual local authority borough boundaries. At the minute there is a funding issue of who is going to pay for that data to be analysed and to cross-match it because each individual local authority only has their own information and it needs someone at a regional level, or even a national level, to look at that and to map it nationally. Now, that is being done in the South West and it is being done by TfL in London, but until that is actually done at a national level we are not going to have a true picture of the situation. But the information which is starting to come through that is proving very useful.

Mr Bodey: It will give information about movement at a level in particular which will be very useful, but without the colleges it will not give information about movement about the 16s.

Chairman: Thank you very much indeed for coming and for giving us so much information about what you are doing. Thank you very much.

Witnesses: **Mr Les Warneford**, Managing Director, Stagecoach UK Bus; **Mr Steven Salmon**, Director of Policy Development, and **Mr Giles Fearnley**, President, Confederation of Passenger Transport; **Mr Leon Daniels**, Commercial Director, UK Bus, FirstGroup, gave evidence.

Q177 Chairman: Good afternoon, gentlemen. Could I ask you if you would introduce yourselves for our records, starting at this end?

Mr Daniels: Leon Daniels, Commercial Director for FirstGroup.

Mr Fearnley: Giles Fearnley, President, Confederation of Passenger Transport.

Mr Salmon: I am Steven Salmon from the secretariat of CPT.

Mr Warneford: I am Les Warneford, Managing Director of Stagecoach UK Bus.

Chairman: Thank you very much.

Q178 Mr Clelland: Are you familiar with the work of the North East Youth Assembly and the Bus Buddies project? This is something which they launched themselves because of their concerns about travel availability for young people and they did quite an effective job, actually, and contacted bus operators, local authorities and politicians such as myself, which is why I am drawing attention to it here. How do you collect the views of young people on current transport services?

Mr Warneford: We do not actively go out and survey them as a specific group. We obviously collect lots of information back through our general market research. You asked were we familiar with the Bus Buddies in the North East, and the honest answer for me—and we are a North East operator—is not very familiar with it. I have heard about it and I have heard good things about it, but I don't know any more than that.

Q179 Mr Clelland: You do not take the needs of young people into account when you are planning your services?

Mr Warneford: I think it is not fair to say we do not take their needs into account.

Q180 Mr Clelland: You do? But if you have not assessed what their needs are, how do you take them into account?

Mr Warneford: Well, I think if we didn't take their needs into account we would not be carrying them. There is a certain long history of knowing where the demand is and what the requirements are, and that is what we seek to satisfy. It does change year on year.

Q181 Mr Clelland: Do you feel that local authorities take account of the effect of transport provision and the delivery of the Every Child Matters project, for instance? Is that part of the local authority's thinking, young people's travel?

Mr Salmon: perhaps I can come in here. We have got two distinct roles as the industry. On the one hand we plan and deliver public bus services for everybody and on the other hand we are contractors to the local authorities both for specialised services carrying only school and college students and sometimes we are contracted for services which carry the whole of the public, and actually when you are planning routes—and it really doesn't matter whether it is us who is doing it or the local authority who is doing it—education movements are relatively easy because everybody has been through an admissions process, you know where they are going, you know where they live, so you have got a good start that you can plan where there are movements that you can cater for commercially with a bus service or, usually on the authority's side, you can get sensible use of your resources because it is all quite predictable. But, of course, the flip side of the

fact that you know where everybody is and where they are going is that you have got a tremendous churn, particularly when you get older into the college sector. Every two years it is all going to change over, so you have got to keep the planning alive.

Q182 Mr Clelland: What would be the effect on school travel, and indeed other services, if there were to be national concessionary fares for young people in full-time education?

Mr Warneford: Could I say no, thank you.

Q183 Mr Clelland: Can you expand on that?

Mr Warneford: We have not had a happy experience of concessionary fares with the elderly and I really don't want to go through that again.

Q184 Chairman: Can you tell us a bit more about that, Mr Warneford?

Mr Warneford: Well, it is not about school transport but the fairly public debate about the way in which the reimbursement mechanisms work for the elderly and disabled concession schemes are still very contentious, if I can put it that way.

Q185 Mr Clelland: You mean you are not making enough money out of it?

Mr Warneford: It is about the inconsistency of it. In some places, quite right, we don't make enough money out of it and we are having to put fares up and reduce services. In other authorities we do fine and we reach good agreements with them and they are happy and we are happy. It is totally inconsistent from authority to authority and there is no sign of a resolution.

Mr Fearnley: If I may continue and put the issues of reimbursement to one side. There would clearly be issues of capacity at certain times, which we would need to manage, and that is our job to manage that, that the reimbursement is fair, but there would possibly be some unintended consequences as well. Perhaps on a winter's evening, let us say, it might encourage large numbers of young people to travel by bus for something to do, to keep warm rather than possibly be on the streets, or whatever, which itself may create capacity issues and indeed may be an inhibitor of passengers travelling. So we have to look at it in the round, but in general we would handle and work to capacity issues if the reimbursement was fair.

Mr Daniels: If I might just add that by "concessionary", whether we mean free or at a lower cost, I think there is something about giving something for free that appears to have no value, to echo what has been said here before. So we are very keen not to see large numbers of children travelling free on our buses late at night, as we have seen in London, and making it difficult for ordinary users to use them.

Q186 Mr Clelland: But if the elderly are restricted to eight o'clock until seven o'clock at night, something like that, would that be different?

Mr Daniels: We would be pleased to see proposals for a system which provided a value, avoided the unintended consequences and gave us fair reimbursement for the journeys being made.

Q187 Mr Clelland: All right. Taking out of the argument for the moment the question of costs and who bears the costs and that sort of thing, what would be the impact on the public transport system of introducing such a scheme in terms of the capacity?

Mr Warneford: It is fairly inevitable that if we are talking about even just travel to and from school, or it could be wider than that, any reduction in price will automatically increase demand. If that demand is spread fairly evenly across the network and the times of day and we can absorb some of it, that would be a big advantage to the young people, to the operators, to society. If it is a huge increase in the peak demand, it could be very expensive and that would put pressure on everybody as to how it is affordable.

Mr Daniels: Could I just say there is a compelling case for staggering school start and finish times and this applies to both the requirements for dedicated school transport as well as travel on the public bus network. Our experience in the USA, where there are extensively staggered school times, is that the dedicated school buses are able to do two or three return trips, which makes the provision of dedicated school services far more efficient than it does with just one return trip. Equally, on the public bus network we already have cases of overcrowding in the morning peak as people who are travelling to work and travelling to school clash together and the availability of staggered school times again helps us smooth that peak and helps us deliver it not only more comfortably but also more efficiently.

Q188 Mr Clelland: How many of your services would be made commercially unviable if they were not being used by students and young people?

Mr Fearnley: I don't think any of us would have that statistic available. Clearly there would be a number of services which became non-commercial as a result, indeed there would be some services supported by local authorities under tender to themselves which would be much more costly to procure. It would have a significant effect. The bus network is built up over the day, over the whole balance of users, and each one is integral to the commercial viability of that network.

Q189 Chairman: Would you say that the general public transport network is suitable for children on school journeys?

Mr Fearnley: It is suitable for secondary age children, who are able to travel. They are mini-commuters after all and there is some advantage to us in encouraging children to use the public bus network because we would like them to become full price customers when they become adults later on. So the public transport network is perfectly suitable for secondary school children. It is safe, it is comfortable and reliable and, as the Committee will

know, the safety statistics for travel by bus and coach is very many times greater than the risk of death or injury when travelling by car. So the public bus network is entirely suitable for travel by secondary school children. Of course, for primary school children they have to be escorted and in general terms the public bus service is entirely suitable provided there is adequate capacity for both the parent and the child to travel, which is a matter of cost and efficiency.

Q190 Chairman: We are told there are problems of antisocial behaviour on buses and that that causes a problem. Do you agree with that? What is your experience? Would you like to comment on that?

Mr Warnford: I made the point in our written evidence that it is a problem. I do agree with the lady in your former evidence session. It is more boisterous than trouble, but there is a minority which is very serious trouble and does great damage to vehicles and such like. I think by and large the comment was right. Society has to get used to old folks and young folks on the same bus and we need to make sure the education system lets the young folks understand that they cannot just take it over, but I do think there has to be a better sanction against the real troublemakers.

Mr Fearnley: It is a fact that a significant number of adult passengers try hard not to travel at school times. Some have to occasionally work. An awful lot of people choose not to, with the consequence that Mr Warnford has just outlined, but we also now have experience that a number of schools around the country work very hard with operators to ensure that there are behavioural standards on buses, whether they be school contract vehicle or normal public service vehicles, and that is to be welcomed. Where a school is willing, they will always find the operator extremely keen to work with them to ensure that those standards are always maintained.

Mr Salmon: I would like to draw out a relationship which does not exist. That is a strange thing to say, but there is no clear link where you could say school children on public bus services are a problem but school children on dedicated services are not. Every day 90% of the school movement passes without incident or any problem. It is not true that there is a total difficulty with antisocial behaviour, but I know from my experience as a manager before I came into the trade association that you can have 80 people on a bus with just the driver and everything will be fine, but you can put on a supervisor who they don't like, paid for by the authority, and everything will get 10 times worse! So it is a very, very complicated area and there is a lot about citizenship and the young people taking responsibility, and the relationship with the school is absolutely key to that.

Q191 Chairman: So you do not see this as a generalised problem?

Mr Salmon: No. There is a problem, but it is a complex problem.

Q192 Mr Martlew: On this issue, because it affects the people you represent every day as the bus operators, what work are you doing to come up with a solution to this? It is in the middle of your business. You are the bus operators and there is a problem for rights in society and this, that and the other. Are any of the bus companies doing any work to try and alleviate this problem?

Mr Salmon: Well, there is more than a little training that goes on specifically to help drivers deal with the situation, and any other staff we have got, of the work. There is liaison with schools and actually there is an art of allocating people to work that you know they are going to be alright with, because certain people just do not like driving buses full of kids and the kids don't like them, and it all goes wrong. But from a day to day operational point of view you can actually manage your way around some of these issues.

Q193 Mr Martlew: Is there anything more that can be done? Is there any sort of research of evidence? It is a problem of some sort, is it not?

Mr Fearnley: I doubt if there is research on this point. Picking up Mr Salmon's point, it is certainly normally very valuable if it can be so allocated that the same driver operates the same school journey. That is a lot easier on a school contract run than it is if it is a local bus service where the schedule will be much larger and the drivers will rotate. In fact very often it provides a link which is very valuable because the children know they will see the driver the next day and if the driver is good at his job, as Mr Salmon has outlined, then the relationship normally works.

Q194 Mr Hollobone: Using Mr Daniels's expertise of American yellow buses, can we try and get to the bottom of why this system of yellow buses works in the United States? Could you in a minute and a half, or two minutes, just sum up for us the essential elements of the successful schemes there?

Mr Daniels: The US yellow bus scheme has been around for 60 years and you pay for it in your taxes and it is commonplace in North America for children from primary school age onwards to be picked up at or close to their home and taken to and from school, and the care of the child is given over to the bus driver at the start of the journey and is handed over to the school on arrival. I have already indicated the value of staggered school times in respect of small children and middle-aged children and older children which gives some efficiency. The American school buses are built in a particular way to promote a particular sort of safety, primarily to avoid accident or injury in the event of a high-speed impact from the side or from the front or rear, and many of the drivers of the North American yellow school buses are parents who are able to do four or five hours' worth of work each school day taking a bus of children to and from school. There is a series of extra road safety arrangements in the US which prohibit motorists from overtaking a school bus when it is stood loading or unloading and there is a number of other safety features on those particular

vehicles which are as a result of advanced technology over the years. So in America, in short, it is the habit for children to go to school by bus from as early as they can remember until they leave school.

Q195 Mr Hollobone: Do they have to go to their local school?

Mr Daniels: No, in fact actually the origins of the American yellow bus system was, I regret to say, in many cases about bussing children to schools further away from home for a number of social and economic reasons, including balancing the right numbers of the right sorts of children in the different schools across the county. So it grew up as a result of children having to travel longer than to their nearest school.

Q196 Mr Hollobone: So it is a comprehensive system. Presumably it is expensive, but logistically it works extremely well, almost on a street by street basis?

Mr Daniels: It does work extremely well. Of course, it is cheaper to provide because I have already indicated that the service is provided more efficiently. The labour is provided by parents who are happy to be paid four hours a day to drive two school runs, two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. The vehicles themselves are extraordinarily cheap, perhaps £40,000, which is less than half the price of an ordinary single-decker bus here in the UK. So the capital cost is cheaper. Fuel, as you know, is cheaper, the labour is cheaper and the service is more efficient. It is, therefore, seriously cheaper to provide in the US than it is to provide here in the UK.

Q197 Mr Hollobone: Having said that and given those differences you have highlighted, are you surprised that more progress has not been made in this country about looking at introducing similar schemes?

Mr Daniels: I think, firstly, we have to say that the yellow school bus model is not the correct solution for every application. The conditions here are different. Of course, the Americans have had it all their lives, so they have known nothing else. We are talking about introducing something new here in the UK and the truth is that in the current financial climate local authorities are bound to procure dedicated school services by compulsory competitive tendering and by definition some local authorities will therefore be forced to provide dedicated school transport at the lowest possible cost. There is no doubt that provision of an American-style US bus service is much more expensive for a local authority to provide than it is to provide an ordinary service. Therefore, quite a number of local authorities have expressed the wish that they would love to have a dedicated yellow school bus service, as they have seen elsewhere, but frankly they cannot afford it.

Q198 Mr Hollobone: Is the yellow bus scheme in the States run by local authorities or are they separate agencies?

Mr Daniels: Education authorities.

Q199 Mr Hollobone: Education authorities separate from the schools or including the schools?

Mr Daniels: The schools are banded together in education authority areas, so they are regional.

Q200 Mr Hollobone: Okay, switching now to Mr Warnford, I take a particular interest in Mr Warnford because Stagecoach run all the buses in the borough of Kettering. Having heard what Mr Daniels has said of his experiences in the United States, presumably given the knowledge you have of the bus network and the road network in the borough of Kettering if there was a suitable mechanism you could provide a yellow bus service just like Mr Daniels has outlined?

Mr Warnford: We could provide that now in Kettering or anywhere else if either the local authority or the local education authority—it could be the transport authority—were so minded that that is how they chose to get the scholars to school. There is nothing to prevent us providing that kind of service and, as I am sure you know from the report, some local authorities are introducing quite large yellow school bus networks.

Q201 Chairman: What would the impact be upon local transport, existing operators, if there were more yellow buses?

Mr Warnford: Enormously variable. It depends entirely on the way the existing networks have been constructed and developed over many, many years. If I could give you perhaps one particular example. In Kent, which still has a grammar school system so there is a lot of scholars travelling quite long distances to schools, we are contracted by the county council to move 6,500 scholars every morning and afternoon, for which we have about 100 double-deck buses, and they form part of the whole Kent local bus network and all the other people are travelling on the vehicles with them. If you introduced a dedicated yellow school bus system to replace those 100 double-deck buses, the entire Kent public transport network would collapse. In other places we have very specific school contract services. An area like Kettering, those kinds of middle sized towns tend to be more specific because the local bus network is not so extensive. Where there are existing contract services, yes, you could make them yellow school bus services. The fact that they are yellow I do not think has a deal of difference to it. They would not cost any less than the existing contracted buses. They may in fact cost more if the specification is higher. We actually have 30 vehicles in Bedford which are all painted yellow and dedicated school services.

Q202 Mr Hollobone: Is one of the ironies about this that in America a lot of people never travel by bus and therefore a dedicated school bus system works more effectively than it might do in this country because we do have a greater reliance upon public transport for adults?

Mr Daniels: That is indeed an irony. We would advocate, though, that in the right circumstances the yellow school bus model can be the right solution. It will deliver modal shift, as has been proven. It will provide a really safe environment for groups of children to travel together and in some cases the children themselves, following on from a question earlier about what the views are of the user, refer to it as the beginning and the end of their school day as they group together in their class or year communities, finish off their homework and generally start to bond before the start of the school day. So there are some intangible benefits to the yellow school bus model, but in order to fully answer your question it is an irony that American children, having had a basic grounding in public transport as children, don't travel much by public transport after that. That, I have to say, is much more to do with the economic history of the US than necessarily the grounding on a yellow school bus.

Mr Salmon: There is the relationship, of course, with what you are using the yellow buses for because if you want to put a yellow bus system in and emphasise that it is a very controlled, very managed environment, very suitable for younger children who are currently going by car, then the bus operators will probably cheer twice, once because they are getting the new business to run the yellow buses and secondly because the cars which are currently making short journeys with young children in are off the road so everything is flowing better. In those circumstances, you get a benefit to the public bus network from introducing yellow school buses.

Q203 Mr Clelland: What if you can do both? Is it possible or even advisable, given what has been said about congestion, et cetera, to introduce the kinds of traffic regulations which go along with the yellow bus services in America?

Mr Daniels: The position is that to provide the sorts of safety traffic regulation features which exist in the US requires primary legislation, clearly. In the round what we would welcome is a review as to whether buses used on school services should form a particular special category inside the classification of buses and coaches which would allow Government to consider the safety features, the provision of seatbelts, roll-over strengths and also at the same time allow for the inclusion of special features which would not normally be allowed on ordinary buses and coaches, which could be used to improve safety in the vicinity of the school bus itself.

Q204 Mr Clelland: What effect is that likely to have on traffic movement, because in America what happens is the bus stops, the kids get off and all the traffic stops.

Mr Daniels: I am very carefully not advocating specifically that we should have the American "You must not pass this bus whilst it is overtaking" rules here in the UK. What I am saying is that it would be possible for the Government to review all of the features which could pertain specially to school buses only that would allow, for example, issues whereby school buses are caught by the disability

discrimination regulation rules, issues to do with the number of passengers being carried and all the safety features as well. But, for the record, I am not specifically advocating worsening congestion by introducing stop signs on British school buses.

Mr Warneford: In response to Mr Clelland, as it happens only last week my boss, Mr Souter, and I had exactly that discussion about should the Government pass legislation to prevent people overtaking a school bus. The problem is, you cannot define a school bus. Does that mean every bus at school times?

Q205 Mr Clelland: Well, we are certainly not talking about yellow buses here, are we, because that would be quite obvious?

Mr Warneford: But then you would have to ignore the vast majority of children not travelling on the yellow buses, so there is a really complicated issue there.

Q206 Chairman: Has anybody got an estimate of what it would cost for a local authority to provide the yellow buses? Has anyone done any costings on that?

Mr Warneford: Well, it is not my report, Chairman, but I know in the yellow bus commission report there is a figure of a national cost.

Q207 Chairman: Yes, but not to a local authority?

Mr Warneford: The local authorities all vary in size and shape. I don't think you could bring it down to that without a lot of detailed work.

Mr Daniels: The organisation which sponsored the yellow school bus commissioned a report. I know you are hearing evidence from the Commission in due course and I think you will find that they will be able to indicate some guidance in terms of the cost. A figure of £154 million is quoted for providing the service nationally.

Q208 Mr Martlew: One of our earlier witnesses, I think it was the gentleman who is the principal of a college, made the comment that he had special buses for students and part of the time the park and ride system was running empty and the licensing laws stopped them from actually being used for picking up the public passengers. Is that a nonsense? Is it an advantage to the public?

Mr Salmon: May I come in on the position? It is slightly complicated. If as a licensed operator you want to offer a service to the public so that you can pick up anybody, then you have to essentially publish the timetable and commit yourself to running it at those times on the days you say you are going to. The life of colleges tends to be such that remarkably often they don't stick to their standard times. They want to start late or they want to finish early. So if you want a dedicated service for the college students you cannot register it under the public system because you would then have to commit to doing the same thing every day. So you have got the choice to do it. No one is saying you can't do it that way. You can register it as a public bus service, but once you have registered it you have got to run it every day whether it is needed or not, strictly speaking. As far as people not being able to travel the wrong way on park and ride, that is

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peculiar. There is no licensing reason sitting behind that. That is eminently solvable if whoever is in charge of the park and ride wants it to be.

Q209 Mr Martlew: So it is just the belief that the regulator will not allow it, it is not the reality?

Mr Salmon: It is very peculiar. It will be the contract conditions for that particular park and ride that will be prohibiting travel for students. Occasionally, if I can enlarge, with park and ride people are worried that the general public will find the service so useful that drivers will get crowded off, so they put a condition on the contract that the only people who can use the service are people who have parked their cars in the car park. But the example we had earlier on was one which I would have thought calls for a bit more flexibility than that.

Q210 Chairman: How do you think we could improve the working relationships between the bus operators, the local authorities and the schools and colleges, unless you think it is perfectly well?

Mr Warneford: I can offer one very simple suggestion which works very well in most places and less so in others. In many places it is proactive, occasionally it is only reactive. I think it works best where the local authority, the transport and the education transport, are joined up in what they call an “integrated transport unit” which we can work very well with.

Q211 Chairman: Are there many of those that are working well?

Mr Warneford: I could not tell you whether it is half the local authorities. There are plenty of them around. It is much easier to work with the general transport scene than leave education in its own pigeonhole.

Q212 Chairman: Will the Local Transport Bill help to make this better?

Mr Warneford: I think it is silent on that matter.

Q213 Chairman: Does anyone else have any views on this?

Mr Fearnley: It ought to be something the local authorities wish to pursue irrespective of the Transport Bill or any other consideration because almost certainly it will deliver cost benefits to them by coordination and liaison. Benefits will accrue, let alone admin savings in the back office.

Q214 Mr Clelland: Mr Warneford said that the Local Transport Bill was silent on the matter, but obviously the Local Transport Bill as drafted at the moment—it is due to come back to the House in a couple of weeks’ time—has implications for the relationship between bus companies and local authorities and I think what we would like to know is what is your view on the impact of the Bill in terms of relationships. Will it help or hinder?

Mr Warneford: If you would like me to answer that, Chairman. It is not particularly a school transport issue.

Q215 Mr Clelland: It is an issue about the relationship between you because the local authorities will have a view on school transport and the Transport Bill may very well give them powers to help influence that.

Mr Warneford: I can give you a very simple response. Where public transport is most successful in the UK is where we are already working as partners with the local authority. I think most people would accept that as given and that is in the majority of cases. Will the Bill help that? I don’t think it will make any difference to that, because if we are already working together to the same end why would we need legislation to make us work together? For those areas where relationships are perhaps more strained occasionally, I think it will be unhelpful. It pushes both local authorities and operators towards very unhelpful litigation rather than pushing us to work together better, which is what we would really like to be doing.

Q216 Mr Martlew: Coming back to what you said originally, Mr Warneford, the issue of concessionary fares is an issue of district councils. I suspect in this case we agree with each other, that basically the education authority should be the authority—it is normally the county areas—which deals with concessionary fares, especially if they are going to talk about concessionary fares for young children as well? Do we agree on that?

Mr Warneford: I think there should be one local transport authority. If that is the county council, then that works for us, yes. I don’t think it is for us to say how local government should be organised, but working with one authority on everything certainly works better.

Q217 Chairman: Thank you. If I could just ask you finally, if we just return to those yellow buses, if there was a national scheme of yellow buses would transport operators become unviable? Would it be a threat?

Mr Warneford: You are looking at me, Chairman. Stagecoach would not. Many small operators are very concerned that if there are very prescriptive rules about the way in which a yellow school bus might be manufactured and used—particularly in the rural areas small firms survive on a great mix of different kinds of work. They have got a school contract, a bit of private hire work. They might do a day trip at a weekend. They might even run the odd tour in the summer. They need all that different work to make their businesses viable. If you restrict the type of vehicle so it can only do school work and it does not satisfy the conditions and use for a public service vehicle, they are extremely worried about their businesses.

Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mr Martlew: It is good to hear you say that Stagecoach is concerned about the small companies!

Chairman: On that note we will end. Thank you very much for coming and giving evidence to us.

Wednesday 22 October 2008

Members present

Mrs Louise Ellman, in the Chair

Mr David Clelland
Mr Philip Hollobone
Mr John Leech

Mr Eric Martlew
Graham Stringer

Witnesses: **Mr Paul Osborne**, School Travel Director, Sustrans; **Mr Tony Armstrong**, Chief Executive, Living Streets; **Rt Hon David Blunkett MP**, Chairman, and **Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Tex Pemberton OBE**, Commissioner, Yellow School Bus Commission; and **Dr Siân Thornthwaite**, Independent Consultant, gave evidence.

Chairman: Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to welcome all of you to the Committee. Could I start by asking members of the Committee if they have any interests to declare.

Mr Clelland: A member of Unite.

Mr Martlew: A member of the Unite and GMB unions.

Graham Stringer: Member of Unite.

Chairman: Louise Ellman, a member of Unite. Any others?

Mr Leech: No.

Q218 Chairman: Thank you. Could I ask the witnesses, please, to identify themselves. Perhaps I could start at the end with Mr Blunkett.

Mr Blunkett: David Blunkett, who chaired the Yellow School Bus Commission and I have a registered interest as FirstGroup sponsored the Commission, Chairman.

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Tex Pemberton. I am a county councillor from West Sussex and a member of the Yellow School Bus Commission with David.

Mr Armstrong: I am Tony Armstrong. I am Chief Executive of the charity Living Streets.

Mr Osborne: Paul Osborne, I am the School Travel Director for Sustrans.

Dr Thornthwaite: I am Siân Thornthwaite. I am an independent consultant and have been doing school transport research for about 20 years.

Q219 Chairman: Thank you very much. Could I start by asking you all how far on the list of priorities do you think encouraging children to get out of cars is? How important would that be? Would anybody like to come in on that?

Mr Blunkett: We think that it is an absolutely key priority that crosses a number of key areas. Firstly, in terms of the safety, security and wellbeing of the child in a fit state to be educated with a socialisation agenda and with the reassurance to parents that the children are safe and well looked after, and the reduction in misbehaviour and bullying is obvious. We also believe, however, that it has a major cross-issue agenda with the impact on the environment, particularly on energy usage, congestion and the wellbeing of other road users with the massive reduction in congestion that exists at particular peak times, and we demonstrate that in the report, and, of

course, the consequent reduction in pollution that would go with it. We think there is a win-win position both for the wider public and the economy of the country, and we demonstrate that in the report from the research done with Aberdeen University.

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Chairman, I have been the cabinet member for highways and transport in West Sussex for the last 10 years and one of my concerns has been the safety at our school gates and the congestion on our roads which has impacted upon our economy, on business and on safety. To me, it is absolutely imperative that we do something. We all, sitting in this room today, or most of us, know exactly what it looks like when school is on holiday. The Yellow School Bus Commission wants to try and promote that as the sort of environment we should have every day, so I encourage getting out of the school car very much so.

Mr Armstrong: We would agree with that, Chairman. I think there is also a wider context to this which is also promoting more active and sustainable forms of travel, such as walking and cycling. From the Living Streets' point of view we run the National Walk to School Campaign so we would come at this from walking as a first priority. There are also health benefits that we can add to the list that you have already heard from getting children out of cars. We know that the UK leads the obesity league table in Europe for child obesity and being overweight, so we think that building everyday walking into your routine is one of the easiest ways of getting children active again. We want to see an holistic approach to reducing congestion, reducing climate change, et cetera, but by promoting walking and cycling as well.

Q220 Chairman: Is there enough investment to promote walking and cycling initiatives? Does anybody have a view on that?

Mr Osborne: I think historically in this country we have seen average investment levels of about a pound per inhabitant on walking, cycling, and typically in continental Europe levels of investment are five times higher than that. Recent investment in the sustainable travel towns and cycle demonstration towns has sought to address this and set up some models in this country, but many towns and cities, and indeed rural areas, are badly lacking

in the infrastructure that has been provided and there is an awful lot we can learn from our continental colleagues.

Dr Thornthwaite: I would echo that. I think the importance of the journey to school is not just in terms of health and environmental issues, there is a lot of research to show that affordable and available transport, whether it be bus or options for walking and cycling, has a key impact in terms of reducing exclusion and ensuring that young people are able to continue in education. I would just say that in terms of funding, as a nation we provide considerably less funding for the school journey than other nations, such as the United States, which we are talking about a lot at this Committee.

Q221 Chairman: Are there any specific school travel schemes that you think have had the greatest impact on taking children out of cars?

Mr Blunkett: The Metro My Bus scheme in West Yorkshire has been very effective and they obviously will be presenting their initial findings to you. We visited at the time that the 150th bus had been delivered as part of the Government's investment programme in providing the capital for that scheme and they got to the point where they could show a very clear modal shift, particularly with primary, in relation to children who had been previously taken by car. They also were demonstrating the importance of what happens immediately around a school as well as getting the change from car to bus. We think that is quite important as well because around the school can be both a dangerous area and a very polluted area.

Q222 Chairman: Does anyone have any different views? If you have the same points, please do not repeat them.

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: My experience when we visited West Yorkshire was we met families, children, staff. I can think of one lady as I speak now who would never in this world have allowed her young child in primary school to go on a bus on their own, wanted to take them to school in the car, but the My Bus scheme in Yorkshire, and elsewhere in the country, is the care, consideration and security that they are all seeking. They do not want to drive their children to school, but they are concerned about them walking if it is too far, and safety. They want them to go to school in a safe, secure way, and that is what our proposition is about supporting.

Mr Osborne: I think broad school initiatives which have sought to provide local solutions for schools, whether they are interested in promoting walking, cycling or buses, have been enormously successful. We know that School Travel Plans, where they have been written well, have reduced car use by between 8% and 15%. Indeed, we have just completed a project in Northern Ireland with some rural schools there and we have seen an across the board reduction in car use of 25%, which is phenomenally successful in a rural area where school journeys are more scattered and generally longer. Our initiatives there

have largely focused on walking and cycling, making the routes safer, and just giving parents and children the chance to try out cycling, to walk along the Walking Bus and just do something different from what they normally do.

Q223 Mr Martlew: I have to admit to having some confusion about the presentations to the extent that we have got people here talking about taking the children to school on a bus, people talking about children being obese, people talking about cycling, and there is a conflict. If you start providing better bus services then less children are going to cycle and less people are going to walk, is that not the case?

Mr Blunkett: We do not accept that. What we demonstrate is that we can get a shift of substantial proportions in terms of those out of the car to the bus, and at the same time encourage youngsters to walk. The only way we disagree in terms of the Living Streets is we think children under the age of eight are likely to walk no more than two miles a day to school and back with their parents, whereas there is a presumption at the moment that children will walk up to four miles a day with their parents at that age and we do not believe that is realistic. We think that a realistic bus programme with an encouragement of walking and cycling, and a link-up where Walking Buses can link up to the dedicated bus system, is the best way of achieving both.

Q224 Graham Stringer: I am persuaded about the argument for school buses, but what I would like to understand more is why yellow school buses? Is it a marketing ploy or is there something particularly about them? Are they cheaper or more expensive? Why yellow buses as opposed to just coaches?

Mr Blunkett: The delivery is more important than the livery and, therefore, in the end, and we have tried to make this clear, it does not matter as long as the school bus has a menu of delivery options. In other words, you have a bus which provides the necessary seatbelts, the safety of the seats, the CCTV, the training of the driver, the provision of regular checks on the bus itself and in future the communication with parents and the schools so that the register can be taken easily and parents can be informed if the bus is going to be late or if their child has not boarded it. All of those things can be put together if you have a dedicated service. Secondly, because you are not actually taking up the space on the normal routes you are not interfering at peak times with the encouragement of adult commuters to use the normal bus service. Above all, of course, you have got the issues around discipline and familiarity with travelling by public transport but in a safe and managed environment. You have got all of those things coming together and if the bus is green, that is fine.

Q225 Chairman: How much actual evidence is there about other travellers being concerned about pupils being on the bus? There is a statement about that in the Commission's report but it does not seem to be backed up by evidence.

Mr Blunkett: It is anecdotal. Let us not pretend, unlike other aspects of the report which were researched and where statistical data is clear, we were dealing with anecdotal questions of people who were put off from being able to use normal route transport because of the sudden flood which occurred at a particular peak time in the morning specifically. I think it is the other way round, Chairman, that actually we could encourage more people to use it rather than people who previously used buses stopped using them because of the children.

Q226 Mr Clelland: Do dedicated bus schemes necessarily offer the best potential for substantial modal shift?

Mr Blunkett: They do in the sense that firstly you can design them specifically for the purpose and, therefore, you can cut down the running costs of the bus, which was what was demonstrated very clearly in the United States. Secondly, because they are designed not just for to and from school or college but actually for work during the school day as well, which we think would be very important, you can have a design that meets all of those requirements. Thirdly, you are not, which is what we have got in too many places at the moment, using pretty second-rate, very elderly transport for children. Children in our country are treated less well than other commuters. The Government's policy on travel for retired people is superb and the Government's policy in terms of investing in commuter transport for major cities is maybe—

Q227 Graham Stringer: Less than superb.

Mr Blunkett: --- on the edge of superb, but for our small commuters we spend only 4% of the total spend on public transport and we have neglected them.

Q228 Mr Clelland: To what extent do the yellow bus services benefit only those people who, for a variety of reasons, have chosen a school that is not in their own local area?

Mr Blunkett: They inevitably benefit at the moment those who are at greater distances. Our proposal is one to five miles for primary and two miles-plus for secondary. We believe that is a sensible balance between encouraging walking and cycling, getting people on the bus, but not encouraging people to believe the sky is the limit. Incidentally, in terms of recommendations on the Pathfinders, which have been delayed, we felt it was sensible, if we could persuade an area to do so, to take a deep breath and start from scratch. In other words, would we do what we do now if we were starting from here. Although that is difficult in politics, we think it is worth experimenting to see whether a charge that was relevant to the income and the wellbeing of the parents and the child would be more beneficial than what we have had in the past.

Q229 Mr Clelland: How would you encourage people who are travelling shorter distances to walk or cycle rather than using a car?

Mr Blunkett: You would not get the facility if under a mile at primary and under two miles at secondary, and bear in mind that is each way. You could if the school transport co-ordinator and the local transport co-ordinator in the plans that are put together make this a big offer. I just commend the Living Streets initiative because they have been doing that with travel being part of the offer at school level where the education process is part of learning about life and personal wellbeing and health but also the health of the planet.

Q230 Mr Hollobone: There is no such thing as an average local authority, but can any of you give us an estimate of the cost for an average local authority of running the yellow bus service?

Mr Blunkett: The total additional cost of the modal shift that we recommend would be £154 million at primary and, because the variation is substantial, between £50 and 100 million building up over a five year period for secondary with a cost benefit analysis breakdown from the Department of Transport at Aberdeen University of 3:1. We think that there is an economic gain and there is a logical financial investment to be made which, incidentally, would be very useful at the moment because if we could produce these buses in Britain, that is 7,000 buses, there would be the consequent employment of drivers. Because authorities vary, not only whether they are contributing as education authorities but because in some areas the schools themselves, like the Northampton example we visited, have actually put some of the school budget in, it is impossible to give an average figure. In Surrey you have got the Pegasus scheme that Surrey County Council pioneered and we were very impressed with their commitment, and you have got the Runnymede contribution from the district council to the scheme and business is contributing as well. What is good about Britain is its pluralism, what is bad about it is actually spreading best practice.

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Also, when it comes to cost, in the position I sat in for 10 years as a cabinet member we were dealing with very, very large sums of money from government for the Transport Innovation Fund, which you are all familiar with, but the hook was that we had to introduce some form of congestion charging. My experience of late has been that maybe we have gone a little cool on congestion charging, but here is a congestion-busting idea and for a fraction of the cost of the money that was being made available. I hope that our new Secretary of State for Transport will take another look at that arrangement.

Q231 Mr Hollobone: Have any estimates been made about the reduction in peak time traffic that results from yellow bus schemes?

Mr Blunkett: The estimate of what would be achieved with the investment that we have laid out is that there would be a 20% reduction in primary school peak time car travel.

Q232 Mr Martlew: Obviously, David, you have answered from the yellow bus point of view, but I am amazed that Mr Osborne and Mr Armstrong are not taking exception to using the yellow bus particularly for children a mile away.

Mr Blunkett: They want us to disagree!

Q233 Mr Martlew: To be honest, David, they have not had a lot of opportunity up until yet! Do you agree with this issue about the yellow bus picking the children up?

Mr Armstrong: We said in our written submission, and we have also sent our submission to the Yellow Bus Commission review, that we think a two mile radius is better in terms of reducing the likelihood of journeys being swapped from walking and cycling to getting the bus. Some of that concern is reflected in what has happened in London anecdotally. I do not know what the TfL official research for this is, but since the under-16 free travel was given there is lots of anecdotal concern from some in TfL that journeys are actually being switched from walking to bus as a result of that. We have to be very careful. Our first priority needs to be to promote walking and cycling as the first option for travelling to school. By setting a limit of one mile I think you are actually capturing a lot of people who could walk and cycle as part of their journey, so that is why we call for a two mile radius for primary.

Mr Osborne: Certainly our experience working with schools, in particular working on promoting cycling, is we have seen a switch from something like 2% to 10% of children who cycle given the support from trained staff and good cycle training and investment in safer routes to schools. Look at what has happened in the United States where I would have a concern if you look at the modal split there where half the children are travelling on the yellow buses, and that is excellent, but only 10% of children are walking and that is a fifth of the level in this country. That does ring some alarm bells with me. I appreciate that journey distances are longer in the States but, nonetheless, it does seem to me that an awful lot of children who could be walking are travelling on buses at a cost to the taxpayer in terms of running the buses, but at an even bigger cost in terms of the obesity cost of children not having physical activity. It is projected that by 2050 the cost to this country will be £50 billion a year treating obesity unless we get our population more physically active. That is why certainly Living Streets and ourselves are saying one mile is just too low a distance to be promoting yellow buses to families, let us look at raising that threshold to one and a half to two miles and look at promoting walking and cycling and let buses pick up those journeys of over three miles where walking and cycling really cannot make much difference.

Dr Thornthwaite: I think all of us would agree that buses have a place for longer journeys. What we have seen over the last 20 years is that most of the local education authorities have ceased to use their discretionary powers, so children who at two miles or one and a half miles, or two and a half miles, would previously have got free home-to-school transport no longer do so and it is that group, we are seeing move to cars and are now having to work very hard to get back on to buses. The safety case for them being transported by buses is quite clear, it is about four times safer than if they are in a car, but I would agree that for shorter distances the priority should be to encourage walking and cycling.

Q234 Mr Martlew: Mr Osborne, obviously the last witness has just mentioned safety as paramount, and I presume that travelling by bus is safer than cycling or actually walking. That is a presumption maybe. I have had some dealings with your organisation in the past and it has not always been favourable because of your opposition to cycle helmets, for example, and you would not support a school that had a policy that children would only be allowed to cycle to school if they wore cycle helmets. Is that the case or not?

Mr Osborne: We are in favour of children wearing helmets. Our position is that we are against compulsion. All our staff who work with schools wear cycle helmets and tell children they are a good idea, but the evidence we have is that by making it compulsory you do reduce the numbers of children who cycle. Ultimately, there is a direct correlation between having more people walking, more people cycling and their levels of safety. We do feel that training and getting more children out on bikes and on foot is a way of improving their safety.

Q235 Mr Martlew: So you would not support a school that had a policy of children having to wear helmets?

Mr Osborne: We would work with them. We do work with schools where they have a compulsory helmet policy.

Q236 Mr Martlew: Do you agree with that?

Mr Osborne: That is fine. Yes, we do.

Q237 Mr Martlew: Thank you.

Mr Osborne: Just to come back, if you look at a trip made by walking, cycling or car journeys, they are comparable, buses are undoubtedly safer. If we are looking at an holistic view on this we have to look at the issue of the danger of not being physically active and bring that into the equation too. As I said before, the more that children walk, the more they cycle, the safer they become, and we have to take that into account.

Q238 Mr Leech: The difference between the one mile and two mile limit, has any assessment been made of how many school children at primary level that will actually include? Obviously in rural areas it will be different, but I would imagine that the vast majority

of children in Manchester, for instance, would be travelling within two miles to their primary school and a large proportion of them would be travelling less than a mile. Have you done any work on the difference in the number of children this would include?

Dr Thornthwaite: We have done extensive mapping exercises of distance to school for children. I have not got the figures off the top of my head, but if you are interested we can provide them. The vast majority are within fairly short distances.

Q239 Mr Leech: So is it potentially the case that the actual cost of school buses would end up being considerably more expensive if it was only going to be providing a service for a small number of people in urban areas?

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Chairman, could I say that the uptake we see in primary school is from 5% to 15%, and, yes, it would be more expensive the more people that travel on buses, but if you were to look at the cost benefit analysis, and I know you have a copy of our report and it is on page 50, you will see how we have worked that data out and showed the beneficial ratio as being 1:3, ie for every one pound of investment you get a benefit of three pounds. We have shown that clearly in our report.

Q240 Mr Leech: Les Warnford from Stagecoach was arguing if we introduced yellow buses it would have a significant impact on the existing services and perhaps some of the services would not be able to be maintained because they would be losing a lot of business. Did you accept the point they made that it could have an impact?

Mr Blunkett: Yes, we accepted at secondary level there was an issue, and it is an issue to be worked through. At primary level—I just repeat what is in the report—staggeringly only 5% of primary children go to school on the bus. We are talking about trying to shift to just over half a million out of the 4.1 million primary school age children. We are talking about a massive effort which will have a substantial impact on congestion and the morning run at a relatively low cost for a relatively low number of children, but it has got to be right to do so. The 5% compares with 50% in the States where the car is king. We have got a mountain to climb in terms of getting those children on to a bus and learning to use public transport as opposed to expecting their parents to run them round everywhere, which we do know, whether we are parents, grandparents, uncles or aunts, is what is happening.

Q241 Mr Leech: A lot of parents I speak to say the reason why they drive their kids to school is they drop their kids off at school and then they go on to work. What impact would significantly changing the school day have on changing those patterns of behaviour from parents?

Mr Blunkett: It would be significant in the sense that it would allow family-friendly policies, which we all talk about, and flexible workdays and the ability to choose when we are going to work as opposed to fitting the drop-off around work or work around the drop-off, and that obviously has to make sense, as was demonstrated in Surrey, which is a really good example. Surrey is what the rest of Britain might be in 20 years' time if we do not do something, namely businesses are suffering from the congestion that arises substantially from the very, very high car usage in a very wealthy county.

Q242 Chairman: Mr Blunkett, does that mean that the flexible working that you are talking about, plus staggering school opening and closing times, is essential for a scheme such as the one you are advocating to work?

Mr Blunkett: Chairman, you have touched on a very important issue. If schools were prepared to stagger hours just a little so that a school moved 20 minutes one way and a neighbouring school moved 20 minutes another way in terms of the starting times, the difference that could make in terms of the economics of what we are putting forward would be substantial.

Q243 Chairman: Is that essential for a yellow bus scheme to work?

Mr Blunkett: We have not worked out the costings based on that. We have worked out the costings with what we have got at the moment, recognising it would be beneficial to us as society and to government if we could persuade schools and local authorities to make that part of their school travel plans.

Q244 Chairman: If we are looking at costings, you have got some figures in the Commission's report where you talk about supporting a combination of dedicated transport and public transport, and it then says in the report on page three: "This combined approach for secondary pupils offers benefits estimated at between £91 million and £194 million per annum." It is not very clear where those figures have come from.

Mr Blunkett: On page 50 we give the detailed cost benefit analysis. We accepted at secondary level that the variations were so great in terms of the choices available that they were not as clear as they were at primary, which is why we placed our emphasis on the investment of just over £154 million building up over five years with a massive impact of 345,000 extra pupils at primary level that we could get out of the car which would be significantly higher than it would be at secondary level. The West Yorkshire example I used earlier is indicative of this because at primary level they have got a modal shift from car to bus of 64% on primary, but only 15% on secondary.

Q245 Mr Hollobone: I am unclear as to how the handful of schemes that exist at the moment receive their funding? Is there significant impact on local council tax levels?

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Yes, there is indeed. If I could give you an example in terms of numbers. In West Sussex there are 120,000 schoolchildren and 11,000 of those are entitled to journey to school and we are paying somewhere in the region of £13 million a year. It just happens that we are looking at is there a better way to get them to school and we are looking at using the Commission report to say what can we do. We need to do that because we are hitting taxpayers with money. In this report we are talking about the possibility, of course, of a charge for travelling on the bus from one to two pounds. I am not talking about entitled children there, that is a consideration yet to be made by others and not us.

Dr Thornthwaite: Just to put this into context, nationally in England we spend just short of a billion a year through the local education authorities on home-to-school transport, but more than half of that is for the small number of children who have got special needs. They are a disproportionately large proportion of that. It is only about half a billion nationally that currently is being spent on primary and secondary school transport.

Q246 Mr Hollobone: Presumably a lot of that current cost which is incurred would be absorbed into a yellow bus scheme because it must be more expensive to transport a relatively small number of people compared to a relatively large number of students, is that right?

Dr Thornthwaite: Yes, you obviously get to a reduction in cost per pupil if you have got that scale.

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: The report does talk in terms of transfer to bus, so we look at the subsidy that is presently being provided, look at a better way of providing the service and transfer those costs into that better way.

Q247 Mr Clelland: How well do school travel services and school transport services work together?

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Can I say very well actually. School travel services and school transport services work well together because we have tended to amalgamate them and bring them into one co-ordinated cell. Certainly in my authority that is the arrangement. It was not at first but it is now, I can assure you. They are hand-in-glove in working together on arrangements and using and exploiting every opportunity to give the best possible service at the cheapest cost, but a quality service will always cost money of course.

Q248 Mr Clelland: So you would recommend bringing them together as best practice?

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Absolutely. We have done it and I would be delighted to demonstrate it to any other authority in the country as an example of how it does work.

Q249 Mr Clelland: What about government departments, how good are government departments in working together to ensure a joined-up approach to school travel strategies?

Mr Blunkett: The new Bill will help a little here because local authorities as a whole will have a better grip and handle on regulation and, I believe, will start to take in the local School Travel Plans as a serious part of what they are doing. The real challenge because of the independence of schools whichever particular mode they are, whether county or foundation or academies, is they can choose to do whatever they wish, so it is quite important that the local authority itself has got a grip on this and is co-ordinating what is happening at the school level with what they want to see across the authority and with the PTEs in metropolitan areas.

Mr Osborne: The Sustainable Travel to School Strategies that local authorities have been submitting has been a real step forward and also the target for journeys to school in the Local Area Agreements is a sign of joined-up working. The school travel advisers in many local authorities have been a key force for joining up the work of departments and making sure that the physical activity agenda is associated with the anti-congestion agenda and things like that. One area where there is a lot of room for work to be done is building schools for the future. We have got education authorities putting forward developments, major schools, putting investment into the structure, the building itself, but no funding is going into the infrastructure supporting how children get to school. That is an area where, bearing in mind the scale of the programme that the country is about to enter into, it is really important we see a significant investment in making sure that not only are the buildings efficient but the way children travel to school is efficient and encouraging first and foremost those children who can walk and cycle into healthy physical activity.

Q250 Mr Clelland: We heard an example of best practice in terms of local government departments working together. Are there any examples of best practice with government departments working together in this area?

Mr Armstrong: The focus on School Travel Plans is a good one where the onus has been on local authorities to join-up internally around their own planning. There are increasing signs of good practice in terms of the focus of the DCSF and DH jointly running the obesity strategy and working closely with DfT on that. There are very promising signs. We do have some concerns about what happens when the ring-fenced funding related to School Travel Planning ends in 2010 because, as yet, there are no signs as to what is going to happen. Where School Travel Plans have really been embedded in what is happening in a local authority, where they have linked strategies, such as the Healthy Schools Programme, they have done good things in terms of creating modal shift and promoting walking and cycling. Where it has not worked so well is where a

plan has just been done, it has been a tick-box exercise and you have not got that ongoing investment and commitment. I fear that post-2010 unless we have got a strategy in place now, some of the improvements that we have seen will fall away.

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Could I just add to that. We agree with Living Streets in promoting answers, and promote cycling and walking within our report, but the difference is the distance. The Safer Routes to School Programme is fantastic because schools genuinely do work hard to do this with Walking Buses and so on, and of course there are financial rewards from Government which we hope, as Living Streets have just said, will continue because a primary school can get £5,000 and a secondary school £10,000. With that money they are building cycling sheds and cycling areas, so they can put their cycles in secure areas. We want that to continue so they have the finances to promote that and are spending that money on safer routes to school, and we encourage them and help them to do so.

Q251 Chairman: Mr Armstrong, in the evidence that we got from Living Streets you criticise the policy of parental choice and say that the policy of parental choice is undermining attempts to change travel habits and parents should think about transport and not just what they see as being the best school. Do you not think you are swimming against the tide there, being realistic?

Mr Osborne: If we look at the challenges we are talking about today of how do we get children, particularly in the 14–19 age group, around covering vast distances just to reach school and swap institutions for where they learn, that presents a big challenge in an environment where oil prices have been rising and we are worried about climate change. As an organisation we are about let us try and provide facilities close to where people live, be that the post office, the shopping centre, and I think schools should be part of the mix, why should they be different. Let us try and make every school a good school. Maybe some limited choice of school near to where people live, but ultimately how are we going to address sustainability unless schools do not generate huge travel demand.

Q252 Chairman: The Government has recently made changes on funding travel to school based on extending the possibility of pupils going to a school that is not their nearest school and not restricting that to people who are better off by making it possible to pay for school transport. Are you opposed to that? Would you say that sort of policy undermines sustainability?

Mr Osborne: If there is a system of parental choice in operation I would support a scheme that enables children from poorer families to reach those schools that are further away, but our starting point would be let us encourage children to go to their local school, make every school a good school and let us provide all the learning opportunities that they need on that site.

Dr Thornthwaite: One of the problems with the recent changes to the Education & Inspection Act regime is that the choice is extended to two to six miles, which offers a choice in maybe urban and suburban areas but in many rural areas is not a practical choice anyway. There are issues for different authorities in dealing with that legislation. It is also administratively quite a difficult piece of legislation to deal with. Individual applications from parents applying for transport take considerably longer to assess than they do under the normal application process.

Mr Armstrong: This is one of those big issues that gets lost in departmental silos because there are many good reasons why we have school choice, but one of the consequences of that is that we do disperse and increase the journeys to school, which is obviously going to be an unsustainable approach. If we are going to start to look at a joined-up way around reducing climate change, increasing activity levels, improving health, we have to start to look at whether the consequences of some of these standalone policies are creating the benefits that we need. The decline in the numbers of children walking to school has been really marked over the past few decades and part of that is because people are travelling further. School as the hub for families and the community is being lost as part of that as well. There are wider sustainability issues related to further journeys to school.

Q253 Chairman: What are your views on the advantages or disadvantages of yellow buses compared with using normal public transport? Is there anybody who thinks it is a disadvantage to have a yellow bus or dedicated bus? Are there any points against it?

Dr Thornthwaite: I do not have any particular safety concerns whether it is a yellow or any other colour bus, but, just picking up on Mr Leech's point, there are issues where most of the rural public transport network is on the back of registered school services and there is a danger if we have segregated school services we could lose the rural public transport routes.

Q254 Chairman: How are the current schemes being funded?

Dr Thornthwaite: My understanding is by a variety of mechanisms. Some of them are funded through district council as well as county council, some are part-funded by parental contributions.

Mr Blunkett: I will just use the Northampton Girls' School example, which is a comprehensive school. When the council withdrew any subsidy whatsoever there was a very major problem for this 1,700 pupil school and they took a decision to use their own school budget, the allocation to each school from Government, to put £62,000 in to create a dedicated school transport offer with a charge to parents who could afford it. They made it a terrific success. It has provided not only access to the school for a very wide range of pupils in a rural as well as suburban area but it has also provided terrific safety for the

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girls as well, so parents have started opting for the school because this school offers them something more than just a good education.

Q255 Chairman: Could you give us any idea of the charges made on dedicated buses and how the definition of ability to pay is arrived at?

Mr Blunkett: We found that there was resistance to over £2 a day. The normal charge was around a pound. In the case of the Northampton example they used the definition we used to use, which was around free school meals, but they also had a flexible appeals policy if there were parents who found themselves in considerable difficulty. The consequence of that was as well as the dedicated resource from the school, parents who could afford it were paying more than the average, they were paying around £2 a day during school time, so that was a larger offer. They found that they could get away with that before elasticity of demand kicked in in terms of what it was costing the parents. Of course, the fuel charge goes up and down and we were talking to them at the point when fuel charges were very considerable indeed.

Q256 Chairman: What is the impact of before school and after school clubs on dedicated transport schemes?

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: We do need to make provision for that. What we have done—

Q257 Chairman: I want to know if that makes it easier or less easy to operate a dedicated bus service?

Councillor Lieutenant Colonel Pemberton: Co-ordination of transport is difficult, of course.

Q258 Chairman: So does it make it harder now?

Mr Blunkett: It makes it easier if there is a reasonable spread of those who want to access, say, a breakfast club and, therefore, instead of the variation in school starting times that we were talking about earlier there is an automatic variation because pupils are coming in at an earlier time and with proper co-ordination you can adjust the runs. Some parents will not need or want their children to go that early so you can vary the runs in a different way. After school clubs are more difficult because of the variation in numbers and the unpredictability from one day to another. We did discover that there was a greater demand in the morning for the dedicated school bus than there was in the afternoon anyway.

Q259 Mr Hollobone: In terms of pupil safety to and from school, do any of you have any views about the merits or demerits of daylight saving?

Mr Armstrong: We have publicly supported moves to move times later so that we have lighter evenings rather than more light in the mornings because there is evidence that there are more accidents walking home from school when the evenings are darker at half past three, four o'clock. We would support putting back times by one hour so in that period of time when children are travelling home from school is still light throughout the year.

Q260 Chairman: Thank you very much for coming and giving us your evidence.

Mr Blunkett: Thank you for inviting us. If you get a consensus on daylight saving you deserve a medal!

Chairman: Thank you very much.

Witnesses: **Mr Mark Hudson**, Head of Transport, and **Ms Mary Roche**, Policy Manager, Rural 14–19 Access to Learning Group; **Dr David Collins**, Resident, and Principal of South Cheshire College, Association of Colleges; and **Ms Elizabeth Dainton**, Research Development Manager, RAC Foundation, gave evidence.

Q261 Chairman: Good afternoon. Could I ask you to identify yourselves for the record, starting from the left.

Ms Dainton: Good afternoon. I am Elizabeth Dainton, Research Development Manager for the RAC Foundation.

Dr Collins: I am David Collins, President of the Association of Colleges.

Ms Roche: Mary Roche, I am Transport Policy Manager for Norfolk County Council and representing 14–19 Rural Access to Learning Group.

Mr Hudson: I am Mark Hudson, Head of Transport for Nottinghamshire County Council, Chairman of the Rural 14–19 Access to Learning Group.

Q262 Chairman: Thank you very much. Is the general public transport network suitable for use by students?

Mr Hudson: Yes, where it is available. Where it is available and there are good networks, low fares and the service is sustainable it is appropriate for young people.

Q263 Chairman: Does everyone share that view?

Ms Dainton: I would say the Foundation might have some concerns about the general use of public transport for school travel generally because we have done some research on what actually encourages the general public to use public transport over the car and sometimes behaviour of young people on public transport can act as a disincentive for the wider population to use transport. If we are looking at it in the round there might be some issues, but if that can be dealt with through better supervision on buses then that might be appropriate.

Q264 Chairman: A number of witnesses have referred to bad behaviour on public transport but it seems to be very anecdotal. Does anybody have any real evidence about the extent of that?

Ms Roche: I think it is the minority of young people who cause problems on public transport and we can address it in our own ways by education. If we do not

let young people travel on public transport they will never learn how to deal with the arrangements and how to interact with other members of society.

Q265 Mr Clelland: What would be the effect on school travel if we had a national concessionary fare scheme for children and young people?

Dr Collins: I think it is an excellent idea, particularly in the college sector. One of the problems we have in the 16–19 age frame is the inconsistency across local authorities. A national scheme, preferably free, would be very much appreciated by our sector.

Ms Roche: I think it would help tremendously. If you ask young people themselves, and I think you would know through the work of the North-East Regional Youth Assembly, they say in their own words that public transport has a massive impact on young people's life choices and if we were to promote public transport for young people that would promote social inclusion and give them better and bigger opportunities in life.

Mr Hudson: Our own research with young people, with the Young People's Parliament in Nottinghamshire, showed they were crying out for a concessionary fare scheme, but they were also saying a pass or concessionary scheme is only good for them if there is a public transport service available, so you have to weigh those two. It is all right having a pass or scheme but you need the service to use it.

Q266 Mr Clelland: That brings me nicely on to the next question. Do you think the public transport system will be able to cope with the increased numbers that would be using the system if there were a concessionary scheme of that sort?

Mr Hudson: In urban areas where there are major networks of services perhaps capacity would cope, but in less sparse areas or deep rural areas there may be difficulties especially around peak times. That could cost local authorities substantial money in putting in new infrastructure and new vehicles. Providing the funding is there to meet that challenge that is fine, but at the moment, the way the funding sits, if there were major costs borne by the local authorities then that could create some difficulties.

Q267 Mr Clelland: Presumably some of the existing public transport services benefit from travel by students and young people? How many of those do you think would become unviable if it was not for students and young people using them?

Mr Hudson: In rural areas and most of the rural counties in England the college services and school services work jointly with the local bus networks for efficiency and best value. If students did not travel and they ended up on dedicated services or transferred to cars, that would make many local bus services, especially in my area, inefficient and we might lose services to communities, especially communities that have no other option of travel.

Q268 Mr Clelland: In urban areas, if we had a concessionary fare scheme for students, would that have a significant impact on modal shift?

Mr Hudson: I think those are the two issues. In urban areas it would create modal shift providing the capacity is there and would reduce congestion and pollution, CO₂, et cetera. In rural areas it is a different issue, it is about access for young people to learning and training and making sure that the services are there so that young people are not having to travel between two and three hours a day to access learning.

Q269 Mr Clelland: What about the effect on other passengers?

Mr Hudson: I think that is a bit of a red herring myself. We should give young people social training at an early age on how to use public transport and make sure that they can integrate with other people who are using the services. The Foundation probably referred to the problems that have been associated with the London free scheme where they have had behaviour problems and I do not think that extends that badly outside the London area.

Q270 Mr Clelland: Do you think it is necessary to have a national scheme or would a regional scheme suffice in terms of colleges and schools?

Mr Hudson: One of the things we found in our research that we completed in July 2007 was there is a postcode lottery on support for young people and transport. We feel that a national scheme would be appropriate but that model needs to suit both urban and rural learners. In urban areas you will find that the commercial bus operators are providing incentives, low fares, season cards, and there are already half-fare schemes or one-third schemes for young people up to 14 but we need to get that into the 14–19 age bracket.

Dr Collins: Travel to college does not necessarily fit in with regional boundaries.

Q271 Mr Martlew: Or national boundaries.

Dr Collins: Or, indeed, national boundaries.

Ms Roche: The danger with going for a regional scheme is you will have the same problems you have now in terms of the disparity between local authorities and the costs.

Q272 Mr Clelland: Mr Hudson just mentioned the concessions already available from commercial providers, but do you think that commercial providers ought to be working more closely together so that students and young people can use more than one provider rather than be stuck with just the one?

Mr Hudson: Hopefully the arrangements in the Local Transport Bill will help us towards ticketing and integrated fares. We are not allowed to do that at the moment because the Office of Fair Trading would come down on us like a ton of bricks. I think in most areas you will find that local authorities work with all the operators in their area to get the best deal for young people.

Q273 Mr Martlew: Can I just come back to the issue that Mr Hudson and the lady from the RAC raised, the question of behaviour on public transport. I do not know what your experience is but it is certainly

different from mine. What we have now is more pensioners travelling on buses because of the concessionary fare. I am finding out as I get older I am less tolerant and what we have is a load of boisterous youngsters. I am not talking about the students, probably early secondary. The reality is that you will stand at a bus stop and you will hear pensioners say, "I'm not catching that bus" or "I'm going to go earlier". That is the reality. It may be that there is not a solution but it is a major issue and anybody who talks to pensioners' groups will tell you that. It is their grandchildren in many cases; not individually, but you know what I mean. There is this clash, and it is becoming an increasing clash, with concessionary fares. It is no good just saying we should teach them how to behave, Mr Hudson, it does not happen. There is a problem and you have got to accept there is a problem.

Dr Collins: There is a difference between the post-16 population that can be treated as adults and, indeed, the college would have the right to throw them out of courses if they were not behaving properly, and the pre-16 scenario. I think a 16–19 national concessionary scheme would be extremely welcome.

Ms Roche: In many local authorities, as it is in Norfolk at the moment, we have excellent travel training schemes which are particularly geared to young people with difficulties or disabilities. Those travel training schemes do address behaviour in a very, very comprehensive way and you will find that any of the young people who have undertaken those schemes in our area are very polite and very well-behaved on buses. Perhaps it is an opportunity to roll that out in all of the school population but, again, it is a funding issue for local authorities to do that.

Q274 Mr Clelland: Is it a general view that a national scheme ought to be restricted to the 16–19 age group and perhaps local schemes for schoolchildren?

Mr Hudson: I think a national scheme should be 14–19 so that it aligns itself with the new agenda on learning and new developments in apprenticeships and everything else. Going back to the behaviour point, what we tend to find is that elderly people travel after 9.30 after young people have gone to school and, like you say, in the afternoon they avoid the services between 3.30 and 4.30. We are trying to deal with that through campaigns like Respect for Transport.

Q275 Mr Martlew: So there is a problem?

Mr Hudson: There is a perceived problem, I think.

Q276 Mr Martlew: The problem is that pensioners will not get on the buses.

Mr Hudson: You normally find that they have gone out and done their shopping or their visits and they are home by then. We generally find in our research on elderly people who are using concessionary travel, and we have got 140,000 of them, that they tend to go out between nine and three o'clock, finish their day and get home. That is the perception.

Q277 Mr Martlew: That is because they do not want to travel on the buses, is that what you are saying?

Mr Hudson: I think they want to get home for their afternoon tea probably.

Q278 Mr Hollobone: You all agree that general public transport is suitable for use by students on their school journeys, but why do you think then that a third of pupils travel to school by car?

Ms Roche: I think one of the big reasons for that is in recent years, particularly in rural authorities, we have been under tremendous budget pressures and one solution is building extra seats into our standard school contracts and cutting the services that we commission. We are now so stretched that we are trimming down all of our services to meet budget pressures and eking out all of those spare seats we would normally offer on a discretionary basis to people who perhaps live under the statutory walking distances or who are attending choice schools. Effectively we are forcing people out of the bus regime and into their cars because these days people do not accept that two or three miles is an acceptable walking distance, they think it is unreasonable and are developing a door-to-door culture. I think that is one of the big reasons.

Q279 Mr Hollobone: I can understand why you are cutting back on dedicated school bus services. I may not agree with that but I can understand why you are doing that. However, you have also agreed that the general public transport network is suitable, so if the general public transport network is suitable, surely students should be transferring from dedicated school buses on to normal buses?

Ms Roche: I would argue with that because in rural areas there often is not the public transport network available so a lot of the schools have dedicated school buses.

Mr Hudson: I think there are two additional things there. One is that in some areas there is a high level of fares that students cannot afford. If you take in our research one student in Cornwall, the cost to the family was £900 a year so they bought a banger for the young person so that he could travel to and from college by car rather than public transport, so public transport was too expensive and that transferred the young person to a car, and that happens a lot in the 17 to 19-year age group.

Dr Collins: There is a natural tendency for all 17-year-olds to want to have a car one way or the other, that is almost a fact of life, but were there free availability on public transport between, say, 16 and 19 and going beyond school hours so they could use it in the evenings and on the weekends as well, I think that would be a major incentive to leave the car at home for a whole range of reasons.

Ms Roche: Absolutely. We do that in our urban centres but we cannot do it in rural areas.

Q280 Mr Hollobone: I agree with the comments that you have all just made but they are, with respect, in complete contrast to the answer that you gave to that first question because what you are now saying is the general public transport network is not

suitable, either because it is not there or because it is too expensive or because people find it more convenient to go by car. My question is do you think you ought to reconsider your answer to that first question?

Ms Roche: I think perhaps I was under the misconception that you meant is it suitable for young people to travel on public transport, so where there is public transport in place young people can travel on it. Obviously there are places where there is not a public transport network or where the prices are too high so it may be restrictive to young people but it does not mean that they should not use it.

Q281 Chairman: To what degree would you say that public transport is not available where it is required? How big is the gap?

Ms Roche: In rural areas it is a massive problem because public transport is not economically viable.

Q282 Chairman: And outside the rural areas?

Ms Roche: In urban centres that would not apply.

Mr Hudson: You cannot draw a line around England and say everywhere is the same. There is a different picture in each area so if you take major metropolitan areas where they have good networks you will find that public transport is available. We have found year-on-year in Nottingham for instance that we have had a 3% increase on public transport (which includes students) which goes against the national trend but that is because we have good networks and low fares. If you move further south you find a lot of areas that are very rural with high fares and little public transport, which does not encourage the young people to use it. The only way to encourage young people to consider public transport as a viable alternative is to give a quality service which is affordable and is available. If we do not do that we will lose those young people to the private car and lose them probably for the rest of their lives until they get their concessionary travel passes at the age of 60.

Q283 Mr Hollobone: The interesting evidence that we have had relevant to the United States' experience is that they have had yellow buses for 60 years, half of students use yellow buses, but when they leave school, bus use in the United States is far lower than it is in this country. I think that one of the weakest arguments—I put this to you—about encouraging people to use yellow buses is that it will encourage people to use buses in general. I would like your views on that.

Ms Dainton: I certainly think that is the right point to make. The research that we have seen shows that about 85% of children between the ages of seven to 10 are escorted to school for fear of crime or molestation and that sort of thing, and obviously yellow buses can have quite an impact there. Where the concern is what they are being used for for the rest of the day because they cannot be used like other types of transport throughout the day so there is a cost element to them. That is certainly a barrier to

using yellow buses and that might be why they are not so successful in this country because of the regime that we have.

Dr Collins: I am not arguing for yellow buses for 14 to 19-year-olds or 16 to 19-year-olds. I am just saying that it should be an opportunity at that age for young people to be introduced to the value of public transport as distinct from using their own cars and other means. I would like to see a concession for that age group not only because it will be very efficient and encourage social mobility and more people to take up college places but also getting them in the habit of using public transport in their future lives.

Q284 Chairman: I think the point of the question is what is the evidence that young people using those dedicated buses or public transport leads them on to using it afterwards? Is there any actual evidence?

Ms Roche: I do not know if there is any evidence in terms of young people using a dedicated school bus going on to public transport, but certainly with young people who use public transport to get to school they are more likely to continue to use public transport into adulthood.

Q285 Mr Martlew: On this issue, and it ties into an earlier report we did on the casualties of young drivers, partly this is because youngsters like to drive cars but you would accept that partly it is because they have to learn to drive because they have no alternative because the public transport is not there or the cost between concessionary fares and running a car would be greater than having to pay the full fare. Do you think if we had better public transport it would help the casualty issue with young drivers?

Mr Hudson: Although there is no research there we have found that where there is public transport available to any age at school that that reduces the amount of accidents and casualties on the home/school journey. If we transferred that into the 14 to 19 or 16 to 19 age bracket that certainly must reduce or have an effect on accidents and reduce the cost to the taxpayer of dealing with those accidents.

Q286 Mr Leech: What impact does increased school choice and allowing people to choose schools in a wider catchment area have on school journeys?

Ms Roche: I think particularly in rural areas it tends to end up being a family car run on many instances because, as I mentioned before, discretionary seats are not very widely available any more, so if they choose to go to a school and it is not part of the new legislation, ie between two and six miles and the family is on low income, then it is down to the parents to get the child to school. If there is a good public transport network in place they may use that but if there is not, which is often the case in rural areas, it tends to be the parents taking the children to school in cars.

Dr Collins: Post 16 we have had to invest quite heavily in some areas to ensure that people do have the choice of coming to college and take the subjects they want to do, particularly in deprived areas. I am talking about Crewe where essentially the buses that

we have put on directly have made a very significant impact on the number of people from poorer families who are able to continue their education post-16.

Ms Dainton: It is certainly true that further education colleges are not as accessible by public transport as a secondary or primary school. I think it is 49% of 16-to-19-year-olds who are within that bracket of 15 minutes' from education by walking or public transport systems, so coincidental with the age they are able to drive you can understand why more people do decide to use their cars because public transport is not accessible.

Q287 Mr Leech: Is there any evidence to suggest that the Government took any notice of travel arrangements when introducing these policies?

Dr Collins: You would probably know that better than I!

Q288 Chairman: Any views on that?

Mr Hudson: There was a consultation from the DCSF to the local authorities and our view was that the extended choice goes against sustainability and environmental issues because it encourages people to travel whereby we feel we should provide the services in the locality where people live and those should be excellent services that everybody can enjoy in that locality.

Q289 Mr Leech: Are you saying then that it is not actually possible to reach transport and education objectives at the same time?

Ms Roche: I think it is difficult; it is not impossible. I think it is difficult and it throws up a number of challenges, particularly when you have got widespread choice and you have consortia arrangements like the new 14 to 19 diplomas. You have people perhaps travelling longer distances to access a particular diploma, and that is a challenge because it often goes against the flow of traffic. It is not impossible to accommodate it; it just makes it more difficult to provide sustainable transport options.

Q290 Mr Leech: Given the impact that the new education policies have had, what have you done to encourage or discourage the Government from maybe taking things further or changing the system again?

Ms Roche: We would not discourage the way Government are going ahead in terms of the wider curriculum that they are making available to young people and of course we all do support increasing participation. The wider choice that young people have the more likely they are to participate and actually stay in education, so we would want to support it, but I think the delivery arrangements could be dealt with a little better in terms of having some quite clearly defined responsibilities and clearly defined funding allocations to support those responsibilities and then we can work together to actually meet the challenges that they are offering.

Q291 Mr Leech: Is it really just all about the money?

Ms Roche: It is not all about money but money goes a long way to help the situation because if we had the appropriate funding we would be able to set up the appropriate transport arrangements right from the beginning instead of having what we call the bolt-on effect all the way along and then you get more small vehicles in the network rather than larger ones.

Dr Collins: The new diplomas though could be delivered more efficiently without the organisational requirements of such wide co-operation between institutions than they are at the moment. Certainly the AoC made suggestions that if colleges were allowed to take the lead rather than local authorities that might mean there would be fewer people moving around between places on buses.

Q292 Chairman: Could you give us any more detail of how you would want things to be changed?

Dr Collins: At the moment it is essential that there are partnership arrangements because there is a belief from the Government that no one institution can actually offer a diploma in its fullness and you need a certain number of partners. That is not actually correct. Colleges being supported by schools could indeed take the lead on this in a more efficient way than the organisational requirements that are there under the present system.

Q293 Mr Clelland: The North East Youth Assembly developed a project which they called the Bus Buddies Project—you might have heard of it—and they did a lot of research into facilities for young people and services for young people in terms of buses and they approached the bus operators and transport providers and did get some changes made, particularly in terms of driver training for instance. In your experience, do you think operators take sufficient account of the needs and views of young people when they are planning their transport services?

Mr Hudson: I think in the urban areas they do and there are lots of good schemes. If you look at Brighton & Hove they have a commercially funded concessionary travel scheme for young people and in the major areas, the PTE areas, there are low fares and good services. In the other county areas it is normally a partnership arrangement between the local authorities and the operators to design the networks and think of all age ranges of people that are going to use them, and how we encourage them to use them, which is a major issue, but again it comes back, whether it be 14 to 19 or 16 to 19 or age five, to the funding and the responsibilities. I do not think there is a clear national framework and national minimum standards to ensure that we deliver the minimum offer to young people.

Q294 Mr Clelland: Do you think that local authorities take the effect of transport provision on the delivery of the five Every Child Matters outcomes sufficiently into account?

Ms Roche: We do take it into account but we are experiencing very difficult times in terms of external cost pressures and therefore we tend to meet the

statutory obligations and not much more beyond that. We are a bit more generous in terms of the discretion we use for our post-16 policies because experience and research tells us that if you do not give young people a choice at post-16 then it affects the retention of those young people in education. If they are doing a course at a place they do not like or doing a course that is not particularly of their choice, then they will drop out. We are very, very conscious that choice is extremely important at that level and we try to support that so we have extended provision there.

Mr Hudson: One good point from the 2006 Education and Inspections Act was the requirement for local authorities to produce sustainable travel strategies, but I think that has been very piecemeal. Some authorities have done it well; some authorities stick two pages of A4 on the web site and think they have done it, and that is where the Every Child Matters should be included within those strategies.

Dr Collins: I would have thought that transport was an area where local authorities and colleges would welcome a restriction of their freedom to act independently and would appreciate a nationally devised scheme.

Ms Roche: Absolutely, we would love to have national standards and statutory obligations to provide this.

Q295 Chairman: Dr Collins, in the written evidence you have submitted you have set out a number of proposals where you think there is a need for change and that includes a revised duty for each local authority relating to home to education transport for 16 to 18-year-olds and then you talk about an entitlement for 16 to 18-year-olds to “affordable transport, to suitable educational provision with two choices.” How important would these new provisions as set out in the evidence be to giving people equal opportunities to access colleges and schools?

Dr Collins: This is the issue. I think some local authorities are excellent in terms of the way in which they support individual students going to not their nearest necessarily but their most suitable institution. Others for financial reasons take a much tighter line and indeed push students in particular directions where they may not want to go. If you have to make a choice between social mobility and equality of opportunities and transport costs then it is a very difficult choice to make, but we are very much of the view that individuals should be able to choose the provision most suitable for them because, as Mary said, this means they are more likely to stay on in education post-16 and go on and be more successful in the future. We would very much support maximum choice—and we think two institutions is a reasonable amount of choice—for individuals to study where they want to study post-16.

Q296 Chairman: What evidence do you have that transport costs are a major issue in young people deciding where they are going to go for post-16 education?

Dr Collins: From discussions that we have with students. We do subsidise transport because we think in that way we can enable the choice to be kept to the maximum as far as the individuals coming to our college are concerned, but when we have discussed with parents the issue of the cost of coming to college transport is top of the list in terms of whether they can afford it or not in some of our more deprived communities.

Ms Dainton: There has also been some good research done by Steer Davies Gleave on this issue and they found that although transport was important it was the course content and the college reputation that outshone everything else in terms of making their decision, so yes transport is important but if we do not place it as more important at the top of the list then these other issues will make people’s decisions.

Ms Roche: There has been a lot of research into this area and Professor Callendar (?) from South Bank University did some research among young people themselves and identified that transport was the single biggest cost that any student had to bear throughout their post-16 education. More recent work that we have had done identifies that on an elasticity basis if you start to charge people more than £350 a year then you start to get a drop-off rate in terms of post-16 education because that is what is perceived to be an affordable amount.

Q297 Chairman: Who do you think should be taking more initiative in dealing with this? Is it local authorities, government, colleges, schools?

Ms Roche: We really need to work together on this but I think that the DCFS could take a big role in making sure that there is a good quality access to learning provision for post-16 students.

Q298 Chairman: Do you think that transport operators consider the needs of young people when they are looking at providing transport?

Mr Hudson: Yes because they are future customers and they need to make sure that the offer is attractive for young people to use.

Q299 Chairman: Do you think they are actually doing that?

Mr Hudson: In some areas they are. In other areas they are probably not but there needs to be more encouragement for those to do that. I think it happens in metropolitan areas but outside the metropolitan areas or big urban cities, the core cities, I think there is lots of work to be done in that area. I think the DCFS and DfT should take the lead on that and promote that.

Chairman: Thank you very much for coming and for answering our questions, it has been very helpful.

Witnesses: Ms Viv McKee, Director of Policy and Research, National Youth Agency; *Ms Barbara Hearn*, Deputy Chief Executive, National Children's Bureau; and *Ms Beth Walker*, Vice President (Further Education), National Union of Students, gave evidence.

Q300 Chairman: Good afternoon. I would like to welcome you to the Committee. Could I ask you to introduce yourselves please giving your name and who you represent.

Ms Walker: My name is Beth Walker and I am Vice President (Further Education) for the National Union of Students.

Ms Hearn: My name is Barbara Hearn and I am Deputy Chief Executive of the National Children's Bureau.

Ms McKee: My name is Viv McKee and I am Director of Policy and Research at the National Youth Agency.

Q301 Chairman: Thank you very much. Would you say that the public transport network is suitable for students on their school journeys?

Ms Walker: I think at this point in time it is important to look at the future and obviously the fact that we are going to be raising the educational leaving age to 18 means there is going to be an expectation that there will be more students continuing on into education. Because of that there are going to be more students who less traditionally would have been in further education which means there are going to be more students there who will not be able to afford transport.

Ms Hearn: From our point of view we take a broader sweep than just student travel, but in that context we would say that it is not suitable in terms of three particular barriers: the cost; the safety that young people feel on transport; and the access to it for certain groups either in the context of rural living or contexts such as disabilities.

Ms McKee: I would say that it makes a significant contribution as part of total transport planning. There are other forms of provision that help young people to access educational facilities as well such as school transport, mini buses, et cetera.

Q302 Chairman: What do you think could be done to improve the system so that it is useable?

Ms McKee: For me the biggest issue is having joined-up planning at both national and local level, taking account of what my colleague on the right said, the changes in expectations of the offer to young people both in terms of the 14 to 19 agenda and Aiming High which expect young people to be able to access services at a number of points at a number of times. Provision is not strategically planned and delivered to make this happen.

Q303 Chairman: What do you think is most important, is it safety, cost, availability, accessibility, any particular aspects that stand out?

Ms Hearn: We would say all three from our point of view but if it was standing out it would be cost from the point of view of what young people say to us. By saying cost I mean things like addressing the fact that in different areas when you become an adult varies. You pay full cost at 14 in some areas, so cost is significant there. There is the issue which has been raised previously, and I am sure which Beth would

raise as well, about the 16 to 17-year-olds and the changes in education that you have referred to, but also for 16 and 17 and 18-year-olds who are on the minimum wage, so even if they are not going into further education but are going into employment, cost is a major issue because the proportion of their income which they may have to spend on transport may act as a deterrent to taking up employment or taking up training.

Ms Walker: I would say cost almost linked to the travel and the distance as well. Obviously with students now going on to the diplomas and apprentices, they might go to a local school which is in their local authority when they are 11 years old but when they are on to the diploma at 14 years old that course might be linked to a college which is not in the same local authority, and because of that that might mean that that student has to take two to three different buses and that is two to three different fares each time. Something that we would like to see is the elimination of discrimination against the distance so there was one base fare and students were not being penalised because they were having to take a lot of different journeys just to get to their institution.

Q304 Chairman: We have had a number of witnesses telling us that some young people do not want to travel on public transport because of anti-social behaviour from other students travelling. Do we have any evidence of that? All the statements we have had up to now have been very anecdotal and none of it is really hard evidence.

Ms McKee: Young people want to be safe in public space in the same way that adults want to be safe in public space and research would suggest that you need to design safety including public transport as part of public space. You need to design safety into public space, so for example where you have tram provision which is large, open and overlooked there can be fewer difficulties in terms of behaviour or feelings of concerns about safety than you would have on some of the smaller buses that are going around rural areas.

Q305 Graham Stringer: Which research are you referring to?

Ms McKee: Some of the work that has been done in Europe which is about joined-up provision and I believe there was work done in Harrogate as well about joined-up transport.

Graham Stringer: Can you give us the source of that because as somebody who lives next to a tram line there has been a good deal of violence involving young people on the trams so that does not accord with my experience. I would be very interested to see the actual evidence for that.

Q306 Chairman: Could you let us have information on that?

Ms McKee: Yes.

Ms Hearn: From evidence in London there was certainly a rise in anti-social behaviour between 2005 and 2006 but as a proportion of all anti-social

behaviour on buses at that time the amount that was committed by young people stayed the same, so 15% of the overall anti-social behaviour records that was recorded, and bus drivers call twice as many code reds to adults who commit anti-social behaviour as they do to young people. While we are not in any way saying there is not an issue about youth anti-social behaviour we are saying that it is not the whole issue. One of the routes to start to resolve that which we are hearing, is training of bus drivers with young people, so opening up the dialogue and the conversation with bus drivers, is beneficial. Where you have got transport that is predominantly used by young people where they get feisty and active and noisy and everything, it is perhaps better to have other adults on the bus as well in a supervisory role.

Q307 Mr Clelland: Would you be in favour of a national concessionary fare scheme for children and young people?

Ms Walker: Yes I would. Can I just quickly go back to the last question. I think rather than demonising young people—and it really is a small minority of students that have got anti-social behaviour—we should look at constructive solutions on how to improve this. Firstly, I do not think you are going to dispel this anxiety of anti-social behaviour by segregating students and keeping them on different buses at different times and things like that. London has a really good example of the fact that if you do not behave and you continue to flout your behaviour they will take your bus pass away from you. Ways like that should be the way forward in my eyes.

Q308 Mr Clelland: Back to my question about concessionary fare schemes, would you be in favour of a national concessionary fare scheme for children and young people?

Ms McKee: I would certainly be in favour of a national age for concessionary fares. If a scheme was bought in nationally—and I am not representing a local authority but I am well aware that the local authorities and the LGA are concerned about the impact of older adult concessionary fares—thought needs to be given to the phasing of implementation. I think there is a place for a piece of research that has not yet been undertaken which looks at the short-term use of resources to improve transport for young people and its impact on improving demand by the community over time.

Q309 Mr Clelland: Should such a scheme for instance be restricted to travel to and from school and college if you had a concessionary scheme?

Ms McKee: I think it should be restricted to appropriate use of positive activities as well. The Government's agenda for young people includes positive activities and formal learning; and research shows that it is important that young people engage in these. I would have it for the ages of 14 to 19.

Q310 Chairman: Ms Walker, do you want to add anything?

Ms Walker: Personally I think that it might be problematic if you link it just to travelling to your college because, going back to things such as apprenticeships and diplomas, students are not just studying in one educational establishment and it would be problematic for someone on an apprenticeship if they are expecting to use that public transport to get themselves around from A to B, so if you are on a plumbing apprentice to go and do your work, if you are being tied into only being able to use your public transport card to get yourself to college. The NUS's view is that concessionary public transport should be linked to an entitlement to learning. Obviously now there is an expectation that you can obtain a level 2 qualification and we believe that should be an entitlement to be matched with an entitlement to public transport concessions, and that also includes those who are returning back into second chance learning as well.

Q311 Mr Clelland: Should we perhaps have different schemes then? Should we have a yellow bus scheme for school children and then a concessionary fare scheme for the 14 to 19 age groups, something like that?

Ms Walker: With regards to people's timetables in further education they are quite sporadic as well so personally I do not know how that would work, but I am not the planner.

Q312 Chairman: In your evidence from the NUS you say that you are undertaking research into travel to college. When is that research going to be available? In the submission we had from you it said that it would be published in November. Is that still the case?

Ms Walker: That is linked to our Education Maintenance Allowance research which was looking into how students spend their money. I have got a little bit of information and I am quite happy to give that to you afterwards.

Q313 Chairman: If you could let the Committee have that information.

Ms Walker: Absolutely. Just interestingly with regards to the results that we have got already we saw that over 45% of respondents said that they spent between £11 and £50 a week on public transport.

Q314 Mr Leech: Sorry, was that between £11 and £50 or £15?

Ms Walker: £11 and £50 and also with regards to the EMA 45% of respondents said that they did not think it covered the amount of expenditure through their learning so it is important to think that the EMA is not just there to be able to cover people's travel and it is not able to do that anyway, which is why concessionary travel is so important.

Chairman: If you could let us have a note on any details of that that would be very helpful for us to consider.

Q315 Mr Leech: Are the views of young people taken into consideration by local authorities and transport providers?

Ms McKee: In some cases most effectively. West Yorkshire Authority for example has had a number of discussions with young people as part of the development of their transport strategy.

Q316 Mr Leech: The West Yorkshire PTA?

Ms McKee: Yes. Bedfordshire is another example and the Isle of Wight is another example of good practice but it is by no means a national picture.

Q317 Mr Leech: Is there no sharing of best practice?

Ms McKee: There is some sharing of best practice and the National Youth Agency is working with the DCSF currently on the solutions to transport issues for young people in relation to non-formal activities. We are also working with the Community Transport Association, but there are a number of stubborn issues that need resolution and could be helped as a result of work by committees such as this.

Q318 Mr Leech: What about the bus companies and other transport providers?

Ms McKee: Some transport providers are engaged with this. Clearly different organisations have different interests and it is important that all of those different interests are respected but there seem to be some core issues which Barbara raised at the beginning which are around cost, age of concession, availability of transport, and it goes back to proper planning to meet the needs of young people with young people as part of that stakeholder group.

Ms Hearn: We would say that there is involvement in some areas but it is dislocated at the moment and there is a need for some clear guidance that encourages or requires local authorities and their partners in Children's Trusts to work more closely with local transport planners so that the local transport plan and the children and young people's plan speak coherently about this area. Most, if not all, of the best policy initiatives that there are go much more broadly than education—for example increasing choice of GPs, reducing CO₂ emissions—these are areas where transport is just as critical a part of the glue, and polices that young people are interested in and are involved in. There is not enough inclusion of Transport at local level in the way Children's Trusts are working and working, nor evidence of working with transport planners that ensures that children and young people's involvement and their voice are included nor evidence that the resolution locally (or nationally) is actually listening to what they are saying. We would support the idea of a national scheme. At the moment only 21% of areas so far have got some form of scheme so it is quite a small number and it means more have not than have. We recognise that there is a large financial implication for that approach and therefore as a stepping stone we think there should be a clear economic modelling undertaken as to what the benefits are which we have seen anecdotally from the National Youth Agency's work. A good example is the Isle of Wight where transport scheme

shows a reduction in the demands on the family budget; it shows young people using the services more and more responsibly because they are afraid of losing that access; and releasing more young people into the local economy so that use of leisure services, shops and so forth has increased. The bus provider there has increased their supply of buses as they have now got more money because they have taken a flat rate fare and increased volume. Rather than a typical journey costing £7 return, it now only costs £1 return but the volume has gone up. We think there is an economic modelling job to be done.

Ms McKee: In a number of the case studies that we have looked at local providers and Children's Trusts are using short-term money from DCSF, the Youth Opportunity Fund, investment for young people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds (PAYP), et cetera, to subsidise transport to positive activities and to a non-formal educational offer. There is a question about how this can be mainstreamed over time and still be a reasonable offer for the transport provider, so we would totally support the need for this economic modelling, now so that we can understand how that could happen in the future.

Q319 Mr Leech: Is the NUS ever contacted by local authorities or transport providers for your views?

Ms Walker: We are not contacted by local authorities but quite a few of our local students' unions have done campaigning work. This is one of the things that the NUS have had a lot of support on from local students' unions doing campaigns for concessionary bus fares because it is one of the things which happen every year. Students unions are contacted by local students saying, "We cannot actually afford our travel and we are finding this very difficult." A good example of this was City College Norwich. Their students' union did a successful campaign. To my knowledge they are one of the only places with a concessionary bus fare at the moment for further education students and that campaign was run by the students' unions. Regardless of what is happening at the moment and what happens next, the most important thing is to ensure that the views of students are kept first and foremost in the planning and I really would stress the importance of making sure that students and the students' unions are involved with planning so they can ensure that it is best for them.

Q320 Chairman: In the written evidence that NUS has sent to us you say that you have got concerns about the impact of concessionary fares for older people on discounts for young people's travel and there is a concern expressed in the evidence that because some local authorities might be facing financial difficulties, or say they are, because of the concessionary scheme somehow that is squeezing out concessions for younger people. Is it possible for you to let us have more information on that if you have it? Could you send us a note on that if you have got that?

Ms Walker: To clarify, we know there is not concessionary travel for everyone everywhere and Norwich is a pocket of good practice, but what we do know is that local authorities did raise their concerns and say that they were not receiving enough money to subsidise the older and disabled subsidy and because of that it has meant that money has had to go from one place to another place and unfortunately that has had a knock-on to local students.

Q321 Mr Leech: Are there specific local authorities that you are aware of where this has happened?

Ms Walker: I am sure we can find that information out for you. I have not got it off the top of my head. I have got examples of problems in places where things have happened and things have been cut off. To my knowledge, I know that there has been 16 to 19 transport withdrawn in Suffolk and there has been an expectation of increased contribution in Lincolnshire for parents.

Q322 Mr Leech: Is there any evidence that this has either made people make different choices in terms of colleges or schools that they are going to or just dropping out of education altogether because they do not feel they can afford it any more?

Ms Walker: All we have is anecdotal evidence but the thing that we do find regularly is that one of the biggest factors on students in making their decision on what educational institution they are going to go is cost, and obviously travel, especially with regards to inflation, has skyrocketed over the past few years which will obviously have a detrimental impact on some students.

Ms McKee: In all our discussions with local authorities as we are looking at problems and solutions, the issue of concessions for older adults has always been raised with us by the authorities particularly where they have reduced discretionary spend.

Q323 Chairman: Are there actual examples where they have done this as distinct from saying that they are going to?

Ms McKee: The discussions have gone along the lines of “we do not want to consider doing this”—and that has also been discussions with the Local Government Association—“because we are concerned that we will not be able to manage the impact”.

Q324 Chairman: But you do not have examples of where this has happened?

Ms McKee: No because they have not moved from the short term to the longer term. In talking about what will stop you mainstreaming this, this is the issue that is raised again and again. The only research that I know of is from 2000 which talks about transport and the costs of transport affecting young people’s access to educational choice, and it says that 40% of young people select their post-16 choice based on the cost of transport.

Q325 Graham Stringer: A lot of bus surveys deal with cost and the time-tabling of buses and safety. One of the gaps I think there is is where networks have been withdrawn or reduced to remote parts of urban areas, overspill estates, and in rural areas. What evidence do you have about 16 to 18-year-olds not being able to get to college because they are not buses available? I know it is more difficult dealing with what is not there rather than dealing with how what is there exists but we know from other inquiries that the networks have shrunk. Do you have any evidence on what impact that has had?

Ms Walker: I do not have evidence but just going back to what I was saying before, students will make a fundamental decision on how much the cost affects them and they might still be continuing further education and they might still be in further education regardless of those costs but they might be studying on a course that they might not overly be wanting to do and they are studying it because it is the easiest and cheapest thing for them to get to. Ultimately, that affects retention rates as well because students feel it is not actually the thing they want to be doing but financially they cannot afford to take the decision they really want.

Q326 Mr Leech: Do local authorities take into account the effect of transport provision on the delivery of the five Every Child Matters outcomes?

Ms Hearn: In our experience—and I am not sure I can comment on local authorities—certainly NYA ourselves and the UK Youth Parliament have done a lot of work in this area. We are in constant conversations now with the Department for Transport and the DCSF who are working more closely together around this agenda, so it is focusing more broadly than education into training, and into employment, as well as into positive activities, but we are finding some local authorities do not have the leverage or do not think they have the leverage to go as broad as meeting the five Every Child Matters outcomes. It requires all Children’s Trust partners to buy into the need for transport and transport is not one of the required partners for Children’s Trusts; they are still very much on the outside of the thinking and of the planning and of the discussions about how you deliver the Every Child Matters outcomes.

Ms McKee: Just to pick up on that, DCSF is talking to the Department for Transport about problems and solutions and that is part of its commitment to the implementation of Aiming High. However, beyond showcasing and disseminating good practice I do not think it is going to take it further into actually securing and mainstreaming solutions, and that is a particular issue in the context of the Education and Skills Bill which is going through now which will raise the participation age of young people in education.

Q327 Mr Leech: So what more do you think needs to be done?

Ms McKee: For me, at a national level I think we need guidance on the age of concession. I think transport and education planning needs to join and produce some national standards with some

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guidance on reasonableness in terms of practice. I would have transport put into the Education and Skills Bill as a matter for concern and certainly in the statutory guidance in terms of implementation, I would undertake that the research we were discussing on the economic benefits of improving the transport system over time so that we can understand the journey from short-termism to the long term. I would look at guidance as to how at a local level the providers and the planners could work together linked into the Children's Trust arrangements.

Q328 Chairman: The National Children's Bureau's written evidence says that local authorities are uncertain about what powers they have to offer post-16 concessions if the young person concerned is not in full-time education or does not have a disability. Could you tell us a bit more about that? Where have these problems been found?

Ms Hearn: Yes, in the way in which the law is currently constructed is unclear when it hits the 16/17-plus. As we understand it, there is no power nor duty on the part of the local authority to make provision in terms of concessions for 16-plus unless they are in full time education and therefore even if they think it is a good idea, they are afraid of or use it as a reason not to provide concessions. There needs to be a clarity in law set out about what the 16/17/18-year-olds should expect or could expect in the same way that there is a power set out in law for younger children in the education area.

Q329 Chairman: Does anyone else have any information on that?

Ms McKee: My information would come from the same source but the reality for a local authority with limited discretionary spend is that it will spend against its statutory obligations first. Where it is unclear, I think very reasonably, it backs off.

Ms Hearn: Picking up further to Mr Leech's point, I think in terms of what we would like to see happen is more information through guidance put out about the standard of information that is to be made available to help people access transport. A lot of young people say that it is not just the physical availability of transport or the price; they do not understand how to use it, so they do not understand the timetables because the way in which the provision is commissioned locally of transport providers does not take due account of their novice nature of using it or of the challenges that may be faced. There should be some overarching guidance that could lay out things as the National Youth Agency have said about the age being a fixed one but also the quality of the information and the necessary communications that need to take place to get young people actually using transport.

Ms Walker: I would reiterate what we said earlier about the fact that we believe that the educational entitlement should also be linked to an entitlement to transport and that also should include those who are returning as second chance learners. With regards to the finances for under-19 education planning and finances going to local authorities there really needs to be some potential of working out joined-up working with local educational clusters in that.

Ms McKee: I think it would be very helpful at this point to have a national framework. In the national indicator set for a local authority—and it is against the indicator set that the performance of local authorities will be judged both by themselves and through the comprehensive area assessment—there are 13 indicators which if the local authority addresses them will improve the transport system. They range from CO₂ reduction to safety on the roads as well as access to positive activities and travel to work by public transport, so there is a real potential and a starting point for such guidance.

Chairman: Thank you very much for coming and for answering our questions.

Wednesday 26 November 2008

Members present

Mrs Louise Ellman, in the Chair

Mr David Clelland
Mr John Leech

Mr David Wilshire

Witnesses: **Councillor Les Lawrence**, Chair of Children and Young Peoples Board, Local Government Association, and **Mr Ian Gwenlan**, Chair of Education Transport Sub-Committee, Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers, gave evidence.

Chairman: Good afternoon. Welcome to our Committee. I would ask Members to declare if they have any interest.

Mr Clelland: Member of Unite.

Q330 Chairman: Louise Ellman. Member of Unite. Could I asked by witnesses to introduce themselves, please.

Councillor Lawrence: I am Councillor Les Lawrence. I chair the Children and Young People's Board at the Local Government Association and I am also the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families in Birmingham.

Mr Gwenlan: I am Ian Gwenlan, Principal School Transport Officer at West Sussex County Council and I am representing ATCO, which is the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers.

Q331 Chairman: Thank you very much. What progress would you say local authorities have made since 2006 in fulfilling their new duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils?

Councillor Lawrence: I suppose in general response to the question I would say not as much as perhaps we would have liked to have achieved in the totality of the responsibilities and duties as they have evolved under the various acts. That can then be differentiated between urban authorities and more rural-based authorities and questions of sustainability, the extent to which funding or access to funding is available, and, thirdly, the ability of those who are providing the services to maintain the services to facilitate the duties that are placed on local government. In response to your question in general terms, not as much as we would have liked to do. I am sure Ian can give you specific example in that regard.

Mr Gwenlan: I think the progress has varied from authority to authority. There are some authorities which have put a lot of work into it and produced very good strategies, where the assessment of the needs and the audits of the current infrastructure has been carried out. I think the results are varied as well. DCSF will have carried out an evaluation of those and that will indicate that there is a huge variation between some strategies which are very short, maybe a couple of pages, and others which are quite detailed.

Q332 Chairman: How has the use of private cars reduced?

Mr Gwenlan: Because of the 2006 Act?

Q333 Chairman: Yes. All this is about sustainability. What effect has it had on the use of private cars to take students to school?

Mr Gwenlan: The writing of strategies at this stage will not have reduced car usage significantly at all. The work that has been carried on for several years through travel plans will be taking effect. In respect of the extension of rights of school transport, of course, that may well affect the use of cars in a small way, but not significantly.

Q334 Chairman: Is the £4 million that has been made available for local authorities to put their plans together enough?

Mr Gwenlan: I would not be able to comment on that. Again, I think that depends on the authority. Some authorities will have had a small amount of money, but they will still have had to have carried out quite a lot of work to produce their strategy. Larger authorities will have significant amounts of money and will have been able to put a lot of effort into it because of that.

Q335 Chairman: The funding for School Travel Advisers might come to an end in 2010. Is that of concern to you?

Councillor Lawrence: It certainly is of concern to local authorities, of whatever construct, because it has been beneficial in assisting local authorities to develop the travel to school plans, for example. There certainly has been car reduction where plans have operated between and with schools: there has been a concentration on the Walking Bus, on encouraging group travel among parents. However, it is dependent upon on the size of authorities and the relationship with the bodies. For example, if you take some of the metropolitan areas, you have transport authorities where you have been able to work much more on an integrated and collective basis to bring about a policy direction that is then utilised across a number of authorities, but that is more difficult in many parts of the country because Passenger Transport Authorities do not exist amongst many of the other authorities. Those authorities are often left on their own, therefore, whereas, as I say, in the major urban areas there has been a much more integrated arrangement between

rail and bus transport, as well as the more basic, very localised concepts of the Walking Bus and travel to school plans.

Q336 Mr Clelland: Perhaps I could pursue that question on School Travel Plans. How successful the School travel plans been in bringing about modal shift?

Councillor Lawrence: If you look at some of the urban areas, the difference between the amount of vehicle traffic going to and from schools between term time and non-term time is about 18% in terms of the volume. Where you have had School Travel Plans, that reduction has been in part maintained in terms of the number of vehicle journeys carrying pupils to and from the school; where a school has not, you will see the stark increase between non-term time and term time. It is very important, therefore, that local authorities try to work with schools to facilitate the plans. But that is when you come up against the funding paradigm. Where authorities have started trying to facilitate providing travel concessions to pupils—where are at the moment it is a standard three-mile limit and they have tried to take it down to two miles—they have then found that the financial pressure has meant that they have gone back to the three-mile limit. That means that you are not able to decrease the traffic to the extent that you had done when you went down to the two-mile limit. The Walking Bus has been successful when you can get volunteers to be the providers of that Walking Bus, but of course sustaining and maintaining volunteers is not always as easy as it first sounds, because you get enthusiasm to start with but maintaining that enthusiasm is somewhat difficult.

Q337 Mr Clelland: I was about to ask you that. Is it possible to maintain the benefits of School Travel Plans after that initial enthusiasm has waned?

Councillor Lawrence: Speaking on the behalf of colleagues from different types of authorities, I have to say that it is easier to do it in an urban location and less so in the more rural areas. You have to take into account the mobility of parents, especially if they are working, and their time constraints, whereas in urban areas you will find that the flexibility of people's travel to satisfy their own requirements is much greater. It is a case of how you can adapt individual plans to suit individual localities and neighbourhoods around individual schools.

Q338 Mr Clelland: Are schools providing enough support for travel plans?

Councillor Lawrence: Shall we say the enthusiasm is like an exponential curve from incredibly enthusiastic—very much linked into aspects of the curriculum around understanding climate change and the nature of the effects on the environment within the school arena—to schools who effectively do not wish to encourage participation because they feel it is an additional burden on themselves and often the governing body is not supportive.

Q339 Mr Clelland: Do you think there are adequate monitoring arrangements in place to enable the success of School Travel Plans?

Councillor Lawrence: It is difficult to get a feel for that. I think that is still a developing area. Again Ian might be able to give you some practical examples from an officer perspective.

Mr Gwenlan: If I could come back to the original question, it is one that I have asked myself. Given that we are getting close to March 2010, when authorities are expected to reach their target of 100% of schools having School Travel Plans, I think it would be very helpful if there were an overall evaluation carried out of the success of the travel plans. I think it does vary from authority to authority and from school to school. For a School Travel Plan to have more chance of success, I think it is important that it is embedded into the ethos and the culture of the school. Where that happens, there is more likely to be success, but we have to remember that the success of a School Travel Plan is not when it is lying in somebody's drawer but in the implementation of it. Where there is a head teacher who gives good leadership, where there is a good champion, and, as I say, where it is embedded into the ethos and the culture, then there is more likely to be success. There are many School Travel Plans where we have seen a modal shift to a large extent and there are others where it has been negative.

Q340 Chairman: How much change has there been?

Mr Gwenlan: That, again, varies. One off our schools in West Sussex, a primary school, has seen modal shift from I think 62% who were travelling by car down to I think 26%, so there is a huge shift there. In others, not so much.

Q341 Chairman: What is the balance? Is there shift in most cases?

Mr Gwenlan: I think there is. Just by doing a School Travel Plan it is raising an awareness of the need to change from car to walking. Although I do think, given that schools have the core business of educating children and looking after the welfare of children, that a more productive line to take is that we are enhancing the health of children and bringing them to school so that they are fresh and ready to learn and therefore bringing improvements to their attainment. That is probably a better line for schools to take than we are trying to reduce congestion.

Q342 Mr Clelland: Councillor Lawrence mentioned funding. Is there enough revenue funding to maintain and improve travel plans?

Councillor Lawrence: The honest answer is no. It is of concern that when local authorities are faced with difficult decisions it is usually a cross-portfolio responsibility between children's services and transportation, and it is then seen purely as a local authority responsibility, whereas a lot of authorities have tried with travel plans around schools to get the schools to contribute from within their own budgetary money as well. By having the school enjoined financially within the travel plan, you are more likely to succeed with the implementation and

the sustainability of that travel plan. It is likely to be the kind of pressure, given the economic circumstances over the next three to four years, where you may well see a lessening of the number of travel plans. Again from talking to colleagues in non-urban areas, I think that it will become very, very difficult not only to meet School Travel Plans but to fulfil one of the other statutory duties, which is around the provision of access to positive activities for young people—which usually takes place outside of school hours. If we do not begin to look at some innovative ways of changing the environment, we will be unlikely to fulfil that statutory duty that has been placed upon us.

Q343 Mr Clelland: Finally, is the Department's target for all schools to complete travel plans by 2010 realistic?

Mr Gwenlan: I think it is not realistic.

Q344 Mr Clelland: Why will some schools not achieve that target?

Mr Gwenlan: It is not the schools that will not achieve the target, it is the authorities that will not achieve the target because the target includes not just local authority maintained schools but independent schools as well and I think that is going to be the hard nut to crack. In my own authority, we are at about 90% in terms of local authority maintained schools, but when you add in the independent schools it is about 80%. My own view is that it is not realistic, because those schools are very difficult to engage. I think some of them just will not engage. There is no incentive for them to do so.

Q345 Mr Clelland: Could there be an incentive?

Councillor Lawrence: One of the ways we have been seeking to see if we can find an innovative idea—and this is more applicable to rural areas than it is to urban areas—is that both bodies who are applying for a licence to provide transport services should have included in that licence a social responsibility clause whereby they have to provide certain services at certain times of the day to meet the needs of young people, either in terms of school transport or in terms of—and more importantly I would argue—access to positive activities, especially at 14–19, to enable the achievement of economic well-being for youngsters not only to go to college but to have the opportunity to undertake apprenticeships. Especially if you work that into concepts of economic development and regeneration and linking into the business world, it is a way of ensuring that young people have an opportunity to continue with either education, employment or training, or a combination of any of those three. It is an idea that we are looking at and working on, simply because I think it will be more difficult for youngsters within rural areas, given the distances and the lack of bus services in many of those areas, for youngsters and the local authority especially to meet its statutory duty. That is an area that does need to be looked at realistically by the departments involved in this area.

Q346 Mr Wilshire: I would like to follow up on one of the things that Mr Clelland asked. I am not sure about funding and priorities, particularly given the climate in which the local authorities find themselves now. I will try to do it without getting drawn into party politics, but it clearly is an issue that is going to get more difficult for funding in the next few years. I perhaps have to make that point but do not want to try to draw general conclusions from it, if I can make that a bit of a preamble. Here you have new duties which are essentially paperwork exercises. Is that right? Strategies.

Mr Gwenlan: We have two sets of new duties essentially. We have developing a strategy, which should be linked into the current LTP and other strategies that local authorities have, and it is largely based on work that has been done with School Travel Plans amongst other things. Then we have the duty in respect of the extension of rights for children from families on low income.

Q347 Mr Wilshire: Can I pursue the second one first. The new duties are going to cost local authorities money. Is that right?

Mr Gwenlan: Yes, they are.

Q348 Mr Wilshire: Will all of that, any of that, or none of that be covered by additional grant?

Mr Gwenlan: I think the answer to that is that it depends on the authority. I have done a round robin of some authorities from my own association and there are some who are saying, "It's just about adequate at the moment," or "Yes, we're okay," and there are others who are saying, "For primary school children we are okay, but for the secondary school children we do not have enough money." So it does vary.

Councillor Lawrence: The support for 16 to 19 year olds as part of the machinery of government changes is still the subject of discussion as part of the funding arrangements, because the Learning and Skills Councils have designed their funding support differently in different parts of the country depending on the area that they serve, and the travel patterns of young people follow—which in some cases are quite complex.

Q349 Chairman: Does there seem to be any rationale in the different arrangements made by different Learning and Skills Councils?

Councillor Lawrence: I think the honest answer is no. There is no common thread other than that the plans are often developed to suit the needs of the localities that the plans are developed to serve.

Q350 Mr Wilshire: Is it appropriate to bring the issue of special needs into a discussion of this general sort about the new rules or are they a separate case?

Mr Gwenlan: They are not a separate case in that the same rules will apply. Again, it varies from authority to authority. There are some authorities that will provide free transport for children with special educational needs, maybe no matter how far they live from the school. There are other authorities who apply the current two- or three-mile limit. For those

children, yes, there is a definite advantage when they come from families on low income that they will receive free school transport. For some families that has been a tremendous help.

Q351 Mr Wilshire: Under the new rules there are going to be more children requiring transport. Particularly if you include special needs, they tend to be the most expensive because of the distances. Some are completely funded by additional grant and some are not, so we have a situation where income will be squeezed. How much of a priority will this remain if authorities are going to have to fund extra for themselves, or will they simply look at the discretionary side of it and say, “We will cut some of that to fund what we are not being funded by grant”?
Mr Gwenlan: Clearly this is a statutory duty and therefore we have to do it. When the budget is squeezed, especially if you are from a local authority like West Sussex which is on the funding floor, then you do have to look at the discretionary elements—as we have done in the past couple of years.

Q352 Mr Wilshire: If more children have to be given transport, do we have any feel for the number of extra children brought into this requirement by the new rules as against the number of discretionary children who might be squeezed out?

Councillor Lawrence: I am sure that we can provide you with that detailed information from the LGA, but I would not want, off the top of my head, to give you a figure. Suffice to say that if you add all the statutory duties together, plus the onset of the 16 to 19 changes, it will be a significant number. The current level of subsidy is about £2.5-billion across all local authorities irrespective of the size of the communities they serve, but added to that there is a set of outcomes that are being asked of local authorities in addition to all this that is around tackling obesity, for example. Again local authorities are beginning to look, in conjunction with PCTs, to see if there is a better way to align the funding that is available to tackle an active lifestyle, using things like the Walking Bus concept to try to overcome that as well. The overall sum of money is of itself being asked to facilitate transport for more young people, but, as I say, we can get you the precise figures.

Chairman: Perhaps you would send us a note on that.

Q353 Mr Wilshire: It would be helpful because it would be somewhat ironic if the effect of the new rules were to reduce the number of people being able to use public transport or school transport to get there. That would be an unintended consequence of helping people who deserve help and it would be worth knowing that. There is this risk then that money is going to have to be found from somewhere if we develop this still further, at a time when money is going to be in short supply. Is that something of a message as well?

Councillor Lawrence: Yes, it is. Local authorities have a whole series of priorities. Perhaps I could use, given the current environment, an analogy. If an

authority was asked to provide more money to facilitate the safeguarding of children as against the provision of support for travel plans, I do not think it would be difficult to see in which direction additional money would go.

Q354 Mr Wilshire: That is what was going through my mind. One of you said about some schools having particular views. I started my working life as a teacher and if I was given the choice of what to do with my time and what to do with my limited resources, I know exactly what it would be, and it would not be trying to do the PCT’s job of dealing with obesity, it would be doing my teaching job. I have heard a lot being said about strategies, but they are paper exercises and it seems to me—and I should be interested in your comments—do we need a strategy? Is an objective not quite adequate, of somebody simply saying, “We want the schools to get more people out of cars and to come to school by a different method.” Does that need strategists, strategic advisers, loads of paperwork and the diversion of staff time, or would a simple statement not be adequate and then we could get on with the plan?

Councillor Lawrence: If the wider public, schools and organisations were compliant, then a simple statement would indeed be all that was necessary to undertake the change of behaviour—because that, in a sense, is what we are trying to achieve, a behavioural change. If you talk to colleagues in local authorities, the desire of most people is to be able to have quick access from their home to a school, to drop the child off and move on to their next port of call. It requires them to do it in the most flexible way and the most flexible way is usually the car. If it happens to be raining or it happens to be cold you do not tend to take the extra time to walk, you just get into the vehicle and go. Therefore you have to create—and that is one of the purposes of the strategy—a carrot and stick approach and to encourage people to take part in the overall intent. As you rightly say, the statement is the principle, but it is how you arrive at the principal. Yes, if we are not careful we can over-egg the pudding in terms of the process by which we arrive at the strategy and the amount of time that we take to develop that.

Mr Wilshire: If you have an objective—and I hear you agreeing that it is a fairly straightforward exercise—why do we need local authorities to intervene? If there is an objective set down nationally, why can we not simply tell the schools to do it and keep an eye on the fact that they do do it, rather than have lots of people pushing bits of paper around and spending scarce money before the schools ever get around to having plans?

Q355 Chairman: Do you think these issues—the numbers of journeys involved, sustainable modes of journey—could all be decided nationally rather than locally? Should there be a national target rather than a local one?

Mr Gwenlan: I think that local issues are very important, but I think we have to remember that the strategy is more than just an objective, it is a plan of

how we reach that objective. In developing a strategy, we are looking at how we are going to get from A to B and looking at the wider needs of young people in getting to and from school or college and between institutions as well. That encompasses the new diploma programme as well as home to school or home to college travel. It can also act as a useful tool for choice advisers and for parents as well in determining what travel arrangements they might want to make and what are available for the choice of school they may make.

Q356 Mr Wilshire: Mr Gwenlan, I am confused now. I was trying to see whether strategies were needed with plans. I think I heard you say that the strategy is a plan. Which is it, a strategy or a plan? If it is a plan, you rather make my point that you do not need strategies.

Mr Gwenlan: A strategy is, in simple terms, a plan of how to get from A to B.

Q357 Mr Wilshire: What is a travel plan? How to get from A to B? On your argument, we are duplicating.

Mr Gwenlan: No, School Travel Plans are different. They are individual and some might even say exclusive to a particular school, dealing with particular travel issues around that school for the pupils in the school. That is different from the school travel strategy that local authorities are required to produce as an authority-wide matter.

Councillor Lawrence: To answer your original question, I would disagree that it is not for schools. The purpose of the school is to educate the young person. The role of the local authority is to assist the school in facilitating the attendance of that child and the access of that child to the school. Different parents have different levels of ability to be able to get a child to school.

Q358 Chairman: Are you agreeing or disagreeing with the concept of a School Travel Plan?

Councillor Lawrence: I am agreeing. I think it is an absolutely essential function of the local authority to have a travel plan, not only to facilitate the access of children to school but to undertake, on the wider objective, access to enable young people to undertake positive activities.

Q359 Chairman: You think that should be done at the local authority level and at the school level.

Councillor Lawrence: It should be done at local authority level in conjunction with schools, in terms of access to education but, equally, with youth clubs, with the voluntary and community sector who provide activities for young people, to enable that access to be facilitated. It cannot be done by a national diktat, simply because you cannot satisfy the needs of each and every locality in the community on a national level.

Mr Wilshire: I started by being slightly confused and I can begin to understand now why schools are confused. I thought the strategies were for the local authorities and the plans were for the schools, yet previously I heard that the strategies have to have plans—so local authorities are involved in planning

as well as strategies—and now I have heard that schools have to have strategies as well as plans. We therefore have two different bodies playing around with both.

Chairman: You have answered the point and we will have to consider what it all means.

Q360 Mr Leech: Perhaps I could start by picking up a couple of points that have been made already by Councillor Lawrence, just to get some clarification. I thought you were suggesting that the success of the School Travel Advisers has been patchy depending on the area that it might be.

Councillor Lawrence: Yes.

Q361 Mr Leech: In certain areas, it worked well, and in other areas they do not necessarily fit into the existing structure. If you were to start with a blank sheet of paper and say, “Are we going to have School Travel Advisers or not, or are we going to provide money for local authorities to do advising on travel plans in the way that they want to choose to do it?” how we you go about it? Would you say, “Yes, everywhere should have travel advisers,” or would you allow local authorities to do it in the way they wanted to do it?

Councillor Lawrence: I would leave the local authorities to act in a discretionary way as to whether they wanted to utilise such a professionals or not.

Q362 Mr Leech: In urban areas, they do not necessarily work better because they do not fit into the existing structure, is that right?

Councillor Lawrence: They tend to be less useful, simply because we have Passenger Transport Authorities dealing with the urban areas and therefore you have a body which is responsible for a lot of the planning for integrated services that can then be worked on with each local authority right the way down to individual school level or in terms of different times of the day to meet the needs of different cohorts of young people.

Q363 Mr Leech: But in some areas they are quite vital within the structure.

Councillor Lawrence: In some areas, especially in particular rural areas, they become very essential because they act often in conjunction with officers like Ian as the conduit for discussing with the providers of bus and other travel services what is the right type of service to provide in different localities.

Q364 Mr Leech: If the funding was not available after 2010 for the travel advisers, do you think then that the urban areas would survive because the structure is already in place, and there would be a real problem in rural areas to continue this kind of work?

Councillor Lawrence: Yes, is my answer, but I think Ian could give you a more practical example, given especially the authority comes from.

Mr Gwenlan: I am not totally convinced that it is a rural and urban issue because in urban areas there can be a real need for School Travel Plans to

encourage people out of cars and onto the transport that may be existing. I think we have to evaluate where we are and say, perhaps through the school travel strategies as well, how we are going to get to where we want to get to, and that means a realignment of the School Travel Plan advisers. Given that the advisers are there at the moment to achieve 100% of schools with School Travel Plans by March 2010, if we have reached that target then there will be ongoing work which is important, but there may be other areas of work to which the School Travel Plan advisers could be realigned, to make sure that we can continue to build on the work that has already been done.

Q365 Mr Leech: You said that it was not necessarily a rural/urban divide. Is it the case that where we have a PTA, they tend to be in place, and where we do not, they tend not to be in place?

Mr Gwenlan: No, I do not think it is whether there is a PTA. Most schools will have PTAs.

Q366 Mr Leech: I am sorry, I did not mean a Parent Teacher Association but a Passenger Transport Authority.

Mr Gwenlan: I am sorry, I thought you meant embedded into the school.

Q367 Mr Leech: No.

Mr Gwenlan: Not necessarily. The circumstances of the school are quite important here, which is why sometimes it is difficult to engage the independent sector. Coming back to what I was saying earlier, it is the leadership of the school that is very important.

Q368 Chairman: You said, Mr Gwenlan, that it can be difficult to engage the independent sector. How much of an issue is that?

Mr Gwenlan: In speaking to my colleagues at West Sussex, it is certainly very difficult to engage independent schools in any School Travel Plans. That may be because of the incentives. We have to remember that one of the incentives for local authority schools was that if they produced a good School Travel Plan that met certain criteria, they were given a capital grant. That does not apply to the independent schools, as far as I know.

Q369 Chairman: What is the extent of the problem in terms of the numbers of schools who do not wish to participate?

Mr Gwenlan: I could not give you a figure across the country, although I dare say we could find that. In West Sussex, for example, we have 290 local authority schools and we have about 35 independent schools, if that helps give an indication.

Q370 Chairman: Is none of those 35 schools involved?

Mr Gwenlan: I think it is very few. I could not say, off the top of my head, that it is none, but it is very few, if any.

Q371 Mr Leech: That brings us nicely onto my second question in relation to the difference in buy-ins for transport plans. Is it partly an issue that within the independent sector people are perhaps more likely to be travelling longer distances to get to independent schools, and therefore schools are reluctant to try and persuade parents not to be driving their kids to school?

Mr Gwenlan: I think it is a mixture of things. You are right that the distances may well be longer and generally are longer. It may be the location of the school as well and the lack of public transport, because there are some independent schools that are out in the countryside with no public transport that goes to the school. On the other hand, there are independent schools that run their own transport and very often there are parents to car share, so they are already doing something to make sure that they are not all travelling to school at the same time.

Q372 Mr Leech: But they do not formulate that in a plan.

Mr Gwenlan: Absolutely.

Q373 Mr Leech: If we take the independent sector away for a second and just look at the state sector, I think you said that there is about a 90% buy-in to travel plans at the moment.

Mr Gwenlan: I can give an indicator from West Sussex. There it is about 90% at the moment. In East Sussex, across the border from us, I think there it is about 86%.

Q374 Mr Leech: Is there any obvious group of schools or a particular type of school that is not currently buying into the process?

Mr Gwenlan: I do not think there is. We now have very few where they do not have School Travel Plans, but it is not that they are all primary or all secondary. There is a mixture.

Q375 Mr Leech: Is there is a difference between the attitudes of perhaps a school where the head teacher and the governing body are on board as opposed to a school where they seem reluctant to introduce them? Is it perhaps the case that there does need to be intervention either at a local authority level or at the national level to push this through and explain the importance of it. Or is there a danger that they then just pay lip service to the process and provide the plan but do not go about implementing it?

Councillor Lawrence: Sometimes the authority has to take extra steps to provide an incentive. I will take one or two simple examples. First, the entrance to the school may well be on a very busy road and the parents feel that to walk to and from school is quite unsafe, because, even with a crossing, with a lollipop man or woman, it is still quite dangerous to cross the road. Local authorities have started to provide controlled pedestrian crossings, for example. That improves the safety of the journey to and from school and therefore it is much easier to encourage not only the development but the implementation of a travel plan. That is an incentive that is outside of a

School Travel Plan, but the authority, to facilitate the implementation of that plan, has had to provide an additional facility. There are other examples where by the police have participated in ticketing vehicles for parking in a way that obstructs the highway. In a sense, you are creating a stick to stop parents driving to and from the school and then becoming an obstruction to the normal passage of vehicles. That is action outside of the travel plan, but it then creates the environment in which to encourage participation simply because of the actions you are taking aside from that.

Q376 Mr Leech: Can I follow up on that stick approach for a second. Certainly in my local authority area in Manchester there are a number of schools that have had problems with parking outside—illegal parking on the school crossing lights or whatever it might be—and the response from the council has always been positive in the short term but lack of resources ensure that they cannot be enforcing that action all the time. Are you finding at local authority level around the country that this is a real problem, and that there are not the resources to be able to do that sort of work?

Councillor Lawrence: The simple answer is yes, and it will become more difficult as time goes on. Through things like the neighbourhood renewal fund, as it used to be, local authorities often devolved an element of spend down to a ward and area basis, which allowed local members in those localities to apply funding in different ways. That was often a way of supporting the police in that type of sustainable action to dissuade and, equally, provided additional funding to support safety measures to make it easier for parents to walk to and from or for walking buses to be implemented. Now that the rules have changed, however—and of course, for example, the neighbourhood renewal fund is no longer in place—we are already beginning to see the withdrawal of some of the support for some of the approaches that I was suggesting.

Q377 Mr Leech: Is there evidence to suggest that that sort of work has worked and it has persuaded the school to look more carefully at travel plans and discouraged people from driving their kids to school?

Councillor Lawrence: Experience indicates that where schools know they have the support of the local authority to achieve those outcomes, they have themselves also been more proactive in engaging with parents to dissuade parents from using vehicles to come to and from school and to engage in other alternatives. As to the sustainability of that, I think that is a matter for conjecture at the moment as to what the outcomes will be. Whether they will be long-term or purely short-term, only time will tell.

Q378 Mr Leech: How big an impact do you think the Government's policy on encouraging greater school choice has had on journeys to school?

Councillor Lawrence: The first thing I would say is that there is not any choice, there is only the exercise of a preference. In a sense, one has to look then at the

different nature of school arrangements in different authorities. Some authorities will have basically one type of community school which is co-educational and other authorities will have a complete mixture of schools: church, single sex, 11–16, 11–18, grammar schools, and all of those can have different effects on the way that parents exercise their preference and the distance, especially at secondary level, that youngsters will have to travel. Again, if you look at the primary sector you will find that a church school, because of the admission arrangements, will have pupils travelling a longer distance than if they are just a community school, which often can have a very tight catchment area around it. It is not easy, therefore, to give you a direct answer as to whether the exercise of a preference has created a differential mobility in pupils moving to and from school.

Q379 Mr Leech: Is there any evidence to suggest that the Government took into consideration school travel when the concept of parental choice was introduced?

Councillor Lawrence: I have no evidence to indicate that was in their mindset.

Q380 Mr Leech: The National Association of Headteachers have suggested that the new diplomas for 14 to 19-year-olds may have a significant impact on school travel. Do you have any particular view on that?

Mr Gwenlan: It will definitely have an impact on travel between institutions as well as possibly home to school. There is no doubt about that. It is a concept that is largely urban-based rather than rural and therefore it will create quite a lot of transport difficulties for rural authorities and for the schools in those rural authorities. It will increase travel. For example, a student may have to travel already to get to their school and then will have to travel even further the other way to reach the host school that is delivering the diploma that he or she wishes to take.

Q381 Mr Leech: Has any assessment been made of how much this might cost local authorities?

Mr Gwenlan: Not that I know of. In my own authority we are really not sure how much it is going to cost because that will depend on which students are going to go to which schools to take whichever diploma they wish.

Q382 Mr Leech: I assume that local authorities are quite concerned about the financial impact of this.

Mr Gwenlan: Yes. We are concerned about the financial impact but we are also concerned for the schools. I think a lot of schools are not totally clear that they will or may be responsible for covering some or all of those transports costs. If a school, if sending a group pupils to another school, how will they get there, what will that cost, who is going to provide the funding for that? A lot of schools may well go to parents in the first instance, and of course we are saying that they should not be doing that, that this is for the schools to fund. Yes, there is concern.

There is concern that the money is not there to provide both the diploma programmes and the transport needs to go with it.

Q383 Mr Clelland: Is there a case for changing the statutory walking distances?

Mr Gwenlan: I think we have to go back to why the statutory walking distance were there. Clearly they were distances beyond which it was reasonably expected the child could not walk. Today it is unlikely that children and/or their parents will walk, let us say, two-and-a-half miles to get to and from school, and so the statutory walking distance is, in effect, an arbitrary limit which differentiates as to whether the financial burden falls on the parent or the local authority.

Q384 Mr Clelland: Should the system be more flexible, do you think?

Mr Gwenlan: I think that is a political view.

Q385 Chairman: Councillor Lawrence, do you have a view on that?

Councillor Lawrence: When you say flexible, if you mean should the element of discretion be allowed to be exercised by a local authority, then yes, because, again depending on the location of the school, it may well be that it is located within a residential community where traffic volumes, traffic flows, are fairly minimal, other than residential traffic, in which case you could argue that the discretionary distance could be greater and through the use of things like the walking bus concept you can encourage that degree of walking. But if you have a school that is located with its entrance on a tributary of or on the main highway, then, in essence, you almost have to say that the distance is one based on safety of home to school rather than an arbitrary distance. I think the discretion has to be very much within the context of a local authority.

Q386 Mr Clelland: Given what you have said, does that mean that there are problems with the statutory distance in some cases?

Councillor Lawrence: Yes, there are. Given the nature of different neighbourhoods and localities, to try to apply it on an equal basis across the local authority can be quite difficult and does give rise to concern amongst parental groups.

Q387 Chairman: Are there problems in the different ways of calculating the distance between homes and schools?

Mr Gwenlan: No, not as far as I know. It is in fact a statutory walking distance and most authorities would calculate that distance in the same way—which might be using a map, but when it gets very close to the mark they may use a very accurate pedometer.

Q388 Chairman: But there are not different ways of doing it that give rise to that.

Mr Gwenlan: No.

Councillor Lawrence: One of the interesting by-products, to take up the point about parental preference, is that if you have a major dual carriageway and the nearest school in distance terms is across the road, parents may not choose that school simply because of the barrier of the dual carriageway. They will go to a school which is further away but is much safer to get to in terms of access. There are some very localised elements in this and that is why I say that discretion on that issue of distance should be left to a local authority to determine.

Q389 Mr Wilshire: I would like to go back to the mixture of funding and my confusion. If I understand it correctly, we are looking at what at the moment is being presented as an educational issue, where we say, “Is the funding adequate and what will happen if there is less money in education budgets?” but I have heard advanced obesity and healthiness, which are health issues, and some of this is about sustainability and the environmental argument, and some of it is plainly about transport issues. Is it reasonable to say that if you are trying to advance a health argument for this then the health budget should meet some of the costs?

Councillor Lawrence: The answer is yes. The reason I say that is because the creation of children’s trust arrangements and therefore the alignment of funding and the beginning of the concept of pooling of funding between different public agencies should enable that same amount of money to be used in a more innovative and productive way than is the case at the moment, where you are taking a bit from here, a bit from there, and trying to add it together. In that sense, I think we can utilise much of the existing funds far more effectively, but it is trying to get a complete handle on exactly how much money is available to enable the various elements of this whole area of transport for children and young people to be facilitated on a sustainable basis?

Q390 Mr Wilshire: Why is it difficult to get a handle on the amount of money available?

Councillor Lawrence: How long do you have? If you look at trying to ask a PCT to differentiate within its budget that which is spent on children and young people from that which is spent on other aspects of health, it is quite difficult. In the children and young people’s arena, however, you can differentiate the spending almost by age or by cohort age groups. Because the nature of the funding regime is totally different, the funding streams and the accountability for the spend is completely different, and, also, the nature of how you can save money and carry forward within local government—which is a method you are not necessarily allowed to do in the same way within the health arena. Until you get the similarity of funding regimes, it will continue to be quite difficult, though local authorities and their partners are now beginning to work in quite interesting ways to begin to try to do that, especially because of the duties placed upon them for the commissioning of services, for example.

Q391 Mr Wilshire: If it is reasonable to pursue the idea of funding coming from all the policy areas where we are trying to achieve a policy, I would only reply to that by saying that if I were in a PCT I would see it as my business to keep it difficult to try to find out, because then you would give up and go away and not make me try to produce money. The fact that it is difficult is perhaps something we ought to address to cover your point. Are you saying that because it is so difficult people do not try?

Councillor Lawrence: I think there is an element of that. I think that has been recognized, interestingly, certainly by the DCSF, because, as part of legislation that I understand will be coming before Parliament in January around children's trusts, the duty to co-operate will be strengthened, the statutory basis of the children and young people's plan—which itself does have aspects related to travel plans embedded in it—will become a document that requires the agreement and, if you like, the signing up to by all the partners to that plan, which includes PCTs. It would certainly be useful if this Committee in its report strengthened and underpinned that direction, because it would facilitate clarity of thought, clarity of purpose, and transparently of funding.

Q392 Mr Wilshire: Viewing things from where I do, as a parent and an ex-teacher, I do not think it matters to me, as an education person, how a child gets to school.

Councillor Lawrence: Correct.

Q393 Mr Wilshire: As long as the child gets there. So perhaps it is not an education issue. Is it right, therefore, to ask you whether or not it is right that this should be the education department's responsibility and the schools' responsibility to worry about these matters or should somebody else take the lead?

Councillor Lawrence: As I said earlier, it should not be just a school concern, it should be a joint concern. Obviously the school needs to ensure that the young person arrives at school fit for purpose; that is, fit to learn. It is the local authority's responsibility in conjunction with the parents to ensure that that child can access the school in the safest and easiest way they can.

Q394 Mr Wilshire: Why is it the school's job to make sure somebody arrives fit for purpose? Is that not a social services' responsibility?

Councillor Lawrence: If the environment within which the learning is to take place is going to be of the best possible order, then that is the school's responsibility in conjunction with the local authority to ensure that that takes place.

Q395 Mr Wilshire: I hear what you say. I think you have persuaded me that that is not necessarily the case. The fact that they must be fit for purpose is surely correct, but is it somebody else's responsibility? Anyway, I will move on. I have also heard regular reference to urban versus rural as an example of different issues arising out of the same subject. Given the fact that we have also been told that 2010 is probably unrealistic everywhere and that

it is easier in some places than others, and we have also heard that the independent sector does not really want to become involved—and I would hazard a guess that one of the reasons for that might be that the independent schools see it as their job to educate children and not become part of an attempt to try to get families to change their social behaviour pattern, but I will leave that alone—if money is going to get shorter and it is easier in some places than others, would it not be better, instead of trying to do it on a universal basis, to prioritise: to say that if there is less money available and it is easier to achieve progress in the short term in urban areas that only some authorities should be asked to make a big effort and it should be accepted that for the time being the great scattered areas of rural England and wherever ought not to be pressurised in the same way and ought not to be asked to use scarce funds to do something which is probably not going to be successful in even the medium term?

Councillor Lawrence: I will try to handle that. I would respond by saying that that presumes that those who live in rural areas have the economic resources to ensure that all the children and young people who live within those areas can easily access positive activity but also education. I would suggest that is not necessarily the case. Often the distance you have to travel, not so much for a primary school but certainly for a secondary school within a rural area, as I am sure Ian will be able to indicate, is far, far greater in a rural area than it is in an urban area. You will find that very few secondary schools have youngsters travelling a distance greater than three miles within an urban area. To take the West Midlands for an example, with the exception of those youngsters who attend the grammar schools that still exist within the West Midlands, most youngsters are within about a mile-and-a-half to two-and-a-half miles from a secondary school, whereas I would think in many rural areas, if you go into some of the rural areas such as Northumberland or Devon, you often have mileages far, far in excess of that.

Q396 Chairman: Why do you think it was that the Government found it impossible to attract bids for Pathfinder status? That was about innovation, was it not?

Mr Gwenlan: I think that was partly because of the work that was involved. A lot of authorities did not have the resources at that stage to prepare the bids. I think there are some authorities who have prepared bids and are very disappointed that they were not taken forward. They did feel that they had met the criteria but they were not successful and they would have liked to have taken it forward. The other aspect of it is the sustainable funding: that they could kick-start something but would not be able to carry it on beyond the life of the Pathfinder.

Councillor Lawrence: Also, to be quite blunt, the Pathfinder started out with a presumed funding of £60 million which was then reduced to £12 million, and at the end of the day, of course, it did not happen.

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Q397 Chairman: Do you agree it with the proposals from the Yellow School Bus Commission that there should be a universal, dedicated bus scheme for primary school children and some dedicated services for secondary school students?

Mr Gwenlan: As far as primary school children are concerned, the issue I would have there is the distance from which they will transport the children into schools. Given that one of the aims that they do not want to detract from is walking and cycling either, which is a good aim, I am not convinced that the idea of taking them from, I think, a mile is feasible. That will detract from walking and cycling. However, I think the idea of yellow school buses in areas where there is no suitable public transport or no suitable transport that is provided by local authorities already could be a good idea in some places. In secondary schools, again, as long as it does not detract from what is there already, as long as it does not detract from the public transport network, some of which is supported already by the school bus network, then there are gaps that could be filled. I would say that yellow school buses are part of an overall solution, but they are not the be all and end all.

Q398 Mr Wilshire: Just one more, thank you, Chairman, and we will see if this one is slightly easier for you. The question I raised earlier about special needs education, it is a particular problem as I understand it; it is a very expensive activity although the numbers are limited. Would it help the general progress on all schools if some other way or some other budget or some other mechanism was found for handling special needs

problems, the financial problems of special needs in this case? Would that be a solution to the general problem?

Councillor Lawrence: I would be supportive of a move in that direction because that would enable the true cost to be determined and it then could be appropriately funded across local authorities. Just to give you an example, perhaps, to assist you, in the West Midlands we have one secondary school for those with visual impairment that serves the whole of the West Midlands conurbation, and of course the costs of transport for those youngsters is shared by all the local authorities but it is not done on a differentiated basis. We have effectively created a pool and that money is then utilised to transport those youngsters, but the number of youngsters each year going to that school does vary and that does create different pressures.

Q399 Chairman: The question is would another system be better?

Councillor Lawrence: A system that allies that as part of the statement and is then funded through the direct schools grant would indeed assist that and make it easier to manage that.

Q400 Mr Wilshire: Would you like us to focus on that, amongst many other things, because the amount of difference it would make would be significant for everybody else, or is it still a relatively small matter?

Councillor Lawrence: It is a small matter, but given the growing incidence of certain types of special need it would be an important element that could then, within the direct schools grant, be delineated and specified.

Chairman: Thank you very much for answering our questions.

Witnesses: **Paul Clark MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport, **Ms Jessica Matthew**, Deputy Director, Cycling and Sustainable Travel, Department for Transport, **Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Children, Schools and Families, and **Ms Hilary Spencer**, Deputy Director, 14–19 Policy and Local Delivery Division, Department for Children, Schools and Families, gave evidence.

Q401 Chairman: Good afternoon, welcome to the Select Committee. Could I ask the witnesses to introduce themselves, please, for our records, starting at the end here?

Ms Spencer: Hilary Spencer, Deputy Director, Policy and Local Delivery in the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Sarah McCarthy-Fry, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools and Learners.

Paul Clark: Paul Clark, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport.

Ms Matthew: Jessica Matthew, Deputy Director, Cycling and Sustainable Travel, Department for Transport.

Q402 Chairman: Thank you very much. Could you tell us whether you have any plans to review the current statutory walking distances?

Paul Clark: My answer to that first of all is to say there are no plans to review those walking distances. Indeed, in the work and surveys that have been done we know that the vast majority of children—94% in England—who receive free school travel actually have three schools within six miles of home and in county authorities it is equivalent to some 84%. A line has to be drawn but we think that that does cover it and does give people genuine choice in terms of reaching schools and meeting the agendas of DCSF.

Q403 Chairman: What do you think the impact of the new entitlements for free transport is going to be?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: It is fairly early to tell because the primary entitlement only came in in 2007, we have had one year, and we are currently evaluating the first year and obviously the secondary one only started just in September. The evaluation that we are currently doing at the moment is that there has not

been an enormous take-up but then we did not necessarily expect there to be enormous take-up because very often their local school is the school people want to go to. What we wanted to do was offer a further choice for those where maybe their local school was not necessarily their first choice, but we are currently going through the evaluation from the first year.

Q404 Chairman: What kind of research have you commissioned?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I will defer to my colleague on the actual evaluation we are doing for the prior entitlement.

Ms Spencer: I am afraid I do not have details of that; could we send that to you?

Q405 Chairman: Yes, we would like to know what has been commissioned and how you are doing it. We have been told that recently discretionary transport has been withdrawn by a number of local authorities, particularly in relation to faith schools. Do you have any hard information on that?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Not at the moment but it is the sort of thing that we have asked and, obviously, each local authority is different. Do we have anything particularly on the faith schools?

Ms Spencer: Not specifically on faith schools.

Q406 Chairman: Do you have information on withdrawal of discretionary free travel for students as we have had reports that recently there has been a withdrawal of discretionary schemes and we would like to know more about that.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Do you have the evidence of where those are?

Paul Clark: We are currently monitoring what local authorities are doing in terms of concessionary fares and provision of concessionary services across the board. Certainly there is some indication that some authorities have decided to withdraw certain provisions that are entirely within their remit to withdraw and this has happened with concessionary arrangements across the board, not just at school level. We are monitoring exactly that and we are working with selected local authorities across a range of different communities, urban and rural, to actually work on what the rollout in terms of the extension of opportunity and across also the diploma process and so on which I am sure the Committee will want to come to in terms of how we can actually follow that through and work with local authorities.

Q407 Mr Clelland: Do you support the national concessionary fare scheme for children and young people and if not why not?

Paul Clark: Let me deal first with the concessionary fares from the point of view of children. Whilst on the face of it rolling out a programme of concessionary fares for all young people seems a sensible step forward, equally it has a danger of cutting across many other requirements and other goals that I suspect we, all around this Committee, Chairman, would want to support. For example,

some 52% of young people in primary schools walk to school; equally the number for secondary schools is high as well. We have seen examples where there has been a school bus operation, for example, where actually there has been a reduction in the number walking and more using the bus, so that then cuts across various other agendas which I am sure the Committee is well aware of in terms of how to deliver genuinely active sustainable transport alternatives. In terms of a concessionary fare if there was a rollout of a total concessionary fare, free transport for all 5 to 19 year olds for example, England-wide, we would be talking of a cost of in excess of probably around about £1.4 billion which, as I say, is a substantial amount of money and not, probably, going to achieve the objectives that all of us would want to see.

Q408 Mr Clelland: Let us take the 16 to 19 age group for instance. We are trying to encourage young people to further their education, to acquire skills in order to benefit the economy of the country as well as themselves. Often there is a great barrier for young people in travelling to colleges of further education, which can be spread out over quite big distances; and of course some colleges of education specialise in certain areas like engineering—aero-engineering for instance is a specialism in Newcastle College so if a student from Middlesbrough wanted to go to the best college for aero-engineering it is quite a distance to travel, so travel can become a barrier to acquiring skills and further education so surely that should be taken into account.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: From the DCSF point of view we do not want transport to be a barrier to learning but going back to your original question of a nationwide blanket, presumably a 5 to 19 concessionary fare scheme, we very much agree with the Department of Transport that we would not necessarily think that that was the best use of that enormous sum of money. However, we are looking at ways to overcome the barriers, particularly as you are talking about the 16 to 19 age group. What we have started doing is there is a duty on the local authorities to actually have a transport policy statement setting out the support that they are going to give to young people aged 16 to 18 and we are proposing in our next Bill that they are then going to have to publish the assessments of how they came to put that policy statement together. Very often if we move to the diploma part as well, and we are raising the participation age from 16 to 18, we are going to be looking at ways in which we can use innovative ways of delivering the entitlement, but also we are looking at examples where local authorities are working together to come together for the best way of getting the transport around. When we come to concessionary fares, obviously in London all the young people have free travel, but we have to accept that there are different horses for courses in different parts of the country. London already has a very well integrated, comprehensive transport system; what is the best use of the resources we have, what is best for London is not necessarily best for other areas but it is certainly something that we are looking at as we

move towards raising the participation age and towards delivering diplomas, which are a different type of delivering education.

Paul Clark: Could I just add to that? The joint work that the DfT has been doing along with now DCSF in terms of the travelling to school initiative and so on, and actually having to roll out those plans to meet exactly the requirements that you are indicating, is helping to focus in terms of how we can draw things together. As Sarah has already indicated, certainly transport must not be a barrier to young people being able to get those options and to exercise the options and requirements that they have under education and training, so that is of particular importance in terms of how we do it. I would just say that in terms of a free blanket concessionary fare option it is a very blunt instrument to meet the requirements that may be different, for example, within a tight urban area. Of course one of the provisions under the new Local Transport Bill, soon to be the Act, I hope, with Royal Assent later this month, would actually allow passenger transport executives and authorities to become integrated transport authorities, so taking responsibility across the board for transport requirements, and would actually help to have a far better joined-up view of the delivery, exactly as you are indicating.

Q409 Mr Clelland: Is there a case then, perhaps, in advance of a national scheme, even concentrating only on the 16 to 19 age group, to perhaps look at regional initiatives? Would it be an idea perhaps to bring together regional stakeholders like local transport authorities, learning and skills councils, further education colleges, local authorities and even the bus companies themselves who are, for heaven's sake, making massive profits. Surely they could contribute something to this for the good of their regions; is there a case perhaps for bringing stakeholders together to do something on a regional basis?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Certainly on the diploma delivery we are doing that but probably with more sub-regional groupings than regional because we are looking at ways in which colleges and local authorities work together. We do actually have some examples of where local authorities are working together to try and get a coherent strategy. There is a London census mapping exercise to see how children are travelling across boroughs and in Suffolk there is a regional group which is bringing together transport and children's services to try and make sure that the SMOTS (Sustainable Mode of Travel Schemes) are actually coming together, not just in a local authority but in a wider area.

Q410 Mr Wilshire: On the specific issue that Mr Clark raised about the fact that his department is monitoring the withdrawal of discretionary transport, would he be able to let us have a note on that evidence, as to how many cases he has discovered and actually as interesting, not only which ones but is there any monitoring being done of why these decisions are being taken?

Paul Clark: One of the things I perhaps ought to indicate very clearly on this position in terms of concessionary fares is that the Government has laid down in terms of concessionary travel and, as far as young people are concerned, minimum entitlements depending on various new provisions under the Act. These are minimum provisions and local authorities are able to make additional provisions within their areas and come together, for example as was being suggested earlier, to actually look at how they can meet the requirements of their own local areas and the local demands of their young people in terms of being able to access school and training alike. So the power is there and we do genuinely believe that, hence the whole thrust of much of the work that we have been doing and the work as I say again of the Local Transport Bill is very much about giving tools to local authorities to make the best decision that meets the requirements of their local people and their local situations. In terms of monitoring, what I was saying was we are working closely with authorities as the provisions are rolled out under the education and training sector and the requirements there as to how it is best able to meet those requirements. At this stage it is very much a learning process for each and every one of us and we want to make sure that we are able and in a position as the Department for Transport, working closely with colleagues in the DCSF, to be able to bring that together in the best possible way.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: If I could add on the 16 to 18 age group, I spoke about the transport policy statements and in our analysis of the 2007–08 transport policy statements for that age group almost all local authorities offer some subsidised provision to that age group and 26 local authorities outside London do offer some form of free transport. The eligibility varies but that is an example where local authorities are already doing some of this and I think it is a prime example of a way to get the local authorities working together as we move across boundaries.

Q411 Mr Wilshire: I understand all that but it was said that some discretionary transport is being withdrawn. The question was asked by a minister "Is there evidence of this?" to which the other minister said "Yes, we are monitoring it." I just would be grateful if you could indicate if you are willing to share with us what you are finding, both as to what is being withdrawn and if you have any information about why then I at least would like to see it.

Paul Clark: I will give that undertaking to the Committee and say that any of that information that we have we will certainly share. We are due to get through the work that we are doing with those local authorities and we are due to publish a report in the summer of 2009, but certainly we will undertake to share with the Committee those findings.

Q412 Mr Wilshire: I am sure Mr Clark can see where this possibly leads in that whilst I think all of us would support the improvement in the statutory requirements to do more, if the result is that we do

less somewhere else it is a bit of an unintended consequence and it would be quite helpful to see whether or not that is actually happening.

Paul Clark: The underlying philosophy of both DfT and DCSF is that transport should not be a barrier to young people being able to take up the opportunities. Obviously that is the overriding one and we want to make sure that there are no unintended consequences in any area that we can avoid.

Q413 Chairman: In your written evidence on the point that Mr Wilshire has just raised there seems to be some ambiguity. In paragraph 7 it says there is no significant difference in the level of participation in education or training in areas offering free or subsidised transport and others, and then you do say later on that you are conducting research to see how transport affects participation in training. There seems to be a little ambivalence there; are you telling us that you are looking at this area to see what is actually happening?

Paul Clark: In terms of the rollout of the extended provision and of course the development of diplomas we obviously are monitoring exactly what the transport requirements are. Certainly at this stage in terms of the local authorities that we have been working with there are indications in the short and medium term that transport is not appearing to be a barrier to that provision, but obviously as further rollout happens, one of the things we are asking the local authorities to do is feed us information in terms of the numbers and the take-up at primary and secondary level. We obviously are monitoring that; that is part of the work that we are doing to make sure that there are not problems that are looming as we move on and as the rollout gets greater.

Q414 Chairman: We can be assured that this is an area you have identified for ongoing research.

Paul Clark: Yes.

Q415 Mr Wilshire: Can I move on to a cause that I feel quite strongly about, special educational needs. I spent a very short amount of my teaching time in one of the predecessors of what are now special educational needs schools. The transport budget as I understand it for the current year is around £980 million; do you know how much of that is actually being absorbed by transport for special educational needs?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: 50%.

Q416 Mr Wilshire: 50% is going on a small number; do you have a figure for how many special educational needs children there are as a percentage of the total number of children being educated?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Do you mean special educational needs with a statement or school action plus or school action?

Q417 Mr Wilshire: Actually having to be transported to schools.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: If it says in their statement that transport should be provided the local authority provide that free. I am sure we could get that figure for you.

Q418 Mr Wilshire: It would be helpful because if 50% of it is going on that it goes without saying that it is not going to be 50% of the children in the United Kingdom.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: No.

Q419 Mr Wilshire: We are talking, therefore, about a huge amount of money for a small number of children. I do not begrudge a penny of it, do not misunderstand me, but what does concern me is that if such a large slice of the overall budget is going on a relatively small number of people, then it makes it incredibly difficult for the remainder of the school population to get what some schools might argue is a fair share of the budget. Is there, therefore, a case for trying to treat special educational needs costs in a different way to just lumping it in with everything else?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: If we go back to the idea that transport should not be a barrier to learning, obviously the people with the greatest barrier to learning are people with special educational needs, so I do not actually think it is surprising that such a large proportion of the budget is used for that.

Mr Wilshire: The evidence we have been given and I know from my inquiries that what we are seeing is the closure of some special educational needs schools—and I am not trying to make any point about that—and the net result of that, for better or worse, is longer distances to the schools that remain, therefore the pressure on this general budget, because of a decision taken about special educational needs provision, is making it more difficult for everybody else.

Q420 Chairman: The issue is that because this is such a relatively large amount of money should it be dealt with in a separate way so that it does not impinge on other transport needs.

Paul Clark: The questioning actually raises a wider issue and this is something that a number of authorities are looking very closely at. Local authorities and health authorities are all requiring transport provision in various ways—it may be older people getting to hospital appointments, there are the school requirements that are needed and a whole range of others that fit within different sections—within town halls, within the health authority and so on. I know that a number of authorities now are seriously looking at how you can join that up and actually, I suppose, sweat the assets far better than we are currently doing. That is no criticism, it is the way things work. As someone was saying to me when I visited a community transport operation in Surrey very recently, we have provision for the school runs that we need to do and rightly so—we need to do that to meet the opportunity to all and not just to those few people—yet we have older people having to go for an appointment at half past eight in the morning. Why can there not be a better

tie-up? Authorities are planning and in fact some of the evidence that I have seen indicates that if there was a way of planning the transport needs of some of our public requirements—if I recall correctly I saw some figures undertaken by the North West Centre of Excellence which showed that counties might be able to save some £500 million and unitary authorities on average some £300 million just on transport requirements alone. That question does raise, therefore, the wider issues of how we actually get all of us looking far better across the board in terms of transport requirements within our public services that we provide.

Mr Wilshire: I was going to say originally that where special educational needs are an educational issue and where they touch even slightly on health issues—there is a connection so I was going to ask you whether you think there is any case for saying that the health budgets should be expected to make a contribution there. If I can double it up with the next question, it was put to us earlier this afternoon as well as at other times that one of the good reasons for persuading children to walk to school is because it is healthier for them and it is part of an anti-obesity policy. If that is the case why should the education department and the Department for Transport be the bearers of the cost, should we not be asking why is it that the health budget does not make a contribution to school transport?

Q421 Chairman: Who would like to answer that one? Perhaps you want to say that they should make a contribution?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: We are moving towards greater joined-up services within local authorities. We have already got the local strategic partnerships where we encourage the PCT and the schools and the wider joined-up people to come together, and I do not see why they should not be encouraged to share budgets. Certainly there are examples in my constituency where projects that work towards healthy outcomes receive a contribution from the primary care trust, from the local authority and from other sources.

Q422 Chairman: But nationally has there been a discussion across departments about these issues?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Look at the free swimming initiative. The free swimming initiative is jointly funded by the Department of Health, the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the DCMS.

Q423 Chairman: What about this issue of school transport, has this been discussed across departments?

Paul Clark: Yes, it has been and in fact the Department of Health is putting in some money and I am quite happy to write to you with how much it is; at the back of my mind I think it is around about £20 million. They are putting that into the work that we are doing through the school travel plans and the travelling to school initiative which has got £140 million of our money in it—I say our money in terms of DfT and DCSF. The Department of Health have

therefore been putting money into exactly that and we are working together to take that forward through the regional travel advisers that exist and the school travel advisers in local authorities, and there are some 250 of them.

Q424 Mr Leech: Just on that point, is £20 million a fair proportion for the health service to be paying? It is not a very high amount, is it?

Paul Clark: Actually you find that with drilling down and getting people working through and thinking through the requirements and looking through the school travel plans to look to deliver active, sustainable alternatives to the car, actually a relatively small amount of money can go a long way in these cases because a great deal of this is also about changing people's thoughts and perceptions. One of the biggest barriers if you ask parents why they drive their children to school is the fear of traffic problems; some 59% respond that they are scared about traffic issues and about a fifth say that for the sake of convenience they use the car. If we actually work through the walking bus initiatives and so on that are making quite a substantial difference in terms of reducing the number of car trips there are, we have actually provided funding through various mechanism and so on to actually help take that forward.

Q425 Mr Leech: With respect though that does not really answer the question I asked. As a transport minister I am sure you would appreciate that if the Department of Health was providing a bigger proportion to help the transport budget, how does that £20 million contribution compare with the contribution from the Department of Health for free swimming for instance?

Paul Clark: I think it is £20 million but let me confirm that with yourselves. What I think is important and where we started at the beginning of this questioning is are we doing any work together? We are doing that work together to work across that agenda collectively because, rightly so, there are a number of benefits that arise from that. The Department for Transport is responsible as well for walking as much as for buses and the provision of or making sure that you can have safe walking, cycling, buses and trains and so on, so it is important to us as the Department for Transport as much as for healthy living and as much as it is for obviously DCSF in making sure that children get to school on time, safely and in the best way possible.

Q426 Mr Leech: Can I move on to something completely different? Why is it that we have so many short journeys by car to schools?

Paul Clark: As I was indicating earlier, on the research that is done, most of the journeys are less than two miles when you come to primary schools and only two to three miles when you come to secondary schools. In terms of parents' perception, if you ask them why they do it, if I recall it is 56% say they are worried about the traffic issues and the safety; some 22% say it is convenient for them and around about 25% are concerned in terms of assault

or the possibility of assault or molestation. That is what we have to tackle and we have to get that message across. The travel to school plans that are being worked on—and I am delighted that we are already at 70% of all schools actually have an approved school travel plan—where we have those all the evidence is that the number of car journeys is reduced. It varies in terms of the degree but there is a reduction of up to 90% in schools that have travel plans of car journeys. I mentioned the walking bus programme and indeed I am due to visit one next week to see the initiatives that they have taken, again using relatively small amounts of money, and that is about building confidence in parents. Coupled with that we have a £140 million programme that is going into cycling and that is very much about putting a substantial amount of that money into training up to 500,000 youngsters by 2012 in level 2 cycling skills, which again is about reassuring parents and giving confidence to youngsters that they can actually do that.

Q427 Mr Leech: You said 54% of parents were saying it was to do with traffic and safety issues as the reason why they drove their kids to school. Where travel plans have been introduced what decrease have those schools seen in the number of accidents in and around the schools?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: We are still evaluating it. Some of the school travel plans are quite new and we are hoping that schools will be monitoring that—as part of the school census they have to include mode of travel so we will be able to see how that is coming down. Can I just come back to the walking bus because I heard about a school travel plan last week which has an additional benefit apart from getting the children to school and apart from the health benefits; as part of their school travel plan the school mapped children who were persistently late to school and by mapping it they were able to reroute their walking bus and they discovered that the reason the children were late was because the parents did not get up and although the children were ready to go to school they had to wait for their parents to take them. They rerouted the walking bus and those children now are not late for school, so that is an additional benefit which is coming out of the school travel plans.

Q428 Mr Leech: When will the figures be available to evaluate the reduction in accidents?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I am not sure when the school census comes out.

Ms Spencer: I think it is in January but so as not to give you the wrong information could we submit that to you?

Q429 Mr Leech: Certainly. If there is clear evidence that the implementation of travel plans has significantly reduced the number of accidents will the Government be looking at actually introducing targets for modal shift from school—national targets for local authorities to aspire to?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: You said number of accidents; I was talking about the reduction in car use. Although we said that parents believe there is a problem and

they use the car because of the risk of accidents I do not necessarily think that that comes out in the number of accidents.

Q430 Mr Leech: One would assume that if there is a reduction in the number of car journeys to and from school there will also be an increase in safety in and around schools so if there is evidence in your evaluation that the number of accidents has been reduced as a result of the implementation of travel plans, will then the Government be looking at national targets for modal shift of journeys from car onto other forms of transport, whether it be walking, cycling or buses to schools because there will have been a clear benefit in the reduction in accidents?

Paul Clark: In terms of triggering some of the funding that is available for the school travel plans, these are small amounts of money but where there have been reductions in the number of car journeys to that school it triggers the payment of monies for that school to use to implement further work in terms of their school travel plans, so there is in a sense an incentive—I will not say it is a target. Obviously, we are monitoring in terms of the work that is coming out of those school travel plans. As I say, we are at 70% already but we are not there; we are monitoring that work through the travel advisers and so on that are within local authorities and at the regional level as well to be able to see how we can further take forward this work. Hopefully, the school travel plans are becoming part and parcel of the work that is in the cycle to make sure that we are looking at the whole home to school travel planning.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I would prefer to look at percentage reduction rather than hard figures because if you put a hard figure in then in urban areas a lot of people walk and cycle anyway so we are probably looking at encouraging percentage reductions to show a direction of travel.

Mr Leech: One of the problems with not having targets in this respect is that from the evidence we have had from other people some schools are paying lip service to the implementation of travel plans and certainly there was a suggestion with our previous witnesses that independent schools are particularly problematic in getting them on board and getting buy-in to the process. Coming back to your initial point about 54% of people were saying that the reason why they drive to school was for safety reasons, surely if we can then prove that by less people driving their kids to school the number of accidents goes down, it is an additional encouragement for other people not to drive.

Chairman: You are saved by the bell for the moment. We will suspend the Committee for 10 minutes.

The Committee suspended from 4.25 pm to 4.46 pm for a division in the House.

Chairman: Mr Leech, do you want to continue with the question you were asking or had you finished?

Q431 Mr Leech: One organisation, Cheshire County Council, has suggested that it is a big challenge to get all travel plans completed by 2010; do you agree?

Paul Clark: Certainly we are very pleased with the progress so far, we were at 70% at the end of March of this year and it looks like 85% could well be the possibility by March of next year. Obviously what is important about travel plans and really thinking about the previous question that was being asked, it is about making sure that there is buy-in from schools, local authorities, operators and of course from parents and children about changing some of that perception that we were talking about before the division. We are on target to get to the full 100% by 2010 but one of the things with school travel advisers and those at regional level as well is about working with authorities where, if they think there is an issue and they are going to have a problem, then let us try and help each other to get to exactly that goal that we want to see at the end of 2010. We are a long way there but I am sure we can get there by joint working.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Many schools are actually involving the pupils themselves in putting the travel plan together and actually using it as part of the curriculum study. There are lots of innovative ways you can do that, particularly with the mapping exercise that I talked about. If the children have been part of putting the travel plan together then they are more likely to have greater ownership of it and they will go home and tell their parents. It becomes then a whole school travel plan, not just a designated person within the school saying we have to put a school travel plan together.

Q432 Mr Leech: What are the two departments doing to work with schools which have not currently come up with their travel plan?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The local authorities have their local authority travel adviser and we also have regional travel advisers, so it is the local authority's responsibility if you like to use their strategic travel advisers to go into the schools and help them, particularly the ones that have not managed to get their plans together because they would have seen all the plans that other schools have got and they will be able to say actually you could do it this way or you could do it that way.

Q433 Mr Leech: The onus is being left on the local authorities to ensure that the 2010 target will be met.

Paul Clark: No, we have been monitoring in terms of where the school travel plans are through the travel advisers, but what I would say is that I do not think we need to take a stick to beat schools to actually deliver a school travel plan because that would actually defeat very much the purpose. We are already at 70%, we are on course for 85% by March of next year, so we are on course for the vast majority of schools being joined-up and involved. What matters is that it is taken forward by the school so that there is ownership to meet those requirements and, as Sarah was indicating, to involve the very people that this is there to help and support, ie the young people themselves and their parents. It is absolutely important that they have that buy-in. We are monitoring it and we are working, I would make very clear, through the school travel advisers who

have been supported by the £140 million that we are jointly funding in the Travelling to School initiative. They are there to help and to support and to follow up with schools that have not got those travel plans.

Q434 Chairman: Are you going to fund school travel advisers post-2010?

Paul Clark: We are reviewing how we can best take this forward because we do believe that come 2010—and remember that we have the indicator as well about mode of travel to school showing the seriousness of this—much of this will be part and parcel of the school routine and having a school travel plan is part and parcel of it.

Q435 Chairman: So does that mean you are or you are not going to fund them?

Paul Clark: What it means very clearly is that we are conscious that we are funded up to 2010, we will look very much at how we now take forward and keep going the plans here, and we will review that and we will make suggestions and recommendations in due course, but certainly well before the expiry of 2010.

Q436 Chairman: You will be reviewing it, you are saying?

Paul Clark: Yes.

Chairman: Anything else, Mr Leech?

Q437 Mr Leech: I just want to push you a little further on the schools that are not actually buying into the process. You have said that you do not want to use the stick approach, which I accept, and that you want to work with local authorities and get local authorities to encourage schools. Certainly there has been a suggestion from other witnesses that certain schools are just not buying into the process. Where they do not buy into the process and where they do not introduce a travel plan, what action will the Government take to ensure that they do?

Paul Clark: Local authorities now have a duty in terms of developing and publishing on websites a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy and much of that is formed with travel school plans, so local authorities obviously need to be joined-up in a way that supports that strategy but also at the practical level with the school travel plans.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: We are providing funding to schools to put these plans together. It is around £5,000 for primary schools and £10,000 for secondary schools so it is not all about the stick. That means that they have the funding there in order to be able to do it.

Q438 Mr Clelland: What about the independent sector?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: A lot of the independent sector are actually involved. The travel advisers can go into independent schools.

Q439 Chairman: Yes, but we did hear evidence earlier this afternoon that there is a problem with significant parts of the independent sector. We were told that they did not wish to be involved in this. Is that something the Department is aware of?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: It is mainly the smaller independent schools that have not actually taken this up.¹

Q440 Chairman: Has this been identified as an issue within the Department?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Travel advisers are trying to engage with all the schools.

Q441 Chairman: Yes but has the issue about independent schools been registered as a problem?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Personally I have not seen it but I would have to defer to ask the officials if it has been alerted to us.

Ms Spencer: It has come to our attention that in some areas independent schools have not engaged in the same way as maintained schools, but I think it varies quite a lot at local level. We can provide you more details on the cases that have come to our attention.

Q442 Mr Clelland: Are you confident that the 2010 target can be met 100%?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I think we are confident.

Q443 Mr Clelland: There seems to be some doubt about the independent sector.

Paul Clark: We are confident that it will be met certainly by the maintained sector in terms of schools.

Q444 Mr Clelland: But not 100% then.

Paul Clark: Well if 100% is 100% of maintained schools. I think it is exactly true that there is patchiness in the independent sector in terms of their involvement. For example, if I just take where we were in March 2008 when we had 70%, it would be wrong to assume that the other 30% was all in one local authority area. There is a whole range of factors as to why so it could well be only individual schools within a local authority area and the rest are clearly travelling well down the route to develop their school travel plans. Again, that is reflected within the independent sector. Clearly you are right from the discussion we had today and I am sure we will take away the comments of the Committee.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I will certainly be asking officials to look at whether there is a correlation between areas where independent schools are doing it and the involvement of the travel advisers and whether that is a route where we could say to the travel advisers that in areas where the travel adviser has proactively gone into independent schools that there has been greater take-up.

Q445 Chairman: We are seeking to establish whether the Department is aware of particular areas of difficulty and no doubt you will take that on board. What are your views on the findings of the Yellow School Bus Commission that there should be a universal dedicated transport service at primary level and some dedicated bus services at secondary level? Do you have any views on that?

Paul Clark: Obviously from the DfT point of view, first of all, we welcome the work that the Bus Commission has done, our colleague David Blunkett along with First and the other members of the board, and it provides some interesting points that we certainly would want to consider and take on board. Undoubtedly, well-designed schemes can potentially reduce car dependency and congestion as well. Again thinking about some of the earlier exchanges we had, certainly we know that the delivery of services has to be tailored to local circumstances and we would certainly not want—and I know this is a recommendation within the report—to see a reduction in the levels of walking, cycling and an undermining of what exists in viable public services.

Q446 Chairman: Does that mean then that you do not agree with the recommendations and the evidence of the Yellow School Bus Commission?

Paul Clark: No, what it recognises is that there are a number of very useful pointers in the Commission's report. What we want to do is, recognising that well-designed schemes can take forward all those other issues, is to respond to that but also take into account, bearing in mind your own Committee's work looking at school travel, your report on that as well, which we will do and we would respond accordingly to that. We understand and recognise that there are certain issues perhaps in terms of load levels, in terms of the frequency of runs that could be achieved and so on that certainly we want to work through and we are working through looking at whether they are value for money, how does it work and the wider implications of the proposals within the Yellow School Bus Commission's report.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: We are doing a similar exercise in DCSF of working through it. We want to be able to give a proper response to what we consider is a very serious piece of work and it may be that we work jointly and give a joint response to it. I know that you have taken evidence a great deal on this. The initial thinking is that we are not convinced at the moment that it is appropriate for a nationwide one-size-fits-all but we certainly recognise the merits.

Q447 Chairman: Will you be working together as two Departments on this?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Yes, very much so.

Q448 Chairman: Where you believe that dedicated school bus services would work well, are you encouraging them to be provided?

Paul Clark: Most certainly. You will be well aware that we funded to the tune of some £18.5 million a project in West Yorkshire called My Bus which has certainly reduced car use overall, for example by 10% to primary schools. However, there was some slight increase in those that previously walked now using the bus. It has given us some interesting pointers in terms of levels of occupancy that were achieved, frequency of runs, so certainly we have encouraged it in that way. Equally, I would say many members will be well aware of course, reinforcing it again, that it is for local areas to decide

¹ Correction and expansion of answers relating to Q405–Q439 are included as (ST 01c)

what is best for them. For example, the Greater Manchester Transport Innovation Fund ballot that is currently going on, whilst introducing a congestion charge, will bring some £2.8 billion-worth of investment in public and private expenditure including proposals for yellow buses—again a matter to be decided locally—but of course it is a part and parcel of their bid for improved public transport.

Q449 Chairman: Where there are yellow bus style-schemes there are escorts accompanying students on the vehicles. Should those escorts be school employees or bus company employees?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: The history of the yellow bus in America has been very much that it is parents that have been taking on that role. Because parents have been used to doing it in America, I think that is the difficulty of trying to shift what has been a very long-standing process of yellow buses in America over to here. I would have an open mind, if we went down that route. I do not know if the Yorkshire Bus had escorts on their buses.

Q450 Chairman: You have no particular views?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Not at this stage.

Q451 Chairman: Are there any examples of schemes that you think are particularly effective in reducing the use of private cars? Would you want to mention any specific schemes apart from the ones you have already mentioned as good examples?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: There was obviously the West Yorkshire one. I think the Walking Bus schemes have shown an advantage because it is about parents having confidence in alternative ways for their children to get to school. The walking buses work particularly at primary level because it is giving parents confidence that they do not have to deliver their child from door to door. That is one I would particularly want to encourage. You can come up to it gradually. Many schools have the Walk on Wednesday scheme where they encourage children to walk. It is getting that parental confidence and it is also about changing the culture so that do not use the car as the automatic way and instead they ask whether there are other ways for their children to go to school. That is why I am particularly keen on the school travel plans, and we talked about involving the children, but I think it is really important that we involve the parents as well, so that it is owned by everybody.

Paul Clark: This is one example I would draw on. Northampton School for Girls introduced dedicated yellow school buses. That is a school of some 1,700 pupils and they used four yellow buses and a local coach but they had staggered timetables as well. There is a contribution to that of some £469 for a full year pass. They worked round it in terms of staggering times so that they could do that in an effective way. Again, that is where it has worked well with that particular school and of course the size of that school matters. As I say, you could see different requirements for a yellow school bus scheme or a dedicated scheme, for example in Liverpool than in

some of the leafy areas of Surrey. Those were the words when I was looking at the Community Transport Scheme. I will say again that provisions within the Local Transport Bill actually might help to be able to use school minibuses which come under what is known as section 19. We might be able to make those available to do school runs, utilising (as schools obviously do) parents who have the right licence and so on. Just in terms of whether they are accompanied, whoever is doing it clearly needs to have the relevant checks and so on; I think that goes without saying.

Q452 Chairman: Are there any other ways where you think the Local Transport Bill could assist school transport?

Paul Clark: Absolutely. I think in terms of the Local Transport Bill allowing options in terms of greater flexibility and involvement for delivering quality partnerships and quality contract schemes as well, depending on local need, will actually allow local authorities the opportunity to look at innovative ways, with the right leadership, and to look at the transport needs, whoever they be, not just the straightforward fare-paying bus services but look at what other options are available there and to work with the local bus companies. Equally, I say to local bus companies let us take the opportunity that we have got through the Local Transport Act to take that opportunity to really meet some of the challenges that we have got within our communities. They will vary and that is why a carte blanche one-size-fits-all dedicated school scheme would raise challenges. I do not think it would necessarily meet all the requirements that each of us has within the different areas in which we operate. I do think it points us in the right direction. The Local Transport Act is certainly there to be used to meet some of these challenges that we face.

Q453 Chairman: You are confident that it will produce results in this regard?

Paul Clark: It will produce results if our local leaders—and I mean local leaders at both political level but also at official level and within the bus companies—are serious about rising to the challenges that are out there. That is why yesterday in Transport Questions I called upon all of us as Members of Parliament to call upon our local authorities to utilise the options that are laid out there and to use those tools to get the best deals for our communities, whether that be school children or parents or Mrs Smith getting to the hospital.

Q454 Chairman: Do you support a national concessionary scheme for young people?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I think we had that question earlier on, but I do not mind going through it again. I think the point comes out of it that it would be massively expensive and we would have to look at whether that is the best use of our resources to get the outcome that we want, which is to make sure that transport is not a barrier to education. Particularly as we are moving towards raising the participation age and talking about the delivery of diplomas, I

think we have to look at innovative transport solutions. As I say, most local authorities are already providing some form of subsidised service and it is something that we will keep under review, but the figure that we have come out with, £1.4 billion, is a huge amount of money and we have to decide whether that would be the best way to spend that sort of money to achieve the outcome that we wanted.

Q455 Mr Leech: Have you done an assessment of what modal shift that would create by introducing free concessionary travel for young people?

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: We have not in DCSF, I do not know about Transport.

Paul Clark: I do not believe that we have followed down that route. For all five to 19-year-olds who are in full-time education and fall within those age ranges you are talking about 8.2 million young people, and because of the figures in terms of travelling we estimate that probably you could look at doubling the number of bus journeys that would be undertaken by those people. As I say, there is also quite a large propensity for young people to walk when you widen this out in terms of whether it is for school or for leisure purposes and so on.

Q456 Mr Leech: I accept that point entirely but is it not fair to say that if you have not done the assessment to see what impact it would have on modal shift it is very difficult for either Department to say that they will support it or will not support it without an evidential base to it?

Paul Clark: If we just look at a dedicated school bus, however, whilst people will say they might use these things or might say it is a good idea, it is not necessarily the case for example that parents will stop taking their children to school by car. They might say it is a good idea but they will not necessarily then stop taking their youngsters to school by car because it suits them for other reasons.

Q457 Mr Leech: I accept that point entirely but what you appear to be saying is, yes, in principle, the idea of free travel for young people is a good idea, and I do not think anyone would disagree with that, but then you have to factor in the cost, but if you are not actually doing an assessment to see what impact that would have on the modal shift, it kind of suggests that you are not really considering this as an option at all.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: But I did not make the point that it was just about cost; I also asked whether it is going to deliver the benefit that we would want it to. Certainly some of the evidence from London having free bus travel is that it does mean that young people are walking less and cycling less.

Q458 Mr Leech: I understand that but you have admitted that there has been no actual impact assessment done on exactly what impact it would have.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: Because we have not had a proposal on the table in order to do that impact assessment.

Paul Clark: A judgment has to be made. I know that the UK Youth Parliament, for example, has campaigned very heavily for having free concessionary fares for all young people on the grounds that cost brings social exclusion and so on. I have to say that I am not convinced that the social exclusion barriers that exist potentially for people who are over the age of 60 and people with disabilities, as under the current concessionary fares that do exist on a nationwide basis, are necessarily the same social exclusion barriers that young people would face. A judgment has to be made about whether £1.4 million is best spent on what is a relatively blunt tool. For example, if you live in a rural area and you have got free travel on the bus, if you have not got the well-developed service there for a bus then it is probably not worth quite as much to you to have that as it would be if you are living in the heart of Newcastle or Liverpool or London. That is why I say it is quite a blunt instrument just to have a blanket concessionary fare when I am not convinced that the arguments are there or the case is made at this stage. In terms of looking at school travel, we obviously have to make sure that we have in place the right provisions to make sure that travel does not become a barrier for education in the wider sense.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: When the Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies come out and when we review them, I think we would have to look at it at that level to see whether cost is a barrier and to do some research, but in the smaller areas and not on a nationwide basis to start with because, as Paul says, it is this huge blunt instrument and if we were going to spend that amount of money in rural areas would it be better spent improving the transport infrastructure in order to help people get around rather than providing a free pass for a bus that is not there?

Q459 Mr Leech: Just finally on that point, I understand the arguments that you are making as to the potential reasons not to introduce a scheme, but it appears as though you have come to that conclusion already and therefore you are not prepared to look at the evidence to see whether or not it would have a significant impact on getting people out of cars and on to buses.

Sarah McCarthy-Fry: I am saying we look at the evidence at the local authority level in different types of local authority which we will get through consulting with our regional travel advisers.

Q460 Chairman: Mr Clark, do you want a final word on that one?

Paul Clark: Just in terms of what we do know, the My Bus scheme in West Yorkshire, whilst I have said that certainly overall it led to a 10% reduction in car use in primary schools, we found that 2% of secondary school users who previously had walked to school started to use buses and so on. It is a very mixed position that you find. Equally, I would say that no doubt if we were to introduce, as perhaps the Member is suggesting, a free option in terms of the bus for young people, it clearly would have to be at peak times so the costs then become far greater very

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simply because you would probably be looking at not just filling empty seats that are on buses already running but the provision of additional bus services, so we would run into issues there in terms of that, and then that would undoubtedly lead to requests for other concessions. We would end up with buses that could well be really running with 60 or 70% occupancy of all concessionary fare travellers, so it does open a whole range. As I say, I am not

convinced that the case is made necessarily that cost and social exclusion exists in the same way for younger generations in terms of wider travelling requirements as it does with the other groups to whom we have extended this requirement. I think the case is still to be made and there is still work to be done in terms of some of the costs that are involved. **Chairman:** Thank you very much for coming and answering our questions.

Written evidence

Joint memorandum from the Department for Transport and Department for Children, Schools and Families (ST 01)

INTRODUCTION

The Department for Transport (DfT) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) welcome the Committee's continuing interest in school travel as this remains a matter of public interest and concern.

This memorandum is submitted jointly on behalf of DfT and DCSF and follows the structure of the Committee's questions contained in the press notice announcing the inquiry.

1. *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel?*

1.1 Local Authorities (LAs) are required to produce a Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy (SMoTS) and publish it on their website by 31 August each year, commencing 31 August 2007. In producing the strategy, LAs should assess the travel and transport needs of children and young people in their area; audit the authority's sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority and promote sustainable travel and transport modes on the journey to, from, and between schools and other institutions. Funding for the duty to promote sustainable travel and transport is £4 million per annum, paid as part of the Standards Fund via the Area Based grant.

1.2 DCSF commissioned an independent evaluation of the 2007 strategies. A representative sample of 24 strategies from metropolitan, unitary, rural and London authorities was evaluated against a range of criteria including compliance with the statutory guidance,¹ improving accessibility to schools, providing user friendly information to parents and being fully inclusive in terms of considering the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), accounting for Special Education Needs (SEN) and Equal Opportunities.

1.3 Overall the quality of the strategies was good, with opportunities for improvement in some areas. The evaluation concluded that there needs to be greater emphasis on ensuring strategies are fully inclusive, reflecting the specific travel provisions for children with SEN and disabilities. LAs need to balance the requirements of producing a strategic document, to enable local transport infrastructures to be developed to meet aspirations of parents, pupils and schools, with providing or signposting parents and other stakeholders to useful travel related information, enabling them to make informed decisions. Finally, the evaluation stressed that the strategies should relate to, and be intrinsically linked with, school travel plans.

1.4 DCSF conducted a search of all LA websites. In around a third of authorities (43) they were unable to locate a SMoTS. They wrote to the non-compliant authorities seeking, by 31 March, a web link to their strategy or a date by which they will comply with the duty. As of 15 April 16 authorities have replied, of which eight have provided web links and eight have indicated that strategy production is "work in progress". They are actively pursuing responses from the remaining authorities.

2. *How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?*

2.1 The primary aim of the school travel plan programme is to promote sustainable and safer transport for the whole school community. Plans are effective, contributing to a reduction in the number of car trips on journeys to and from schools and removing the barriers to walking, cycling and using public transport for school journeys. They are helping to increase the understanding among the whole school community of the available travel options and increasing the number of young people choosing active travel options over that of the car.

2.2 We know from the DfT's *Smarter Choices* research² that 60% to 90% of schools with a school travel plan can be expected to cut car use to some extent and the latest National Travel Survey results suggest that the proportion of children travelling by car is falling. It was 32% in both 2004 and 2005 and 30% in 2006. For the first time the Annual Schools Census (2007) included a question for schools with a school travel plan, about the mode of travel to school for each pupil, and it will do so annually from now onwards. Only schools with plans in place have to respond. This data will enable us to measure modal shift towards more sustainable school travel.

¹ *Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance*, Department for Education and Skills, May 2007.

² *Smarter choices—Changing the way we travel*, Department for Transport, July 2004.

2.3 Additional benefits of school travel plans include: safer walking and cycling routes around schools, improved school grounds with the provision for bicycle storage, more accessible school sites, improved behaviour, increased confidence and independent mobility for pupils with SEN, improved punctuality and attendance, engaging schools and pupils from deprived areas, building positive relationships with LAs and local communities and improved safety.³

2.4 We are ahead of the trajectory to meet the objective for all schools to have a School Travel Plan in place by 31 March 2010. At 31 March 2007 more than 14,000 (56%) schools had an approved plan and, taking into account the schools that submitted a plan for approval by 31 March 2008, we expect shortly to have confirmation that around 17,500 (70%) of schools now have an approved plan.

2.5 DCSF's statutory guidance suggests that the assessment of travel and transport needs of children and young people, which informs the SMoTS, should be informed by the data provided in school travel plans.

2.6 School travel plans typically include a range of both nationally and locally funded measures such as walking buses, Bikeability (cycle training), Kerbcraft (pedestrian training), Park and Stride, 20 mph schemes, National Cycle Network, Independent Travel Training, behaviour on buses, and Safe Haven initiatives.

2.7 Once a school travel plan is approved, the school receives a one-off capital grant, typically £5,000 for a primary and £10,000 for a secondary school. The grants are used to provide secure cycle parking, CCTV, improving access and generally implementing measures contained in the plans. Whilst there is no additional monetary incentive to encourage revision of plans, part of the initial planning process is to agree monitoring and review procedures for subsequent years, ensuring plans are fit for purpose and benefits continue to accrue. Furthermore, some LAs are reported as incentivising schools to adopt travel plans as a "way in" to other capital programmes, thereby maximising the benefits derived from plans. Mode of Travel to School is one of the set of 198 National Indicators for new Local Area Agreements from April 2008. It is envisaged that this will reinforce the review process.

3. *Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?*

3.1 The extended entitlement for primary pupils commenced in September 2007. There has been no evidence from LAs to suggest there is insufficient capacity to accommodate the needs. DCSF will be evaluating the take-up during September 2008.

3.2 Funding for subsequent years for primary and the secondary element, which commences in September 2008, will be paid via the new Area Based grant (ABG), which is an un-ringfenced mechanism incorporating the majority of the previous Standards Fund grants. As such, authorities will be free to spend the ABG as they think fit. The capacity to accommodate the secondary element will be evaluated in due course.

3.3 Funding for the extended rights in 2008–11 is £10.5/19.7/28.9 million.

4. *What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of the proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?*

4.1 LAs were invited to submit bids to apply to become School Travel Scheme pathfinders by 30 November 2007. DCSF published detailed guidance for bidders⁴ and was looking to approve up to 20 pathfinder schemes in England with a view to them starting in September 2009, running initially until the end of July 2012. Authorities applying for pathfinder status were expected to make proposals to trial innovative transport arrangements. In doing so, they were expected to demonstrate how they would consider the needs of all pupils in their areas and take account of parental preference. Proposals could have included developing a range of cost effective alternatives to car use and transport solutions for rural schools and communities. Pathfinders were encouraged to trial making reasonable charges for transport arrangements, with the exception of those children entitled to free transport under the terms of existing legislation.

4.2 Pump priming of £2 million per annum was available for 2007–08 and 2008–09 with mainstream funding of £2/1.3/3.7 million for 2009–12.

4.3 DCSF hoped that as many LAs as possible would submit bids. However, only 23 were received and the quality of the bids was disappointing. All bids were independently evaluated. None were fully compliant with the criteria set out in the prospectus. They were neither comprehensive nor did they give the broad and diverse mix of rural and urban schemes DCSF was looking for to run meaningful pilots that could lead to potentially sustainable alternative home to school transport arrangements.

4.4 The consultants reduced the 23 bids to a shortlist of six. Although these were not fully compliant, DCSF agreed to fully evaluate them to see if they warranted taking forward. Proposals included a cycle hire/loan scheme, a carbon footprint competition for secondary pupils and a minibus service running on a loop.

³ Annex C—*Travel to School Initiative—report on the findings of the initial evaluation*, Department for Transport, November 2005.

⁴ *School Travel Pathfinder Schemes Prospectus and Guidance*, Department for Education and Skills, May 2007.

Other proposals were extensions of current provision. It was concluded that whilst these elements might have their own merits, the bids as a whole did not fully satisfy the criteria set out in the prospectus and regulations.

4.5 No proposals were submitted to implement a coherent charging policy. Anecdotal evidence suggests that LA members are unwilling to introduce charging for home to school transport in order to fund more comprehensive provision. The evaluation team reported that “one of the bids, which relied for its coherence on the principle of charging to fund and sustain a comprehensive and diverse package of measures, had the charging element removed by political decision just before submission”. Nevertheless, an increasing number of LAs are withdrawing concessionary denominational travel—effectively charging for previously free provision—and are not reinvesting the savings in other home to school transport.

4.6 DCSF will consult with the Local Government Association to gauge the level of desire amongst LAs to explore alternative ways of addressing methods of home to school transport in line with the original intention behind the legislation and pathfinder prospectus. DCSF is not aware of any evidence of LAs innovating outside this scheme.

5. Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?

5.1 Public transport for children who do not use dedicated school buses can be provided through commercial operators who may provide services at a full or discounted fare or LA-supported bus services on routes they consider “socially necessary”. The latest National Travel Survey shows that 17% of children aged 5–16 travelled to school by public transport in England in 2006.

5.2 In *Travelling to School: an action plan* published in 2003, the then DfES and DfT asked LAs to:

- encourage commercial [or tendered] bus services that meet pupils’ needs;
- support bus use on the journey to school through concessionary fare schemes; and
- work with schools and their communities to identify more use of community transport, particularly in rural areas.

5.3 As part of the development of their school travel plan, schools were asked to discuss with bus operators how services might be matched to pupils’ needs, and in particular how they might support the extended school day.

5.4 From April 2007 the Education and Inspections Act 2006 has placed a general duty on LAs in England to assess the school travel needs of all children and young people in their area, to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel, to conduct an audit of the sustainable travel infrastructure (including bus services and pedestrian/cycle training provision) and to develop and publish a strategy to improve infrastructure supporting sustainable travel.

5.5 This will help local transport authorities and bus providers to plan routes and schedules that meet the needs of pupils.

5.6 Local transport plans (LTPs) are one appropriate place for an authority to set out its strategy for travel to school. They are not the only place and, for example, authorities may wish to develop strategies within the lifetime of a LTP, rather than await its replacement.

5.7 DfT’s guidance for the second round of LTPs issued in 2004 focussed on four key priorities (congestion, pollution, road safety and accessibility). Travel to school is important to achieving these priorities. DfT is planning to finalise its guidance about LTPs after 2010–11 by summer 2009.

6. Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?

6.1 Extending rights to free home to school transport for low income groups of secondary school age to any of the three suitable schools closest to their home between two and six miles away, and to the nearest school preferred on grounds of religion or belief up to a maximum of 15 miles away, will increase effective choice, and relieve the financial burden on those families currently paying full fares on public transport. Where these parents currently drive their children to school, this offer should also lead to a reduction in car use.

6.2 It is estimated that around 30% of newly entitled pupils will take advantage of the new offer (the new entitlement does not guarantee a place in one of their three nearest schools, and only applies where children actually secure a place through the admissions process); and significant numbers are likely to prefer one of their nearest schools below the two mile limit. This leaves a total of 40,000 pupils who would benefit from the new entitlement.

6.3 The most important benefit will come from removing transport as a barrier to parents from low income backgrounds being able to express a preference for a school that best meets the needs, aspirations, and talents of their children. In turn, this should contribute to a reduction in social exclusion.

6.4 As the largest proportion of journeys undertaken by car at secondary age are of between two and three miles, a further benefit of the extended rights for secondary aged pupils is likely to be a small reduction in the proportion of journeys undertaken by cars, a reduction of localised congestion and pollution around schools, with corresponding health benefits from a more active lifestyle (especially if pupils walk a little way to the bus stop).

6.5 Financially, those parents from low income backgrounds currently paying full bus fares (at an average of £7.29 per pupil per week) for their children will now benefit from free transport.

6.6 The main benefits from the extension of transport rights at primary age are reduced car use (with environmental and safety benefits), and a reduction in the financial burden for parents currently paying bus fares.

6.7 The evaluation of the take up of the extended rights will indicate the degree to which they are affordable and offer value for money.

7. How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated yellow buses?

7.1 We know from an earlier evaluation of various small-scale yellow and other dedicated school bus schemes that well-designed schemes have the potential to reduce car dependency for journeys to school and the resulting traffic congestion. But we also know that care needs to be taken to ensure that they are appropriate to local circumstances and do not reduce levels of walking or cycling, or undermine the viability of important general public bus services.

7.2 Dedicated (though not necessarily yellow) bus services are popular with parents and children, and are perceived as safe, secure and reliable. Parents particularly like modern vehicles with a guaranteed seat with seatbelt for each child, regular drivers trained to work with children and young people, a control centre they can contact for information, CCTV, and pick-up and drop-off points close to home and school.

7.3 Modal shift from the introduction of yellow school buses (YSBs) can generate a range of benefits including reductions in emissions, savings in vehicle operating costs and travel time for parents whom previously drove their children to school, reduced accidents and time saved from reduced congestion. The magnitude of benefits will vary according to local circumstances. The key factors are the number of children travelling on each service, the level of modal shift from car, existing congestion, and average car journey lengths. The number of factors makes it difficult to make broad generalisations about the suitability of YSBs.

7.4 Instances where YSBs work well include:

- for primary schools, especially where children need to walk further than around 1 km or on unsafe routes;
- for SEN schools, especially where activity is linked to travel training; and
- for secondary schools where behaviour is an issue either on existing schools services or on the regular network; where children are travelling long distances and/or having to interchange on the home to school journey; or where there are other local issues (eg Muslim girls travelling in a safer environment; for routes where buses would not otherwise be a viable option—rural areas or specific catchments).

7.5 YSBs work less well where they run alongside or close to existing services, especially where these are of a reasonable quality.

8. Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?

8.1 DfT and DCSF are working together to promote and increase sustainable travel to school through their joint Travelling to School project which encourages all schools in England to develop a school travel plan in order to reduce car use for journey to school and to allow many more children to take regular exercise. Officials from both Departments are responsible for the day to day running of the project which is managed by a joint Project Board.

8.2 The project is jointly funded and, by 2010, DfT and DCSF will have committed more than £140 million to support the project.

8.3 DfT and DCSF contributed to the recently published obesity strategy Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives and are continuing to work closely with DH to implement that strategy. DH is represented on the School Travel Expert Panel along with the co-ordinator of the National Healthy Schools programme, a joint DCSF/DH initiative.

8.4 At regional level, Regional School Travel Advisers, jointly funded by DfT and DCSF, work with transport and education colleagues in Government Offices for the Regions and in LAs. They also work with a wide range of external partners including Regional Healthy Schools Coordinators.

8.5 A network of around 250 LA-based school travel advisers, jointly funded by DfT and DCSF, work with transport, education and health interests in LAs and with a range of external partners to help schools develop and implement school travel plans.

8.6 Mode of Travel to School is one of the set of 198 National Indicators for new Local Area Agreements (LAAs). LAAs and the new local performance framework will play a significant role in securing commitment to a shared agenda of priorities enabling a more robust approach to cross-cutting delivery. Regional School Travel Advisers are involved in providing advice to those involved in negotiating new LAAs and setting targets, which will encourage closer working between transport, education and health interests.

8.7 Since 2005 DfT has worked closely with the North West Centre of Excellence (NWCE) to identify and deliver best practice in the provision of local passenger transport. In 2006 DfT, NWCE and the then Department for Education and Skills jointly launched a good practice paper on LA integrated transport units (ITU), which bring together all passenger transport service planning, procurement and monitoring and management functions across a range of service areas (including school transport and healthcare). This approach offers efficiencies of scale. The NWCE project director estimates that County Councils could save approximately £500k and Unitary Authorities approximately £300k per annum through the use of ITUs.

8.8 Although the NWCE (now the NW Improvement and Efficiency Partnership) no longer funds the national lead on identifying areas for efficiency savings in the local passenger transport sector, the Department will continue to work with key stakeholders (such as the DCSF Educational Procurement Centre, NWIEP, Merseytravel and the Department of Health) to ensure that transport services for LAs, health and schools are procured efficiently.

8.9 The DCSF Educational Procurement Centre is taking forward a programme to look at school transport issues and has established the DCSF Transport in Education Project Board on which DfT is represented. This will look at the issues surrounding procurement of educational focused transport.

April 2008

Further joint memorandum from the Department for Transport and Department for Children, Schools and Families (ST 01A)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

INTRODUCTION

The Transport Select Committee inquiry has called for evidence on the following areas:

- Travel options for students aged 16 to 19, including those studying at sixth-form colleges and further education colleges
- The transport and travel implications (if any) of the new Diploma for 14–19 year olds and the Government's target of increasing the proportion of 17 year olds in full-time education
- The provision of concessionary travel for young people more generally

The Department for Transport (DfT) and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) welcome the Committee's interest in these areas.

This second memorandum is submitted jointly on behalf of DfT and DCSF and covers the additional topics on which the Committee has invited written evidence in its press notice dated 2 July.

TRAVEL OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS AGED 16 TO 19, INCLUDING THOSE STUDYING AT SIXTH-FORM COLLEGES AND FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

SUMMARY

- Local authorities currently have the discretion to determine what transport provision to make available to the 16 to 19 age group and are required to set this out in a transport policy statement each year.
- Analysis of transport policy statements has shown that a range of transport provision is made available to young people by local authorities.
- This is a critical time to assess the extent to which transport policy is enabling young people's participation in education and training.

Policy objective

1. Government policy seeks to ensure that lack of transport provision is not a barrier to any young person's participation in education or training whilst providing local areas with the flexibility to prioritise resources in accordance with local need.

Current policy

2. Current legislation places a duty on local authorities to publish a transport policy statement that sets out the transport provision, and financial assistance towards transport costs, it considers necessary to facilitate the participation of 16–19 year olds.⁵

3. To ensure these statements reflect local needs, the legislation requires local authorities to work collaboratively with their local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), providers of post-16 education and training, transport authorities, Connexions and others when developing their transport policy. They must also take specified factors into account including the distance between home and school/college; the need to secure a choice of institutions, the cost of transport and the needs of those who could not easily attend a particular institution if no arrangements were made.

4. In order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current system, we have analysed a sample of 2007–08 transport policy statements. Our analysis shows that despite variations in the level of detail and format of the transport policy statements, the majority met most or all of the legislative requirements. All statements set out, to some extent, the arrangements that will be made for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities, with many local authorities making available specific concessions for these young people. Eligibility for these concessions is most commonly assessed on a case-by-case basis.

5. Almost all local authorities stated in their transport policy statement that they offer some form of subsidised provision. Many local authorities in more rural areas charge a flat fee for seats on contracted transport organised by the council or in association with schools and colleges. Other local authorities:

- provide learner discount cards for use on public transport that typically offer fixed rate fares or a discount off full-price tickets;
- provide a grant or part contribution scheme where the learner pays a set amount and the local authority refunds travel costs above that amount (up to a set limit); and
- offer subsidies for other transport methods, for example, a bicycle or moped loan scheme.

6. Transport for London offers free travel on the bus and tram network for young people of sixth form age enrolled in full-time education or work-based learning, resident in the 33 London boroughs. Based on the results of our analysis, we estimate that approximately a further 26 local authorities outside London offer some form of free transport to young people who are eligible. Eligibility criteria vary between local authorities. In some local authorities, the offer of free transport is restricted to young people attending particular courses or institutions. In most local authorities eligibility is dependent on age, enrolment in full-time education and location of study relative to the young person's home. Some local authorities use means-testing as part of their eligibility criteria.

7. There is no significant difference in levels of young people's participation in education or training between areas offering free or subsidised transport provision and those areas which did not offer this provision.

8. Local authorities' responsibilities for transport provision and travel concessions for school age children and for post-16 learners are funded through Revenue Support Grant from central government and through income generated by councils, including council tax. By 2010/11, the increase in total Government grant for local services since 1997 will be 45 per cent in real terms. Formula Grant is not hypothecated to a particular service and councils are free to use the funding in line with the wishes of their electorate and taking into account their statutory responsibilities. The LSC also provide £12 million per annum through the Transport Partnership Fund to support local innovation.

Direction of travel/future policy developments

9. The fundamental changes being carried out with the dissolution of the LSC, the transfer of funding for 16–18 provision to local authorities, the introduction of the new Diplomas and the raising of the participation age make this a critical time to assess the extent to which transport policy is enabling young people's participation in education or training.

10. In light of this, we are commissioning research to assess in more detail the extent to which transport is a barrier to the participation of young people in education or training. This research will inform policy decisions about the longer-term direction of transport policy. In the short term, we will legislate in the Fourth Session to ensure greater transparency and local accountability in the production of transport policy statements.

⁵ Specifically, this is students who are over compulsory school age but under 19, and students who are over 19 but who began their course before they reached 19.

THE TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS (IF ANY) OF THE NEW DIPLOMA FOR 14–19 YEAR OLDS AND THE GOVERNMENT’S TARGET OF INCREASING THE PROPORTION OF 17 YEAR OLDS IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION

SUMMARY

- Diplomas are being introduced from September 2008.
- Transport is not a significant concern for local areas as they begin delivering Diplomas in the short to medium term.
- We will explore the potential longer-term issues as we move towards delivery of the 2013 entitlement.
- We do not anticipate that there will be significant transport or travel implications associated with the raising of the participation age, however, we will keep these issues under review.

TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW DIPLOMA FOR 14–19 YEAR OLDS

Policy objective

11. Diplomas are being introduced from September 2008 and are a critical element of the Government’s objective to give every young person access to a broad curriculum offer to prepare them to succeed in education, work and life. By 2013, the intention is for all young people to have an entitlement to study all of the Diploma lines.⁶

Current policy

12. To understand the potential transport implications for areas of the 14–19 reforms we commissioned independent research last summer to look into this. Published in June 2008, this found that in the short to medium term, transport is not a significant concern for local areas. The 144 consortia delivering up to 5 Diploma lines from this September have relatively small learner numbers and many consortia are able to deploy existing methods to transport young people between sites. Many consortia are also timetabling Diplomas for whole days to reduce the need to transport young people between sites during the day. The research also found some evidence of e-learning being used by consortia to minimise transport requirements.

13. We recognise that rural areas do face a particular set of transport challenges in delivering the Diploma entitlement—with dispersed populations and settlements and less well-developed transport infrastructure. We are committed to supporting these areas to overcome the challenges they face and in June 2008, we published a report of good practice that local authorities are already deploying to ensure that young people can access provision. We also announced £23 million for the 40 most rural areas in the country to develop local solutions and innovation. This will fund the post of a Transport and Access Coordinator in the 40 most rural areas and provide £1 million in capital to the 20 most rural areas. This capital funding will enable these areas to develop and realise such solutions as mobile teaching provision, e-learning, skills centres and satellite campuses. The 20 local areas receiving the capital funding will be submitting proposals detailing how they will use the funding to DCSF by 15 September.

Direction of travel/future policy developments

14. Issues may emerge in the longer-term which we will look to address as we move towards delivery of the 2013 entitlement. For example, we will explore how sustainable current transport solutions are and the extent to which areas will be able to scale them up as the number of learners and Diploma lines increase. However, there are longer-term developments that could also ease transport requirements. For example, as Level 3 provision expands, larger institutions may be able to deliver Diplomas by themselves, further reducing the need for travelling between institutions.

15. We will work with a sample of local authorities from Autumn 2008 to model the transport requirements associated with delivery of the 2013 Diploma entitlement. This work will take into account the contribution of common timetabling, e-learning and other solutions being deployed by local authorities and we will publish the results of this work in Summer 2009. We will also work with BECTA to produce a good practice guide on e-learning and Diploma delivery.

⁶ From 2013, 14–16 year olds will have an entitlement to study the first 14 Diploma lines and 16–18 year olds will have an entitlement to study all of the 17 Diploma lines

TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RAISING OF THE PARTICIPATION AGE

Policy objective

16. Subject to the passing of legislation to raise the participation age, all young people will have a duty to stay on in education or training to the age of 17 from 2013 and 18 from 2015.

CURRENT POLICY

17. The Committee's coverage of this issue raises two main questions for current policy:

- Can the transport needs of this age group for participation be met by current provision?
- Should the current policy to provide free home to school transport for eligible 5–16 year olds be extended to this older age group?

CAN THE TRANSPORT NEEDS OF THIS AGE GROUP FOR PARTICIPATION BE MET BY CURRENT PROVISION?

18. By 2013 and 2015, the additional number of learners captured by the raising of the participation age is unlikely to be so substantial that it places significant additional pressure on the transport system. However, we will explore this further for areas that have low levels of participation currently.

Should the current policy to provide free home to school transport for eligible 5–16 year olds be extended to this age group?

19. Parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age (ie 5 to 16 year olds) receive a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. This is accompanied by a duty on local authorities to provide free home to school transport to the nearest school for eligible children of compulsory school age. The duty to participate for 16 to 18 years olds provides a broader range of options for participation than just full-time education. 16–18 year olds will therefore access a greater range of institutions and they often currently travel further than younger learners. This means that providing comprehensive free home to institution transport is less feasible and more costly for this older age group. For these reasons, we are not currently proposing simply extending the duty for 5–16 year olds to 16–18 year olds.

Direction of travel/future policy developments

20. However, we will keep these issues under review as it will be essential to ensure that transport and financial circumstances are not a barrier to participation. We will look at the structure of financial support to make sure that it continues to be as effective as possible. In addition, as set out previously, we are also commissioning research to assess in more detail the extent to which transport is, and could be, a barrier to the participation of all young people in education or training. This research will inform policy decisions about the longer-term direction of transport policy including considering the pros and cons of extending the existing pre-16 duty for home to school travel to older learners.

THE PROVISION OF CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE MORE GENERALLY

SUMMARY

- Local authorities can and do use their existing powers to offer local concessionary travel to young people.
- Extending England-wide concessionary travel to 5–19 year olds (including the morning peak for travel to school) would cost an estimated £1.4bn
- At present 48% of young people walk or cycle to school and there is a risk that a blanket concession could encourage young people who currently walk or cycle to take the bus
- Extending the concession to young people would significantly increase the pressure on the existing system for administering concessionary travel

Current Policy

21. The current statutory minimum bus concession provides free off peak bus travel anywhere in England to people aged 60 or over and eligible disabled people in England. Young people, except those who qualify through disability, are not eligible for the statutory concession.

22. Local authorities can use their existing powers in section 93 of the Transport Act 1985 to offer local concessionary travel to young people. Many local authorities do offer some form of bus concession to young people, whether it is in the form of reduced fares, flat fares or discounted travel cards. These are provided from local resources. Any concessionary travel offered to young people will be in addition to their statutory requirements regarding travel to school. Many bus operators also offer reduced fares to young people as commercial incentives.

Potential benefits

23. There are some potential benefits to extending statutory concessionary travel to cover young people. It could ensure that cost of travel is not a barrier to young people staying on in education or training up to age 18. It could also enable young people to access positive activities and out of school opportunities.

Cost and operational Implications

24. However, there are significant issues associated with extending the statutory concession in this way. The cost of implementing the scheme would be considerable. Central Government already provides around £1bn per year to local authorities to fund the existing older and disabled person's concession. Our initial estimate of the cost of extending the concession is that all England travel for 5–19 year olds could cost around £1.4bn.

25. The current statutory concession for older and disabled people is for off peak travel when there is likely to be unused operational capacity on buses. Extending the concession to young people for travel to school would require a morning peak concession, when buses have far less, if any, spare capacity. This would have a considerable cost and operational impact. Extending the concession to young people would significantly increase the number of people travelling for free on the buses and in many areas concessionary passengers could outnumber fare-payers.

26. Under the statutory concession for older and disabled people, local authorities currently receive funding from Central Government for the statutory concession. This is mainly provided through Revenue Support Grant (RSG). In accordance with the wishes of local government, the additional £212m funding for the extension to the current scheme to cover England-wide travel has been provided as a special grant. Local authorities reimburse operators so that they are no better or worse off as a result of the providing the concession. Operators can appeal to the Secretary of State for Transport if they think they are being unfairly reimbursed. In 2007/8, there were over 100 appeals from operators. Some 2007/8 appeal decisions are also currently subject to Judicial Review.

Further Implications to consider

27. While a bus concession may work well in urban areas where the transport infrastructure is good, in rural areas, making transport free would not necessarily help young people access education as the bus infrastructure is more limited.

28. There is also a risk that the introduction of concessionary travel would act against the Government's objective to reduce obesity in children and young people. At present, 48%⁷ of young people walk or cycle to school. There is a risk that free bus travel would encourage some young people who currently walk to take the bus.

29. Some local authorities feel that they are being under-funded for the current concessionary travel regime. We believe that there is sufficient funding in total, but the complexities of RSG make it difficult to be exact about how much funding each local authority receives for concessionary travel. Extending concessionary travel to young people would increase the pressure on the current arrangements. There have been significant recent changes in this area that has seen concessionary travel extended from half-fare local travel to free travel anywhere in England in only three years.

30. Any extension of the statutory England-wide concession would therefore be challenging to implement and would be costly. Blanket concessionary travel is increasingly difficult to implement in a de-regulated bus market and the more people are offered free travel the more that market might be distorted. Any changes would need to be consulted on widely due to the significant impact that it would have on the bus industry in England and to local authority funding.

31. We will continue to keep both the scope and the administrative arrangements for statutory concessionary travel under review.

⁷ National Travel Survey 2006 data

CONCLUSION

32. We believe that local authorities remain best suited to decide on the most appropriate concessions to offer to young people in their area. They can take account of the location of educational and transport infrastructure far more flexibly than a blanket statutory concession. They can, as necessary, consider more varied solutions to the challenge of reducing barriers to accessing education and training.

September 2008

Further joint memorandum from the Department for Transport and Department for Children, Schools and Families (ST 01B)

1. *Details of evaluation of extension of Primary School transport offer for low income families. (DCSF)*

Evaluation of the extended rights to free travel for children from low income families commenced on 19 September 2008. All local authorities (LAs) were written to and asked to:

- state how many pupils were entitled to the extended rights;
- state how many took up the offer;
- state what was the cost of meeting the entitlement; and
- comment on the impact and how the LA met the need eg additional bus/taxi use, existing provision running at higher capacity etc.

LAs were asked to respond by 20 October. Reminders were sent on 4 November. To date, DCSF is still awaiting 16 replies and further follow up action is under way.

Of those LAs that have responded:

- not all authorities are able to state how many pupils are entitled;
- 854 pupils have taken up the offer; and
- 65 LAs including London Boroughs (where there was no entitlement) reported no take up.

Due to some LAs reporting the total expenditure on primary travel instead of the extended rights element, it is not possible to state accurately the actual cost of meeting the entitlement; the impact has been a mix including “we already provide the transport”, new bus passes provided, additional buses provided, additional taxi provided and retraining staff costs.

A more detailed report will be produced once responses have been received from all LAs.

2. *Details of the evaluation DfT carrying out relating to concessionary fares including information on the types of local authority, the types of concessionary travel and the extent of changes/withdrawals. (DfT)*

The paper at Appendix A presents the main results of a biennial survey of Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) carried out in the summer. The headline figures are based on an incomplete set of Local Authorities and should therefore be interpreted with care. Some of the missing information was sought on non-respondents’ websites and presented alongside the survey responses where appropriate.

292 TCAs in England were surveyed (plus 21 Welsh authorities) and 226 authorities (77%) responded to the survey, although some specific questions have lower response rates. The analysis at Annex A concentrates on English TCAs.

3. *A note on the proportion of children losing out on the provision of discretionary transport as a result of the extension of statutory provision. (DCSF)*

DCSF does not collect figures regarding the provision of discretionary transport. As the extended rights to free travel have been separately funded, DCSF does not anticipate that any children will miss out on discretionary transport resulting from the introduction of the extended rights to free travel.

4. *Clarification of the apparent discrepancy between the statement in paragraph 7 of STO1A and the third bullet in summary of that section—to include details of research currently being carried out. (DCSF)*

Paragraph 7 of STO1A sets out that, based on information drawn from 2007–08 local authority post-16 transport policy statements and 2007 Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) data, there is no apparent correlation between provision of a free or subsidised transport scheme and post-16 participation. There is a similar spread of participation figures irrespective of whether a local authority has a free or subsidised transport scheme. It is not possible to draw any causal links from analysis of this data.

The third bullet in the summary relates to paragraph 9 of STO1A. This highlights that as we move forward with the fundamental changes that are being introduced now and in the future (ie the introduction and rollout of the new Diplomas from 2008 with young people having an entitlement to study Diplomas from 2013, the dissolution of the LSC from 2010, the transfer of funding for 16–18 provision to local authorities from 2010 and the raising of the participation age from 2013), it is important that we ensure that transport is not a barrier to young people's participation. Therefore, we plan to commission research to establish whether and to what extent transport is acting as a barrier to young people's participation in education or training. This will be investigated as part of a wider piece of research into barriers to young people's participation. Subject to the agreement of the DCSF Research Approvals Committee, we hope to commission this research in April 2009.

5. *Information relating to (a) the proportion of school transport budget spent on children with SEN and (b) the proportion of the children receiving free home to school transport that are children with SEN. (DCSF)*

- (a) The total net expenditure on home to school transport is £912 million, of which £534.6 million is spent on SEN transport.
- (b) LAs are not required to report the numbers of children with SEN receiving free transport. To establish the numbers would place an additional burden on LAs and would therefore need Research Approvals Committee and STAR chamber approval.

6. *The amount of funding that the Department of Health is putting into promoting sustainable travel to school and details of the initiatives that this is funding. (DfT/DCSF)*

Details of the funding that Department of Health (DH) contributes to the promotion of sustainable travel to school through its contribution to the Cycling England Budget and the Healthy Towns programme has already been provided to the Committee.

In addition, DH is a partner with DCSF in the National Healthy Schools Initiative. DH contributes £22.6 million towards the funding. There is no separate funding stream specifically for sustainable travel. However sustainable travel is incorporated into the core themes.

The National Healthy Schools Initiative has four core themes which relate to both the school curriculum and the emotional and physical learning environment in school.

- (i) Personal, Social and Health Education including Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and Drug Education (including alcohol, tobacco and volatile substance abuse).
- (ii) Healthy eating.
- (iii) Physical activity.
- (iv) Emotional health and wellbeing, including bullying.

More than 95% of schools nationally are now involved in the programme and over 60% of schools have achieved National Healthy Schools Status. This translates to around 3.7 million children and young people currently enjoying the benefits of attending a Healthy School.

7. *A state of play report on independent schools and School Travel Plans (STPs), to include the percentage / numbers completing STPs, the availability of STP grants to independent schools and the inclusion of independent schools in Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies (SMoTS) (DfT/DCSF)*

Independent schools are part of the target group of all schools to have a School Travel Plan by 2010. They do not receive a grant for completing a plan. It is up to individual School Travel Advisers to plan how they approach schools in their authority. Some may decide to target a cross-section of schools, others may decide that as independents don't receive a grant they may be "hard to engage" and therefore leave them until last. Anecdotally it is known that some independent schools have readily produced school travel plans, whilst others have been reluctant.

The DCSF does not collect details of grants available to independent schools. However, anecdotally we know that some LAs do offer a grant to encourage independent schools to participate.

We are clear in our statutory guidance that the duty to promote sustainable travel and publish Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies includes independent schools.

8. *Details of any evidence of the percentage of pupils that take part in a "walking bus" and how significant the "walking bus" is to the overall modal shift. (DfT)*

At the time DfT launched its Walking to School Initiatives Grant scheme in November 2006, it was estimated that there were around 600–1,000 "walking buses" in England. More than 1,900 schools were awarded Walking to Schools Initiatives Grant funding in 2007–08 to enable them to set up a "walking bus" and the information received from schools and local authorities, indicates that more than 1,200 additional

“walking buses” have now been set up, many of which are saving an extra five return car trips each day. DfT does not know what the total number of “walking buses” in England currently is and therefore cannot say what percentage of pupils take part in these and how significant the “walking bus” is to overall modal shift.

The Department of Health (DH) will shortly be commissioning an audit of walking schemes for school age children and DfT will consider what further evaluation of the Walking to School Initiatives Grant scheme it needs to carry out once the report of the DH audit is available.

APPENDIX A

DFT SURVEY OF TRAVEL CONCESSION AUTHORITIES 2007–08

KEY POINTS

- The results of the 2007–08 survey of Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) is based on a response rate of 77% and should therefore be interpreted with care.
- A third of respondent TCAs offered free travel all day in 2008.
- Some authorities have withdrawn some of features offered in addition to the statutory minimum (for instance in 2008, 39% of TCAs offered free travel from 9.30 compared to 28% in 2007).
- Similarly fewer authorities offered discounted rates outside the free period in 2008 (13%) compared to 2007 (5%).
- However, few differences were observed in other aspects of the schemes on offer between 2007 and 2008 (eg enhancements, alternative benefits, alternative modes).
- In 2008, a small number of authorities withdrew the additional benefits offered to disabled people (73% of respondents offered the same benefits as for older people in 2008 compared to 63% in 2007).
- Only one in five TCA offers concessions to young people, mainly in the form of reduces fares.

INTRODUCTION

- This paper presents the main results of a biennial survey of Travel Concession Authorities (TCAs) carried out in the summer. The headline figures are based on an incomplete set of Local Authorities and should therefore be interpreted with care. Some of the missing information was sought on non-respondents’ websites and presented alongside the survey responses where appropriate.
- 292 TCAs in England were surveyed (plus 21 Welsh authorities) and 226 authorities (77%) responded to the survey, although some specific questions have lower response rates. The analysis below concentrates on English TCAs.

PEOPLE AGED 60 AND OVER

1) *Start time for free travel*

- The statutory minimum concession in England is for Local Authorities to offer free travel for concessionaires from 9.30am to 11pm. However, some Local Authorities go further and fund extensions to the national minimum concession.
- We asked TCAs at what other times on weekdays residents aged 60 and over were able to travel for free. Around 33% of TCAs offered free travel at all times in 2008, down from 35% in 2007. There was also a marked reduction in the number of authorities offering free travel from 9.00am (from 35 to 25%) and a corresponding increase in the number of TCAs offering free travel from 9.30am in line with the statutory requirement.

Start time for free travel

	<i>At 30 June 2007</i>		<i>At 30 June 2008</i>	
	<i>Number of TCAs</i>	<i>Percentage of TCAs</i>	<i>Number of TCAs</i>	<i>Percentage of TCAs</i>
Free travel from 8.30am	7	3	7	3
Free travel from 9.00am	78	35	57	25
Free travel from 9.30am	63	28	88	39
Free travel at all times	78	35	74	33
Total	226		226	

- The table below shows the overall picture for 2008 including the information found on the websites of 49 non-respondent TCAs. There is a slightly higher proportion of TCAs offering free travel from 9am.

Start for free travel, including information from websites

	<i>Number of TACs</i>	<i>Percentage of TACs</i>
Free travel from 8.30am	7	3
Free travel from 9.00am	75	27
Free travel from 9.30am	109	40
Free travel at all times	84	31
Total	275	100

- TACs which offered free travel from 9.30 did not necessarily just offer the statutory requirement in other aspects. In 2007, 31 of the 63 authorities (49%) offering free travel from 9.30 did offer other types of extensions such as no time restrictions in the evening during weekdays. However, the proportion of such authorities decreased to 41% in 2008 (36 TACs out of 88).
- The table below highlights the nature of the change on restrictions between 2007 and 2008, distinguishing between those that offered less, more or the same benefits between the two years. Of the 40 authorities which offered a less attractive scheme in 2008 compared to 2007, over half moved the free travel time period from 9am to 9.30am. Another 12 did not alter the start time but altered their scheme in other ways, for instance by introducing a limit of 11pm on free travel, in line with the statutory requirement. Interestingly, 16 TACs offered an improved scheme in 2008, the majority by removing the evening restrictions on free travel. For 170 TACs (75% of respondents), the scheme on offer was unchanged.

Nature of the change in travel time restrictions between 2007 and 2008

	<i>Offered less in 2008</i>	<i>Offered more in 2008</i>	<i>Offered the same</i>	<i>Total</i>
Move from all times to 9am	2	0	0	2
Move from all times to 9.30am	3	0	0	3
Move from 9am to 9.30am	23	0	0	23
Move to all times	0	1	0	1
Other change	12	15	0	27
No change	0	0	170	170
Total	40	16	170	226

- It is also notable that a few authorities reported that they had changed their scheme to the statutory minimum in April 2008 but reverted back to their previous, more generous scheme in one or two months later (the tables above record the latest position). For instance Kent districts reverted to the statutory time of 9.30 between 1/4/08 and 30/6/08 but reinstated a 9am start following an initiative from Kent County to assist with funding the extra half hour. There is uncertainty as to whether this will continue in the future.

2) Cost of travel outside of free travel period

- In 2008, 5% of respondent TACs had discounted fares outside the free travel period, down from 13% in 2007. Conversely, there was an increase in the proportion of authorities offering full fares (from 47 to 58%). Over two-thirds of the TACs which moved from discounted to full fares had also introduced some restrictions on the travel times in the evening.

Cost outside free travel period

		2008				<i>Total</i>	<i>Per cent (2007)</i>
		<i>Free fare</i>	<i>Discounted rate</i>	<i>Full fare</i>	<i>A mixture of both</i>		
2007	Free fare	72	0	5	0	77	35
	Discounted rate	0	11	17	0	28	13
	Full fare	1	0	102	0	103	47
	A mixture of both	0	0	1	8	9	4
	Total	73	11	125	8	217	100
	<i>Per cent (2008)</i>	34	5	58	4	100	

3) *Enhanced schemes*

- In 2008, only three out of 222 responding TCAs offered older people the opportunity to pay for an enhanced concessionary fare scheme (compared to two in 2007).

4) *Alternative benefits*

- There was little difference in the proportion of responding TCAs which offered an alternative benefit in place of the statutory minimum scheme (42% in 2008, down from 44%).

Alternatives to free bus travel

		2008		Total	Per cent (2008)
		Alternative offered	No alternative offered		
2007	Alternative offered	93	7	100	44
	No alternative offered	2	123	125	56
	Total	95	130	225	100
	<i>Per cent (2008)</i>	42	58	100	

- In 2008, 46% of those offering an alternative offered taxi tokens, 7% offered a taxi discount card and 48% offered some other alternative such as travel tokens and senior railcards.

5) *Alternative modes available free*

- There were little differences in the extent to which TCAs offered concessionary fares on other modes of travel in 2007 and 2008. In 2008, half of responding authorities said that no additional modes were available for free. The most commonly offered type of service (by 40% of authorities) was on-demand services, typically community transport.

Additional modes available free

	2007		2008	
	No of TCAs	Percentage of TCAs	No of TCAs	Percentage of TCAs
No additional modes	111	50	112	50
On demand	88	40	88	40
Tram services	22	10	22	10
Train services	44	20	43	19
Ferry services	17	8	17	8
Other services	15	7	15	7

Note: Local authorities can offer multiple benefits so the percentage columns will not necessarily sum to 100.

DISABLED PEOPLE

1) *Difference with schemes offered to older people*

- In 2007, 63% of respondent authorities offered the same scheme to disabled people as that offered to older people. In 2008, this was up to 73%.

Schemes offered to disabled

		2008		Total	Percentage same (2007)
		Same scheme as 60+	Differences		
2007	Same scheme as 60+	137	2	139	63
	Differences	25	58	83	37
	Total	162	60	222	100
	<i>Percentage same (2008)</i>	73	27	100	

YOUNG PEOPLE

1) *Types of concessions offered*

- Of those who responded, 173 TCAs (80%) said that they did not offer concessions to young people at 30 June 2008. Of the 43 authorities who did offer benefits, 14% said that they offered half fares or reduced fares and 3% said they offered free travel.

Concessions offered to young people

	<i>No of LAs</i>	<i>Percentage of LAs</i>
No benefit ordered	173	80.1
Flat fare	1	0.5
Half fare	17	7.9
Reduced fare	12	5.6
Free travel	7	3.2
A mixture	3	1.4
Reduced season tickets	3	1.4
Total	216	100.0

2) *Age groups*

- Most of the 43 TCAs who offer concessions offer those to young people aged 17–18 (40) and 15–16 (35). Less than half of the TCAs offer concessions to children aged 5–11 and 12–14. However, the answers to this question are difficult to interpret because the age bands were specified incorrectly (they were overlapping). Care should therefore be taken in using these results.

To which age groups are these benefits offered?

	<i>No of LAs offering benefit</i>	<i>Age 5–11</i>	<i>Age 12–14</i>	<i>Age 15–16</i>	<i>Age 17–18</i>
Flat fare	1	1	1	1	1
Half fare	17	7	7	15	15
Reduced fare	12	2	2	9	12
Reduced season tickets	3	2	2	2	3
Free travel	7	4	5	5	7
A mixture	3	2	3	3	2
All respondents who offer benefits	43	18	20	35	40

Note: The question was phrased incorrectly (with age bands 6–11, 11–14, 14–16, 16–18). The answers to this question should therefore be interpreted with care.

3) *Restrictions*

- Very few of the 43 TCAs pose restrictions on the concession offered to young people. The most common policy is to restrict concessionary travel during term time.

Are there any restrictions on when the concession can be used?

	<i>No of LAs offering benefit</i>	<i>Travel to school only</i>	<i>Term time only</i>	<i>Local travel only</i>	<i>Only on certain routes</i>
Flat fare	1	0	0	1	0
Half fare	17	3	0	1	4
Reduced fare	12	2	9	2	0
Reduced season tickets	3	1	2	2	1
Free travel	7	1	1	0	1
A mixture	3	0	0	1	0
All respondents who offer benefits	43	7	12	7	6

 QUESTIONS NOT COVERED IN PAPER

Scheme areas
 Smart cards
 No permits older people
 No permits disabled
 Escorts to disabled
 Boardings (see previous analysis)
 Fares used in reimbursement (see previous analysis)
 Reimbursement mechanism

December 2008

Supplementary memorandum from the Department for Transport and Department for Children, Schools and Families (ST 01C)

TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
 CORRECTION OF MATTERS OF FACT RELATING TO ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION ON 26
 NOVEMBER 2008—SCHOOL TRAVEL

Q405/Q406 In response to a question on withdrawal of discretionary travel to faith schools and whether we had any information on it, Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP indicated that it was the sort of thing DCSF has asked and Paul Clark MP indicated that DfT was monitoring what local authorities were doing in terms of concessionary fares

Neither DCSF nor DfT has asked local authorities for information on the withdrawal of discretionary transport for faith schools.

Q407 In response to a question about a national concessionary fare scheme for children and young people Paul Clark MP indicated that a rollout of free transport to young people would cost around £1.4 billion

DfT's initial estimate is that a concession of free travel on buses at any time, anywhere in England for 5–19 year olds in full time education would cost in the region of £1.4 billion per year. This does not include any other mode of transport.

Q408 In response to a question about concessionary travel for young people aged 16–19, Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP indicated that all young people in London received free travel

London has chosen to offer free travel on buses to young people aged under 16. This is not part of the statutory bus concession. Young people aged under 5 and 5–10 can travel on buses, tubes, trams, DLR and London Overground for free with some conditions. Young people aged 11–15 can travel for free on buses and trams and at child rate on tubes, DLR and London Overground with some conditions. 16 to 17-year-olds can travel at child-rate on bus, Tube, tram, DLR and London Overground services with a 16+ Oyster photocard, while 16 to 18 year olds in qualifying full-time education can apply for free travel on buses and trams. Child fare is generally half the adult fare.

Q409 In response to the question about whether there is a case for concentrating only on the 16 to 19 age group, to perhaps look at regional initiatives, Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP indicated that in diploma delivery, we are looking at regional initiatives

As part of the Machinery of Government (MoG) changes, in June 2007 it was announced that 16–19 funding would transfer from LSC to Local Authorities (LAs) subject to legislation. At the same time the decision was taken to also review post-19 delivery arrangements following the MoG changes.

The changes will allow LAs to take an even more integrated approach to delivery of all Children's Services from ages 0–19, helping to deliver our proposals set out in the Children's Plan. This will put LAs in the lead to deliver our ambitions to raise the participation age to 18, drive up attainment at 19 and deliver the Diplomas programme ensuring a coherent approach to planning local provision across the 14–19 phase and a single, clear point of accountability for the outcomes of young people.

Local authorities will increasingly work together in sub-regional groupings to commission provision for the 16–19 age group.

Q410 *In response to a question about the withdrawal of discretionary transport, Paul Clark MP indicated that there were minimum entitlements for concessionary travel for young people*

The only statutory minimum bus concession is for older people and eligible disabled people. There is no statutory provision for young people in either the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 or the Transport Act 2000. However, local authorities do have the power to offer concessionary travel to other groups of people, such as young people.

There are statutory requirements on local authorities regarding travel to school for young people contained in Sections 508A-D, 509AD and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996, which were inserted by Part 6 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Q415 *In response to a question on how much of the transport budget is spent on special educational needs transport, Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP replied 50%*

The exact figure is 58%.

Q420 *During a discussion about the better co-ordination of local authority procured services, Paul Clark MP said that, if his recollection was correct, he had recently seen figures undertaken by the North West Centre of Excellence which showed that counties might be able to save some £500 million and unitary authorities on average some £300 million just on transport requirements alone if they were more joined up*

DfT worked closely with the North West Centre of Excellence (NWCE) to identify and deliver best practice in the provision of local passenger transport. In 2006 DfT, NWCE and the then Department for Education and Skills jointly launched a good practice paper on local authority integrated transport units (ITU), which bring together all passenger transport service planning, procurement and monitoring and management functions across a range of service areas (including school transport and healthcare). This approach offers efficiencies of scale and the NWCE project director at the time estimated that a County Council could save approximately £500k per annum and a Unitary Authority approximately £300k per annum through the use of ITUs.

Q423 *During a discussion about whether the Department of Health should contribute to the cost of school transport, Paul Clark MP said that he thought they were putting in around £20 million and that that was going into the work we are doing through school travel plans and the Travelling to School Initiative*

The Department of Health is providing £15 million of the £140 million provided for the Cycling England budget until March 2011. The funding is not directed at specific measures but will support Cycling England programmes to assist in delivering health improvements, such as walking and cycling infrastructure improvements to schools, Bike It officers to promote cycling to school and the Cycling Cities and Towns programme where the local authorities are partnering with their Primary Care Trusts and other stakeholders to make the most of the cycling investment. This is separate from the £140 million joint investment by DCSF/DfT in the Travelling to School Initiative.

The Department for Health has also recently announced a £30 million programme of Healthy Towns, which include initiatives around everyday walking and cycling, other forms of physical activity and the promotion of healthier eating. The DfT has also contributed to this initiative which demonstrates that Government is working closely across Whitehall to deliver shared aims, be it through funding contributions, policy formulation and general advice. Given the complicated way in which different programmes interact and support each other, for instance the Healthy Towns programme will contribute to sustainable travel to school but is not specifically aimed at doing so, It is difficult to know exactly how much funding the Department for Health is contributing to sustainable travel to school.

Q427 *In response to a question relating to where school travel plans are in place what decrease has there been in the number of accidents around schools, Sarah McCarthy Fry MP indicated that we are evaluating the decrease*

It is not known whether or not there is a direct correlation between a school having a School Travel Plan and a reduction in accidents outside schools. DCSF does not monitor this and nor does DfT. DfT does however collect data on child road casualties on journeys to and from school by mode which can be found in the Road Casualties Great Britain:2007—Annual Report. Police reports (STATS 19) may record whether an accident happened on the home to school journey but does not necessarily record the school the injured child attends. The child may attend a school with a travel plan but could have been passing a school without one.

Q430 *In response to a further question regarding school travel plans being in place and a reduction in accidents, Paul Clark MP indicated that where there have been reductions in the number of car journeys to a school, this would trigger the payment of monies for the school to use to implement further work in terms of their school travel plans*

Once school travel plans are judged to have met the required standard, a sample is submitted for quality assurance after which time a claim is made to the DCSF. A one-off grant is then made to each school submitting a plan on the basis of £3,750 plus £5 per pupil for primary schools and £5,000 plus £5 per pupil for secondary schools. There is then no additional funding available from either DCSF or DfT specifically in relation to school travel plans for reductions in car journeys.

However, in 2007 DfT awarded Walking to School Initiatives Grants to more than 3,200 state-funded primary schools in England to enable them to set up and sustain either a “walking bus” or an alternative walking to school initiative. To qualify for a grant for a “walking bus” of £1,000 a year for up to three years, schools had to have a reasonable expectation of saving an extra five return car trips a day as a result of setting up their “walking bus”. To qualify for a grant for an alternative walking initiative of £500 a year for up to three years, schools had to have a reasonable expectation of saving an extra two and a half return car trips a day as a result of setting up their walking initiative. In order to qualify for continued funding in years two and three, schools have had to show that they have set up their initiatives, saved the required number of extra car trips and have a reasonable expectation of continuing to do so.

In addition, we know that having a school travel plan can be an influencing factor when authorities are allocating safer routes to school money for highway capital works near schools.

Q439 *In response to a question about independent school not wanting to engage with school travel planning, Sarah McCarthy-Fry MP indicated that it is mainly the smaller independent schools that have not taken it up*

Whilst some small independent schools have not engaged in travel planning, we cannot be certain that they are the majority.

December 2008

Memorandum from South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group (ST 02)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is a collective response by the South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group. Represented on the Group are:

- (a) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council.
- (b) Sheffield City Council.
- (c) Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.
- (d) Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.
- (e) South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive.
- (f) South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat.
- (g) Local Transport Plan.
- (h) Sheffield College (South Yorkshire Colleges).
- (i) Learning and Skills Council (advisory).

1.2 The South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group was formed to improve the links between the education and transport sectors—to ensure a county-wide perspective, and to strengthen the links between strategy and delivery across both sectors. Work is being taken forward in the context of the Local Transport Plan and the four Local Area Agreements. Our overall aim is *to improve educational access and attainment by sustainable transport*. The following priorities for South Yorkshire have been agreed and progress is monitored by the Group through its Business Plan:

- (a) Implement the Education and Transport Duty.
- (b) Develop and promote sustainable travel for all to education across South Yorkshire.
- (c) Support 14–19 education to ensure that transport enables access.

1.3 Given our commitment to a County-wide approach to education and transport we believe it is beneficial to provide a South Yorkshire response to this Inquiry. We will be pleased to provide further information upon request.

2. DUTY TO ASSESS TRAVEL NEEDS AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

2.1 In South Yorkshire a “Task and Finish” Group has been set up to ensure delivery of the new duties in the Education and Inspections Act. The Local Authorities face different local issues and audits are being undertaken separately, however we are sharing best practice and adopting a consistent approach—in particular to deployment, promotion and publicity. In 2007 a common risk assessment on suitable walking routes was agreed through the T&F Group. This has been adopted within each Authority and informed ongoing work. An initial generic Strategy has been agreed and published by the South Yorkshire Local Authorities and a more robust Sustainable Travel Strategy will follow once the audits are complete.

2.2 All four Local Authority audits are close to completion in order to determine what must/can be done and compile the in depth Strategy. Sheffield has created a specific post to implement the Act; Rotherham has carried out its internal audit using GIS; all the Authorities have used GIS and Web based systems to deploy information, combined with hard copy information for those without access to IT facilities. Sustainable travel is also promoted via existing arrangements including the School Travel Advisors.

2.3 We regard promotion and publicity of sustainable travel as extremely important—and view this is an opportunity once the audits and strategy are complete to focus on promotion locally and South Yorkshire wide. This will include promotion in schools, for young people and parents but also at a higher level within the Local Strategic Partnerships and with policy makers.

2.4 Work has been helped by the provision of specific funding to undertake the additional duties—and the scope of what can be done in future will be funding dependent. Our approach will be to consider how the audits, mapping, strategy can be tied in with wider issues relating to sustainable travel and school travel/travel planning and through the LTP.

2.5 Government guidance recommends using School Census data to assess travel needs. This collects data about usual and preferred mode of travel to school but it is questionable whether the needs of children are successfully measured by this.

3. SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS

3.1 Travel planning monitoring has changed and there is limited comparable data regarding effectiveness. Once 2008 census data is compared against the 2007 baseline this will provide additional information. The benefits of introducing School Travel Plan actions are to raise awareness and address the trend in the increase of car trips on the school run. In some schools (prior to STPs) the recent increase in car use has been dramatic—even schools where there is a traditionally high level of walking (often in deprived areas where car ownership is lower than average) are showing an increase in car use.⁸ Future school travel mode census data will establish effectiveness in this respect.

3.2 Individual School Travel Plans (STPs) and initiatives within them can be very effective and there is evidence of slightly lower car use in schools with travel plans against those without.⁹ However travel plans are also about influencing longer term behavioural change and their impact on wider issues (not just modal shift). Raising awareness, engaging with young people and influencing travel behaviour can be effective at forming life long skills and attitudes to travel and also has the potential to change parents/carers attitude to travel. STPs are also good at engaging and promoting wider associated agendas, especially road safety/road safety education, the healthy schools agenda, sustainable and environmental issues and Every Child Matters. Data to measure performance will become more useful over time but can be difficult to attribute directly.

3.3 Importantly STPs can also allow access to various existing and new funding streams eg Cycling England’s school cycle training grant.

3.4 Travel Plans must be about more than just financial reward for schools to produce one—they must bring about positive behavioural change accompanied with robust monitoring of this. The effectiveness of a STP is often dependent upon securing the right person within an individual school. Engagement and participation of young people (and their parents) is very important and difficulties arise when enthusiastic STP champions (staff member, parent, governor) move on. The attitude of the School Head to travel to school, environmental issues etc is also important.

3.5 The effectiveness of STPs is dependent on factors external to schools and is often resource dependent—including the capacity of the LA to provide support in terms of road safety, training, publicity and the provision of suitable infrastructure. New provisions within the Act will improve this but issues of resources and funding for providing new infrastructure remains.

⁸ Eg Coit Infant Junior School—has no travel plan 40%–57% increased car use 2004–08; 60%–43% walking.

Brook House Junior—with travel plan 45%–41% car use over three years; walking 54%–58% (Hands Up Survey).

⁹ Sheffield Hands up data 2007 21% car use in schools with STPs and 23% car use for all schools.

4. LINKS TO OTHER TRANSPORT INITIATIVES AND MAINTAINING BENEFITS

4.1 Our Strategic Education Transport Group Business Plan helps to provide the links between initiatives, also to key delivery groups and the LTP. Through the Building Schools for the Future Programmes associated travel planning, access and congestion issues around schools are being reviewed and will be reported through the Local Strategic Partnership Boards.

4.2 Links are also made at a South Yorkshire level through the LTP's shared priorities: Congestion, Accessibility, Road Safety, Air Quality. Delivery plans for the Accessibility Planning Strategy incorporate a range of services related to sustainable travel—including cycling, walking, bus, travel planning. A key theme for the Strategy is about building partnerships and addressing access/ transport issues of other sectors—particularly Education and Health.

4.3 Our aim across South Yorkshire is to link the work we are undertaking to implement the Education and Inspections Act Duty with other issues regarding sustainable travel, School Travel Plans and other aspects of school travel, including 14–19 education agenda, extended hours etc.

4.4 Individually Local Authorities have well established links between their School Travel Plan process and other strategies and initiatives—such as Walking, Cycling, and Road Safety. For instance Road Safety Strategies deliver a range of schemes to reduce the number/severity of casualties (to meet local and national targets) and as part of this revenue funded road safety training and publicity are an important means of delivering accident reduction and behavioural change on the journey to school. All four LAs actively promote sustainable travel to and from schools and deliver a range of initiatives/training for schools including: cycle, walking, road safety and independent travel training and schemes such as walking buses. Examples:

- (a) Rotherham's pedestrian safety training is provided to schools that traditionally incorporate training in their school prospectus. As all schools are now required to provide a School Travel Plan Rotherham will provide a suitable training scheme in the next school year. This includes delivering classroom lessons/assemblies, Walk to School Week, walking buses etc and is linked to the SAFEMark and Travel South Yorkshire schemes.
- (b) Sheffield's STPs are linked to the implementation of permit parking zones and have also been picked up through the local Accessibility Strategies (Burngreave, Southey Owlerton), and linked to the delivery of Child Safety Zones, Safer Routes to Schools and School Entrance capital schemes. Support work in schools is focussed on road safety education and is prioritised in areas where the highest Killed and Seriously Injured occur.

4.5 There are plans to further integrate the behavioural/influencing travel patterns as an element of *Smarter Choices* as part of the LTP Congestion Delivery Programme and to undertake a greater range of training and support for schools—with messages to suit the individual STP's wider aims and objectives.

4.6 Once any initiative is in place promotion is an important part of maintaining benefits, together with monitoring its effectiveness—often linked to reward schemes. For example Sheffield's School Travel Activity Reward Scheme (STARS), awards schools annually on a points basis and includes compulsory elements to be entered in the scheme. Each year more activity is required to achieve the same rating encouraging continuous improvement. A similar reward scheme is in place throughout Barnsley schools—with financial benefits for those schools where there is a reduction in car use for journeys to schools. Maintaining the momentum of STPs is also possible at the moment because of the provision of a central Government bursary to support the employment of School Travel Advisors.

5. ARRANGEMENTS TO ACCOMMODATE EXTENDED ENTITLEMENTS

5.1 Appropriate arrangements are in place to meet the statutory requirement. Additional entitlements have had no discernable impact on the demand for travel on school buses.

5.2 The extended entitlements to free transport for Low Income Families are measured by either entitlement to free school meals or receipt of Maximum Working Tax Credit (MWTC). Whilst details of those entitled to free school meals are available, this is not always the case with MWTC and relies on submission of proof at the time of application. A National Database (similar to free school meals) could be useful. Whilst we are confident that the extended entitlements have been devolved within each LA's area, there is some scope to publicise the extended entitlements on a national basis perhaps by means of a media/ TV release.

6. THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

6.1 Children can travel to/from school using contracted dedicated services, usually funded by the Council via the PTE, equivalent services operated commercially or general network services. Statutory children are provided with passes enabling them to travel free. This entitlement applies throughout South Yorkshire on all relevant buses, trams and trains. Dedicated school transport is only provided where suitable alternatives are not already available. The reason for carrying out an assessment of needs and an audit is to identify gaps in the infrastructure. The suitability of the network can be reviewed once this work is completed.

6.2 There are also wider issues over the suitability of the network—including capacity, safety (in relation to behaviour and bullying, distance and safety of walk to bus stops), conflict with other users (eg commuters), attitudes and behaviour of drivers to young people. Capacity would not be sufficient to carry all pupils who currently use other modes. The introduction of diplomas would also increase demand on the network.

7. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLANS

7.1 Home to school journeys, particularly those made by walking, cycling, public transport and cars are included in the LTP and mode share on journey to school is a key LTP indicator. The provision of statutory free Home to School Transport is not specifically dealt with through the LTP—in particular the contribution that contracted Home to School Transport Services make to LTP targets (congestion, urban peak modal traffic volumes etc). There are stronger links through LA School Travel Steering Groups and the County structure.

8. IMPACT OF THE NEW PROVISIONS AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

8.1 The additional provisions within the Act in terms of infrastructure and promotion (subject to resources) could have an impact on reducing car use on the home to school journey—if the infrastructure meets the needs of potential passengers and is targeted at those most likely to change their travel behaviour. Greater pupil/parental choice (subject to admissions policy changes) could potentially lead to longer journeys and more travelling—this is an unknown factor.

8.2 This must be considered as a part of a wider range of issues relating to sustainable travel eg safer neighbourhoods, awareness, image. Promotion is very important and this is an opportunity to improve what is already done in terms of raising awareness of sustainable travel options to schools. Long-term behavioural changes and attitudes to school travel issues take time to become established and require monitoring. Timescales could be in terms of generations—to allow lost skills (eg cycling) to be regained through training etc and passed on through family structures.

8.3 Regarding cost effectiveness many of the “softer” measures are revenue intensive with very small capital costs which can be problematic within current funding regimes. Research has shown that although difficult to quantify the cost benefit of softer measures is very high compared to traditional infrastructure schemes.¹⁰ The provision of new infrastructure is very capital resource intensive and is currently delivered locally in relation to schools and KSIs where there is most impact on accident reductions.

9. INNOVATIVE SCHOOL TRANSPORT SCHEMES

9.1 In South Yorkshire we are proud of our strong joint working arrangements—helping us to share best practise, develop common approaches and strengthen links to the LSPs in order to bridge the gap between policy and actual delivery of services.

9.2 A number of schemes relating to sustainable home to school travel have been implemented in each of the Local Authority areas (see below). These are part of a range of measures geared collectively towards delivering and/or promoting sustainable transport and encouraging lifelong changes in behaviour. “Success” will therefore be monitored over many years and more work to quantify the impact on these longer term benefits and contribution to wider (other sectors’) objectives is still needed.

Types of schemes:

- (a) *Walk once a week schemes* (eg 59% of primary schools in Sheffield are involved in “WOW” schemes and similar schemes are operated in other Local Authorities).
- (b) *“Bikeit” schemes* (The Doncaster Bikeit scheme has been operating for 4 years and in 30 schools).
- (c) *Walking buses* (in schools across all the Local Authorities).
- (d) *Independent travel training* (Rotherham’s Post 16 Transport Partnership funds an “ITT” programme—in its fourth year. It is delivered predominantly but not exclusively to SEN learners and gives learners the opportunity to consider attending Further Education and a wider choice of school/college. Costs can also be reduced if a pupil is able to travel by public transport rather than dedicated taxi etc. The programme has also identified groups of mainstream pupils who would not have considered FE due to their lack of familiarity with public transport).
- (e) *Road safety education* (89% of primary schools in Sheffield take part in Crucial Crew—safety workshops for children provided by Road Safety, South Yorkshire Police, the Fire Service and the PTE).

¹⁰ Cost Benefit ratios of 1:10 and potentially higher in congested areas (Smarter Choices—Changing the way we travel Dft 2004).

- (f) *Cycle and pedestrian training* (eg Child pedestrian training has been running in 30 Barnsley schools for over five years; Rotherham provided cycle training in 54 schools during 2007–08).
- (g) *Public transport schemes* (Supporting a Friendly Environment “SAFE” promotes personal safety on public transport and operates as a partnership between the PTE, Police and local bus/tram operators. All 75 secondary schools in South Yorkshire have signed up to the SAFEmark scheme and in 2007–08 256 junior/primary schools were visited by the PTE’s promotional bus).

10. EDUCATION, TRANSPORT AND HEALTH AUTHORITIES—JOINT WORKING

10.1 Health, Transport and Education have traditionally worked to separate agendas. This is still the case but is being eroded at a strategic and working level through the Local Strategic Partnership structures and the inclusion of national indicators related to health, transport and education within Local Area Agreements. Transport representatives in South Yorkshire have worked closely with each of the LSPs regarding selection of their key indicators and to identify cross-cutting transport issues across the LAAs. Three of the four Local Authorities have selected Child Obesity Year 6 as one of their key indicators and this provides a strong link between Health, Education and Transport to build on.

10.2 The remit of the South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group is to address this lack of connection across sectors and associated county-wide reporting structures have been put in place to make sure key issues are raised through the LSPs and fed into the LAA process. The LTP Accessibility Planning Strategy also places a strong emphasis on the importance of developing partnership arrangements across sectors in order to deliver changes in local communities. Joint working between Health and Transport is being progressed in Barnsley through a Transport and Health Group linked to the LSP structure. In Sheffield similar joint working is being established through the LSP and the Enhanced Public Health Programme.

10.3 At a working level there are also links between Education and Health through the Healthy Schools initiative—national guidance states “A school cannot achieve Healthy Schools status without a School Travel Plan”. There are opportunities to strengthen these links by placing greater emphasis on active travel and physical activity and relevant operational transport schemes. Again at a working level there has traditionally been closer links between Education, Transport and Health Authorities within the Special Educational Needs arena. There could be opportunities to develop this—for example through combined use of SEN/PCT dedicated transport.

April 2008

Further memorandum from South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group (ST 02A)

School Travel—Extension of Scope

SUMMARY

- In South Yorkshire current funding and procurement of home to school transport is formalised under a Service Level Agreement between SYPTE and the four Local Authorities.
- In South Yorkshire there are discretionary concessionary fares which have been negotiated with commercial operators and each Local Authority has eligibility criteria for provision of further assistance with transport. This is within the scope of current transport legislation and there are issues about the allowable age ranges and the definition of full time education.
- Support for Special Educational Needs students to access learning opportunities represents a relatively small percentage of students but a significant proportion of overall expenditure.
- Other sustainable travel initiatives include journey planning and travel plans for colleges and Independent Travel Training.
- Transport provision should support the Government’s agenda to widen opportunities and to create a world class education system based on mixed academic, vocational and industry based provision. This would benefit from a national approach—joined up across policy areas and supported by the legislation. Student’s decisions about their post 16 education must be based on the most appropriate learning opportunity not about the transport support available and transport should not be a barrier to them accessing learning.
- There are specific transport implications for 14–19 diplomas around more complex, longer and possibly cross-boundary journey patterns and the transport provision and assistance to support this. This is about making it possible for all young people to access those learning opportunities without being financially disadvantaged.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is a collective response by the South Yorkshire Strategic Education Transport Group and provides supplementary information to our submission to the School Travel Inquiry in April 2008 and oral evidence in July 2008.

1.2 Represented on the Group are:

- (a) Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- (b) Sheffield City Council
- (c) Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- (d) Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
- (e) South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive
- (f) South Yorkshire Joint Secretariat
- (g) Local Transport Plan
- (h) Sheffield College (South Yorkshire Colleges)
- (i) Learning and Skills Council (advisory)

1.3 Transport and access to support 14–19 education has been identified as one of our priorities for South Yorkshire and we continue to work towards a County-wide approach and common standards where appropriate. We therefore welcome this opportunity to respond to the extended scope of the School Travel Inquiry and we will be interested to contribute further if requested and to work with Government towards a national way forward.

2. TRAVEL OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS AGED 16 TO 19, INCLUDING THOSE STUDYING AT SIX-FORM COLLEGES AND FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

SUMMARY OF PROVISION IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Service Level Agreement for procurement of bus services:

2.1 In South Yorkshire from April 2005 the funding and procurement arrangements for home-to-school transport was formalised under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between SYPTE and the four Local Authorities. SYPTE funds provision of home-to-school transport up to a level specified through the SLA. Any further expenditure to provide bus services required by an Authority is charged to that Authority.

2.2 The SLA covers the provision of home-to-school transport (by bus) for full-time pupils aged 4 to 18 inclusive. It does not cover transport required during the school day or for extra-curricular activities or transport for Special Educational Needs pupils, which is arranged by the Local Authorities. Arrangements for numbers of less than 8 pupils are also made by each Authority.

Bus Services:

2.3 All bus services procured through SYPTE are registered as local bus services open to the general public although some are run primarily to meet the requirements of schools. The latter operate on schooldays only and are provided only where the general network or commercially operated school services do not cater for the demand.

2.4 If a bus operator deregisters a commercially operated service relied upon for school or college use and there is a proven demand for statutory travel provision, SYPTE will fund a replacement service if there is enough funding available to do so, and provided certain criteria are met, as agreed in the SLA. Otherwise it falls to the Local Authority to fund. If it is not a statutory provision service other operators are given the option to replace the service before it ceases.

2.5 Currently there are no special services provided to colleges, however some colleges have funded services to encourage students to attend. Colleges face different issues to schools in terms of more flexible timetable and a wider cohort. The majority but not all colleges in South Yorkshire are based in town centres / urban areas and are served by regular bus networks.

Tickets and Fares:

2.6 The following discretionary concessionary fares and passes are currently available within the county to South Yorkshire residents:

- (a) 5 to 16 40p flat fare per journey.
- (b) 16–18 Student Pass free for students in full time education. Allows county-wide travel on buses and trams for 40p per journey and half-fare on Northern Rail services.

- (c) Zero Fare Pass for students meeting each Authority's qualifying criteria*. Free travel by bus, train or tram between home and school. *14–16 in line with statutory requirements and 16–18 discretionary provision.
- (d) 16–19 Travelmaster for any person between their 16th and 19th birthday. Allows unlimited travel by bus, tram or train throughout South Yorkshire. Currently costs £11 per week or £41.25 per calendar month (approximately half full price equivalents)
- (e) 19–21 Travelmaster for any person between their 19th and 21st birthday for travel as above. Costs £13.50 / £49.50.
- (f) Student Travelmaster Available to all students at FE Colleges for Allows unlimited travel as above. Costs £125 per college term.
- (g) Summer Saver Allows unlimited travel as above, available to students if exchanging expired 5–16 or 16–18 passes at the end of term and runs to the start of the autumn term. Costs £21.75.
- (h) Tickets to assist independent travel training for unlimited travel by bus, tram or train throughout South Yorkshire costs £1.60 per day for students and £3.50 per day for trainers accompanying students.

2.7 In addition to these passes and the statutory provision each Local Authority offers some discretionary support based on certain criteria. As yet this is not standardised across South Yorkshire. For example Sheffield's criteria for entitlement to Zero fares are that the learner or residential parent receives Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance or NASS vouchers and they are living more than 3 miles away. In Doncaster Sixth form students (16–19) living more than 3 miles away are entitled to a zero fares pass and college Students (16–19) receive equivalent free provision as a grant. These arrangements are being reviewed.

2.8 Colleges across the county also assist in payment of students' transport—for example Barnsley College helps to pay for the student 16–19 Travelmaster (dependent on household income), and students with caring responsibilities or who have physical disabilities may be entitled to car mileage allowances. Doncaster College also assists in payment for its students' transport.

2.9 Transport provision for Special Educational Needs (SEN) students represents a relatively small percentage of students but a significant proportion of overall expenditure because of the dedicated transport often required. Mobility Passes are available from each Local Authority and Independent Travel Training is also offered (see below).

2.10 Students attending a sixth form or college are assessed and receive a statement of special educational need, including transport requirements. This is then funded by the Local Authority or relevant college. The level of discretionary provision varies.

Sustainable travel 14–19:

2.11 Independent Travel Training (ITT) is offered by each Authority. For example Barnsley College and Greenacre Special School provide mobility/ independence training as part of some specialist courses, and an Independent Travel Training project for Sheffield was introduced in 2007 funded by Sheffield Post 16 Partnership Group. Rotherham has offered for the last 5 years ITT to support SEN and mainstream learners to widen their potential choice of FE College. In Doncaster ITT has been developed for schools and colleges, including Doncaster College and College for the Deaf. In Doncaster there is a dedicated post funded by the 14–19 Partnership to provide advice on travel choices for the 14–19 cohort. This includes ITT for schools and colleges and work in conjunction with Connexions to target NEETs young people.

2.12 Funding for Travel Advisors is for School Travel Plans to age 16. Travel Plans have not historically included cross-site movement but this is now being investigated. Some colleges do have travel plans. In Barnsley the college and Advanced Learning Centres have or will have travel plans. SYPTE also offers journey planning services to colleges and travel information is available to students through the Travel South Yorkshire web site.

Key Issues

2.13 The Government's agenda is for widening opportunities and providing choice—to create a world class education system so that all young people are equipped with the skills to compete in a global economy. It is important to make sure students can access these opportunities and that transport supports this vision.

2.14 This would benefit from a national approach which must be joined up across policy areas and supported by legislation. Students' decisions about their post 16 education should be on the basis of the most appropriate learning opportunity not about the transport support available. Ideally support for transport should be simplified to make it easier for students to understand their entitlement and transport not be a barrier or determining factor in their choice.

2.15 In South Yorkshire under current policy young people are eligible for a concessionary fare aged 14–16 and the legislation states who is entitled to free transport. All Local Authorities publish a policy statement setting out transport / access for learners aged 16–18. As the majority of post 16 transport is discretionary budget pressures in different Local Authorities has led to cuts which has resulted in inconsistencies in provision.

2.16 There is no funding from Government to support subsidy of concessionary fares for young learners. In South Yorkshire the concessionary 40p fare and other commercial discounts have been negotiated with operators but without statutory protection these will remain vulnerable.

2.17 Provisions under Education and Transport Legislation do not always sit comfortably. The Transport Act restricts the ages for provision of concessionary travel only for students who are under 18 years old on the first day of the academic year and if in full time education. Education provision relates to someone who is under the age of 19 or has begun a particular course of education or training before attaining the age of 19.

2.18 Age issues are important. Concessionary travel provides for 2 years (Year 12, Year 13). It does not cover 3 years (the Year 14 cohort)—including those students who did not enter the post 16 system with full level 2. Approximately 50% will need that extra college year. A Government target is also that everyone under the age of 25 is qualified to full Level 3.

2.19 Similarly government policy is moving towards a mixed provision of learning including academic education, vocational and industry based training and apprenticeships. Under current transport legislation we can only provide concessionary fares to those students who are in full time education. There is no consistently applied definition as to what constitutes full time education and it will be useful if this should be expressed in terms of hours per week but also what constitutes education and training. Those students not in conventional education therefore slip through the net.

2.20 Guidance has been issued that Local Authority boundaries should not be a barrier to young people taking up courses in further education but there is no funding to address this through concessionary fares and there are issues about legal entitlement to extend current provision.

2.21 There is a comprehensive bus network in South Yorkshire which provides links to the majority of schools and colleges. However if commercial services are withdrawn and not replaced parents and young people's choice of education / training opportunities may be compromised.

2.22 A specific issue: the DfT have recently consulted over implementation of EC directives on Whole Vehicle Type Approval. This places the 3+2 seating configuration, generally used on most yellow bus schemes, at risk. We would not want to see a move which affects the future viability of such schemes given the potential need for inter-school movements during the course of the school day, and possible requirement for either more or larger buses. Its particular relevance is affordability and viability and the desire to keep costs of additional transport manageable.

3. PARTICULAR TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW DIPLOMA FOR 14–19 YEAR OLDS

3.1 Diplomas are a key part of the Government's vision for a world class education system with mixed provision of academic and work based learning and apprenticeships. They will enable students to study in high quality (industry standard) facilities and it will be important that transport provision is available and affordable in order that students can access these opportunities.

3.2 From 2013 all young people will have a right to access their learning choices and there needs to be clarity about what this will mean in terms of transport provision and assistance. Under current arrangements in South Yorkshire most young people will be eligible for concessionary fares if they are in full time education but not to age 19. It is also possible that there will be a higher take-up of free travel or additional assistance and it will be important to clarify any ambiguity about legal entitlement in relation to these rights.

3.3 Journey patterns during the school week are likely to be more complex or longer:

- (a) Diplomas are about working in industry standard environments and many pupils will need to attend a different site at least one day (or half days) a week. In addition there will be travel for industry based involvement and work experience at least 20 times a year.
- (b) Quality provision for specialist subjects will be focused on a few sites which is likely to lead to longer journeys and an increased need to travel either across Local Authority boundaries within South Yorkshire or out of County in order to access these.
- (c) Core subjects for the diplomas will be offered at certain schools or colleges and there will be a need to travel between sites during the school day. This means that there is likely to be less traditional home to (same) school journeys at the start / finish of each day. Scheduling courses to allow for this movement between sites and then aligning transport to this will in some cases be challenging. Wherever possible travel time between sites will be planned into the timetables, although this becomes more complicated if travel is between a school and a college because timetables differ

more, or for half days of study. For example in Sheffield students studying for a construction diploma have 1.5 days out of school and the diploma is on the other side of town which involves some students missing the end of one period to allow travelling time.

3.4 Regarding the bus network the extent of pupils' need to travel between schools / colleges etc is unknown. The conventional network is unlikely to be adequate or flexible enough and in many cases there will be no commercial links between one school site and another as there would otherwise be no demand. We might need fewer or smaller buses to some schools at the start / finish of each day but more flexibility during the school day between sites.

3.5 In-house fleets will be useful but because of the potential numbers of students and range of different journeys the demand on these could be great. For example one dedicated mini-bus at a site might not be sufficient.

3.6 Urban and rural areas face different issues. Rural and semi-rural areas are more likely to need dedicated transport and some existing arrangements that have worked well on a small scale it might not be possible to upscale if there is increased usage.

3.7 Staggered start and finish times would allow bus operators to maximise their cost efficiency by ensuring that each vehicle can operate more than one run in each peak period and therefore allowing SYPT and Local Authorities to contain their expenditure. Whilst each Local Authority is working to rationalise timetabling and scheduling for diploma subjects to allow travelling time between courses or limit the need to travel during the school day—staggered start times as well will not be easy to achieve.

3.8 More complex journeys, off-site days, travel to one school and return from another school etc could make it difficult to determine eligibility for assistance with travel / free travel (for example because of distance from a school). Likewise for days off site suitable arrangements to provide assistance with travel will need to be made for students eligible under Local Authority / South Yorkshire policy or legislation.

4. TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS OF INCREASING THE PROPORTION OF 17 YEAR OLDS IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION

4.1 In terms of bus services this could impact on capacity and the number and size of buses required.

4.2 Regarding concessionary fares pupils aged 17 will be entitled under different parts of the Transport Act—and based on current arrangements negotiated with operators in South Yorkshire there is no distinction. It is possible however that these will not remain the same.

5. THE PROVISION OF CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE MORE GENERALLY

5.1 For further information on concessionary travel other than that provided above, please refer to the supplementary evidence provided through pteg.

September 2008

Memorandum from Cheshire County Council (ST 03)

SUMMARY

This paper outlines Cheshire County Council's response to the request from the House of Commons Transport Committee for information into their inquiry for school travel.

1. Cheshire is a semi-rural county and, as such, many of the transport problems for young people stem from the lack of transport accessing the more remote parts of the county. The Cheshire Branch of the UK Youth Parliament have identified transport issues as the most important issue to have an impact on their lives. In our urban areas surveys undertaken with young people highlight three main causes of concern about public transport: the cost of the fare, the lack of transport and during school hours the behaviour of other pupils on the buses.

2. In recent years, much work has been successfully undertaken to effect modal shift through capital based projects designed to improve the infrastructure of the environment on the journey to school; this has been complemented by a high-profile publicity and school travel plan programme.

3. The next step, to make a significant change, will be to develop home to school transport and improve accessibility for young people in all parts of the county.

4. Smart card technology offers the opportunity for products to be developed which could offer young persons access to school transport at weekends and evenings. The implementation of such a system will require additional funds of both capital and revenue and negotiations with bus companies to allow it to function in a multi operator environment.

5. In Cheshire, the delivery of public transport services, school services and all other initiatives are delivered through an Integrated Transport Unit which brings together special education transport, adult and older peoples transport, community transport and school crossing patrols. The transport network is supported with considerable resources from a publicity unit.

6. Cheshire County Council were disappointed not to be awarded Pathfinder status as it had been a challenging journey since Pathfinder and its predecessor was first mooted, to the stage of being able to put in a bid. Despite some difficult political decisions to reach and the threat of the onset of LGR in one form or another, we had reached the stage where the whole council, regardless of party, were firmly behind the bid. Members realised that this was an opportunity to grasp and rationalise the absurd systems of charging of bus fares for school and young persons travel, as well as fulfilling many other objectives.

Q1. *Sustainable School Travel and School Travel Plans*

7. Cheshire County Council has a proven record of developing sustainable school travel and transport initiatives and therefore, prior to the Education & Inspections Act (E&IA), had already undertaken a programme of works to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and promotion of sustainable school travel. The act has enabled for this work to be further progressed, which includes: a web based journey planner featuring walking, cycling and school transport routes to and from school and the temporary appointment of an officer to monitor travel plans the possibility of an independent travel training officer for special schools.

8. The development of the travel plan can certainly focus a school's attention on the travel needs of their pupils. Very often the working groups that are set up to develop the plan can become a cohesive force in changing travel behaviour. However, the effectiveness of a school travel plan can depend on the commitment of the school to develop school travel plan initiatives. Short term gains in modal shift can be lost without the on-going dedication of parents or teachers and support from the local authority.

9. For example, due to an amalgamation of an Infant and Junior School, the newly formed primary school ran a concerted campaign for parents to leave their car at home on the school run; this was supported by a traffic management scheme and new pedestrian crossing built outside the school. Car use reduced 48% in 2005 to 30% the following year but has increased slightly over the two subsequent years to 37% in 2007 and 34% in 2008.

10. It is essential that the school travel plan programme is supported by a highways based safer routes to school programme. Over the past five years the school travel programme has developed to become a school community led programme with the pupils, teachers and parents of Cheshire shaping the focus of how capital funding is spent through the County. This methodology of community involvement is key in deciding how the Local Transport Plan funding is used for highway improvements. For example, a newly installed zebra crossing was constructed as a direct response to a school's request for a park and stride scheme from the local church car park.

11. The enthusiasm for maintaining the focus of the school travel plan work varies from school to school. Long term specialist support from the Local Authority is needed but can be problematical due to the lack of staff resources. Funding through the E&IA has enabled the recruitment of a temporary post to assist with monitoring but a moratorium on new jobs has prevented any permanent solution.

12. Targets have been set by the DCSF to have all schools complete a travel plan by 2010 and although there are concerns at a local level with these unrealistic expectations these targets have been maintained. Cheshire has currently achieved 68% of mainstream and independent schools with a travel plan but there may be some, more specialised schools, which will not be able or willing to participate in the scheme.

Q2. *Arrangements for extended entitlements to free school transport*

13. It is too early to say how the extended entitlements will progress. The systems are in place and a few enquiries have been made by parents but it will take a few years before the affect of this measure has a real impact.

Q3. *Pathfinder bids for school travel*

14. Cheshire County Council submitted a bid to become a pathfinder authority, subsequently the bid was turned down for two main reasons; the lack of a proposal for comprehensive user charging and the impact of the Government's announcement that all Cheshire local authorities are to be reorganised into two unitary authorities next year.

15. The fact that no pathfinder bids were approved indicates that there is a level of misunderstanding as to what can be achieved at a local level. We understand that none of the bids contained details of a comprehensive charging system and certainly in Cheshire's case the option was discussed at great length by Members and Senior Officers. However, it was felt that the proposal could have a negative impact on rural communities. It was also felt by Members that without thorough market testing charging could be seen as imposing an additional and unpopular burden on parents without the benefits being understood.

16. Cheshire's bid for Pathfinder status outlined a holistic approach to reducing the impact of parental cars on the school run. Reducing traffic congestion is seen as a key objective of this Council and it has been pro-active in developing innovative school travel schemes to tackle the issues. The focus of this bid was to develop new ground-breaking projects which as yet we had been unable to take forward because of the lack of the necessary revenue funding and to integrate this work with the expansion of existing "proven-to-work" schemes. Developing the Pathfinder bid took advantage of the fact that Cheshire has a totally integrated transport co-ordination unit and it was felt that more flexible and innovative charging methods could be trialled which would lead to greater use of the transport network outside school hours.

17. Our pathfinder proposals included:

- Development of a multi-operator Youth card which would have allowed pupils access to all commercial transport for the price of the school transport ticket which would bring benefits on to the existing investment from Cheshire County Council and the DfT in smart card technology.
- Monitoring of the impact of charging for school denominational transport, which is due to start in September 2008, on modal shift and inclusion of a Youth Card to mitigate the impact.
- Monitoring the impact of the Youth Card on the local bus network.
- Continuing negotiations with Bus Companies to develop a Youth Card to work across all commercial services.
- Development of existing work with schools to resource school bus packs which would have been a combination of revenue support and assistance with running their own transport.
- Development a campaign, aimed at secondary aged pupils, highlighting the importance of using sustainable transport. The umbrella campaign would maintain the same theme but would address different topics, including:
 - Further development of the bus behaviour programme.
 - Grants for secondary schools to promote sustainable transport within their school.
 - A wide reaching publicity campaign, using all aspects of the media.
- Working with Cheshire's Primary and Secondary School head teacher bodies to ensure that all schools become involved in the Pathfinder process. Independent schools would also have been encouraged to participate.
- Work to assess the impact of current charging systems on the take-up of home to school transport.

18. The preparatory work would have been an essential stage in ensuring the success of the schemes once the implementation stage takes over. The information collated would have given a vital resource on the validity of school travel schemes that can be shared with other local authorities.

Q4. *Suitability of general public transport network*

19. Of the 100,000 pupils in Cheshire, it is estimated that approximately 4,000 pupils currently use the commercial or supported Cheshire bus network, 3,500 16+ pupils receive subsidised transport, 500 pupils travel on school operated buses and almost 10,000 pupils receive a free bus pass. This equates to 18% of the school population using transport for their school journey. Cheshire currently supports ineligible pupils on school transport to the region of £1 million.

20. Although the commercially operated bus network in Cheshire has reduced over the years, modifications and additions to the supported bus network have, to a large extent, maintained continuity.

21. A recent survey of a Cheshire school showed that of the 359 pupils who were driven to school, 100 or 36% would use the bus if there were improvements to the school transport system. Therefore, assuming that 36% of Cheshire secondary aged pupils, who are driven to school, would use the bus if services were more accessible, then there is potential of 2,800 pupils who could travel to school by bus rather than car. These figures were corroborated in a comprehensive survey undertaken at a separate school where both parents and pupils stated that 90% of pupils driven to school would use the bus if routes were more convenient and behaviour on the bus was better. In the comments from both surveys a high proportion of the respondents commented that they would use the bus if fares were cheaper or free.

22. The funding from local transport plans is capital based and as is already stated it is revenue funding that is required to support home to school transport. Nevertheless, there are some capital based schemes that can bring advantages for school transport. For example, Cheshire operates a yellow minibus loan scheme for schools for use primarily on the school run. The minibuses are operated by rural and urban schools and it is planned that a special school receives a minibus next year.

Q5. Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion?

23. The new provision to give free transport to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds will be unlikely, on its own, to reduce car use. Many of the pupils who will be able to access the funding will be less likely to have access to a car and will more likely walk or cycle to school. In fact the new provision may mean that some pupils may need to be allocated a taxi in extreme circumstances. However, it is early days and the funding may enable local authorities to set up new supported bus routes which can be accessed by other pupils whose only other viable transport to school would have been the car.

24. A survey of the impact of the first years of the new provisions is needed to assess whether they will prove to be affordable and effective. The Cheshire Pathfinder bid proposed this kind of analysis before embarking on an untested comprehensive charging regime.

Q6. How successful are yellow buses?

25. Cheshire operates seven in-house yellow buses on the home to school run, the buses are also used in the day time for school trips which contribute to covering the costs of operating the buses. The main success of the yellow buses has been to reduce the numbers of complaints regarding behaviour. On one route where a yellow bus was installed, the number of officially reported incidents fell by 80%.

26. Four Cheshire based commercial bus companies operate yellow style buses. The quality improvements offered by the yellow bus concept are welcomed by service users and parents. For example, one company increased their routes to pick up Primary School children on their journey home. Parents had the confidence to allow their younger children to use the bus because of the quality of the bus with seatbelts and a dedicated driver.

Q7. Are education, transport and health authorities working together?

27. In general, at local level, education, transport, and health work well together and in Cheshire there are close working relations with colleagues in Children's Services, but there are conflicting agendas. For example, Cheshire's "TLC" (Transforming Learning Communities) agenda seeks to optimise school provision which can lead to an increase in vehicular traffic at certain schools that have either increase their pupil attendance number or been the receiving school for a closed school. For example, over the last 12 months, traffic has increased on average of 4.5% at four schools impacted by the TLC agenda.

28. Over recent years there has been a general change in attitude towards the effectiveness of the travel plan from officers involved in planning services. It is now the norm that a travel plan is seen as an essential part of any school planning application and that all new school build infrastructure should prioritise the pedestrian/cyclist over the car driver.

29. In Cheshire, Healthy Schools, Eco Schools, School Travel and a number of other interested bodies, including the Police, meet on a regular basis to ensure cohesion in their programmes.

30. At a national level the joining together of the DfT and DCSF with input from the DoH, to develop the "Travelling to School" agenda is without doubt a major player in promoting modal shift on the school run. Other national bodies and events such as Sustrans and "Walk to School Week" raise the profile of these issues.

31. In terms of resources (ie vehicles) allocated to Education, Transport and Health Authorities, work is ongoing to make best use of them through vehicle brokerage development between the suppliers. For example a local scheme in Malpas has made best use of transport services involving; public buses, education contracts and adult and community services to and from day centres.

April 2008

Further memorandum from Cheshire County Council (ST 03A)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

- the challenge facing school transport provision;
- how 14–19 reforms are developing in Cheshire;
- the impact on current transport provision;
- integrated transport provision as a solution: opportunities and challenges;
- long term sustainability;
- some proposed solutions;
- implications of Local government Re-organisation; and
- what is needed to move forward.

1. *The Challenge*

1.1 Delivering the 14–19 Implementation Plan for learners poses some of the greatest challenges to the school transport network since its introduction following the 1944 Education Act. In an area like Cheshire which is a mixture of extensive rural areas criss-crossed with medium-sized towns the challenges are particularly daunting.

1.2 Cheshire County Council has developed an integrated transport service where the same unit delivers support for public transport, home to school transport, transport for people with special needs and meets its internal transport needs. This paper has been written in conjunction with the Council's Children's Service.

2. *14–19 developments in Cheshire*

2.1 In response to the Government initiative to reform the delivery of 14–19 education Cheshire have developed six local consortia and 1 cross County consortia to offer diploma courses.

2.2 From September 2008 three consortia will be delivering Diploma courses, in Macclesfield (Engineering), Vale Royal (Creative and Media) and Crewe (Engineering and Society Health and Development). It is planned that a total of six consortia and a stand alone college will offer 13 Diplomas from September 2009. From 2010 all Diplomas will be offered across consortia in Cheshire and as a consequence there will be significant numbers of learners and or staff transferring between institutions.

2.3 While the Government has stated that Cheshire could be treated as a single "travel to learn area" in reality there will be six travel to learn areas. On this basis learners will be offered opportunities to attend courses within those travel to learn areas but also across the County. On three days they will attend their "home school" and on two at the provider institution which specialises in that diploma line.

2.4 As one of the 40 rural areas identified by DCSF Cheshire is to receive £75,000 to support the post of Transport Access Coordinator, for 18 months from September 2008, and also a further £2,000 to carry out a rural pairing exercise with Warwickshire to look at the challenges we both face and possible solutions.

3. *Impact on school transport provision*

3.1 The journeys that are needed to achieve this will transcend the established home to school journey patterns. This will create a need for new routes and will reduce demand on previously established routes.

3.2 In large metropolitan areas or in rural areas with a single large town as a focus, much but not all of the new demand could be absorbed by the existing public transport network. The challenge would then be one of managing down the displaced demand where less of the traditional home to school transport is needed. In Cheshire a more sophisticated solution is required.

3.3 Cheshire also has to face the fact that unlike many areas public transport is provided in a multi-operator environment. There are over 40 operators in the County. With a single home to school service this is not a major issue. Where a learner is attending more than one institution or has to make more than one journey this becomes an obstacle to efficient provision.

3.4 Key to delivering this is parental confidence in the transport system. They need to be assured that their children will have a safe journey to and from their place of learning. For example where possible complicated journeys involving changes need to be avoided especially for younger learners.

3.5 The Crewe area is the most developed in Cheshire in terms of delivering diplomas. They have therefore had most experience of the transport problems this has created. The following case study outlines some of their experiences.

CASE STUDY: TRANSPORT WORK IN CREWE SO FAR

Crewe has five high schools which operate on five sites. 14–19 collaborative provision has been in place for some time with each school arranging their own transport. In Spring 2007 we commissioned a survey of the current transport systems and an investigation into how they could be improved. This found that transport for 14–19 learners is a significant and costly aspect of learning. A range of activities had to be covered from single day events such as industrial visits and FE/HE tasters to weekly collaborative courses at colleges, schools or other venues. While all schools operated within the county framework, demonstrating best practice and using transport from the recognised county users list, methods for booking were inconsistent. Sometimes they were done by staff arranging events or at other times by a centrally appointed person. The result in one case was that two buses from the same school were commissioned to make the same journey for two small groups of pupils. Some schools arrange transport for pupils attending college courses and from 2007 these were co-ordinated as combined transport whereas before they had each booked coaches.

For diplomas coaches have been booked to transport students to the college each week. As the specialist facilities can only accommodate small group sizes this will involve a shuttle service between schools; this has been planned and co-ordinated centrally and will be supported by a diploma student support co-ordinator—a part time post created to address the need for additional support for students required when undertaking

off-site learning. This is financially unsustainable in the long term. An improved system with smart cards and pupils being entitled to use public transport is one of the options to be explored. This could involve students being entitled to reduced fares while in learning or at least until the end of Y11 not just until their 16th birthday. For other provision learners either walk between sites (supervised by staff), are transported in taxis or are required to make their own arrangements.

Work has also been done on the risk assessment framework which will need to be carried out for pupil transport of any type. From this, recommendations have been made to schools about preparing and equipping pupils for the transport to their place of learning—this includes safe crossing of roads, identification of bus/train routes etc. It is important that schools are confident in the pupils' ability to manage their safety before any arrangements are made and in the quality and clarity of communication with parents about the expectations and responsibilities re pupils transport. Staff training and support will be required in order to develop the collaborative transport which will be needed to make the collaborative learning work within Cheshire.

This example illustrates a number of key points:

- the transport system becomes more complex and more expensive as a result of this policy;
- the need for co-ordination of transport on a long- term sustainable basis;
- the benefits of integration potentially offering opportunities to deliver transport through the public network by giving learners smart cards and concessions; and
- bus and rail transport is only part of the solution; the role of walking and cycling and the risk management this requires are an essential part of the mix.

4. *Integrated transport measures*

4.1 Cheshire already operates its home to school and supported bus network as an integrated system. Learners may travel on one of a variety of services; for example they may have a dedicated school bus, a seat on a supported registered bus or a contract on a commercial service. This approach could form the basis for optimising expansion of the network but it requires resourcing and recognition that transport is as vital an input into education provision as computers or teachers.

4.2 One encouraging sign is that after years of decline bus patronage is growing. In 2007–08 there were an extra million bus passenger journeys in Cheshire alone. This is partly a result of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme for older and disabled people and the impact of rising fuel prices but in Cheshire the Council has agreed network improvements in partnership with bus operators as part of its “Route and Branch” initiative. This gives an opportunity to expand provision by providing for multiple markets.

4.3 There is a hunger among young people in Cheshire to overcome the obstacles that the lack of transport makes to their lives. The Cheshire Youth Parliament identified transport as their number one priority. When offered funding their first action was to put it into a youth bus and rail concessions scheme.

5. *Long term sustainability*

5.1 Transport provision for the pilot phase of the diploma initiative has been aided by giving participating schools additional funding to enhance current transport provision between provider and home school. However this is unsustainable in the long term as more consortia come on board, learners seek to take advantage of the many opportunities open to them and the initial funding runs out.

5.2 A good example of how transport can be delivered effectively has been illustrated in the Crewe consortium where . . .

5.3 Transport choice could also be exercised by learners and their parents opting for unsustainable means of transport increasing congestion and their carbon footprint. Proposals need to design in sustainable transport, public transport, cycling and walking rather than addressing these as an afterthought when unsustainable habits have become ingrained.

5.4 These issues need co-ordination at the highest level in central Government, local government and in educational institutions.

6. *Some proposed solutions*

6.1 Flexibility of transport provision has to be the key to any response to these educational developments. In its bid to the DSCF earlier this year for Pathfinder funding in response to the Education and Inspections Act Cheshire County Council proposed a series of sustainable transport measures. A key element of the proposal was to negotiate with bus operators to use the funding to pilot a smartcard school bus pass which offered young people concessions on the public transport network. The prospects for success for this were good because the Council has already established its transport operation as a fully integrated unit, dealing with all aspects of public sector delivery of transport in the County. Other Pathfinder measures would have enhanced the provision for other forms of sustainable travel to school.

6.2 The success of the County's concessionary fares scheme for older and disabled people indicates that there is an opportunity to offer concessions to young people in a way that enhances educational opportunity and enriches their lives. It also offers something which the concession to older people does not: an introduction to public transport for an emerging, young, market. Nearly all bus operators in Cheshire offer reduced fares (two thirds to a half fare for under 16s) opening up the opportunity for negotiating enhanced concessions.

6.3 The County Council is also a leader in the development of smartcard technology. Using the accepted ITSO standard we are developing solutions which meet the challenges of a multi-operator environment. The on-bus and back office solutions being developed for the older people's concessions scheme can quickly be applied to home to school and young people's bus travel.

7. Local Government Reorganisation

7.1 The Government has decided to reform the pattern of local government in Cheshire, abolishing the current two tier system and replacing it with two all-purpose unitary councils. The new councils come into existence on 1 April 2009.

7.2 This will have an impact on current provision and any proposals for future development. Because of the impact on service delivery in the short term implementation teams of the shadow authorities have taken the view that for a period of two years transport provision will remain as a shared service. Delays in decisions about the medium term future of education transport delivery and support will hold up the development of a solution in this area of radical change.

7.3 Local Government Reorganisation was cited as the key reason for the rejection of the Cheshire Pathfinder proposal mentioned above, although the DSCF finally decided not to pursue any of the applications from local authorities.

7.4 The reorganisation issue has highlighted the potential impact of cross boundary access to diploma courses. It is the government's intention to give greater freedom to choose courses and for the resources to "follow" the learner to the provider. Especially if this involves crossing boundaries, it is important to find a mechanism for ensuring that some of the resource meets the transport needs of the learners.

8. Next steps

8.1 The move towards diplomas and greater choice for learners is welcome but there needs to be clear recognition that for it to be financially and environmentally sustainable a number of key points need to be addressed.

8.2 Resources need to go into transport as well as on site education. If resources "follow" the learner, funding bodies need to ensure that resources are allocated to transport.

8.3 Stakeholders must work together to deliver an integrated package of support for learners. This needs to take place at Government level (with the Department for Transport, Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Communities and Local Government) as well as locally.

8.4 Policies need to be developed with regard to deliverability and resource at all levels and address boundary issues.

8.5 Policy needs to address sustainability issues and make provision for sustainable travel in this context.

8.6 Practical solutions need to be piloted which offer young people truly flexible transport options through smart ticketing and innovative agreements with transport operators.

September 2008

Memorandum from TravelWatch NorthWest (ST 04)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) represents all public transport users in North West England. In giving evidence to this inquiry TWNW has considered the following:

- pupils are also passengers, and indeed public transport's passengers of the future;
- there is a synergy between public and education transport;
- pupils and the travelling public often share the same vehicle; and
- in some authorities the schools transport budget dwarfs and also significantly affects the public transport budget—so that changes in school travel legislation are of more significance than new public transport legislation. Part 6 of the much wider Education and Inspection Act 2006 is truly, in these instances, the "elephant in the room".

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have a duty¹¹ to prepare and publish sustainable school transport strategies and annual schools' travel needs analysis. This duty¹² will pass to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in respect of scholars aged 16–19.

2.2 School bus services will no longer have to be registered as local services.¹³

2.3 Under the 1996 Transport Act pupils under the age of 16 had an entitlement to free home to school travel over distances exceeding three miles (two miles for the under 8s). Part 6 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 extends this by creating an additional but means tested entitlement to free home to school travel¹⁴ over distances exceeding two miles but not exceeding six miles (15 miles in the case of attendance at “faith schools”).

2.4 Further it allows LEAs to apply to become “pathfinder” authorities able to propose innovative changes in their areas to the current statutory¹⁵ school travel scheme to support greater parental choice of school. Unlike the current scheme these need not contain any universal free travel entitlement, although pupils from low income families will continue to be protected by the extended entitlements.

TWNW'S RESPONSE

3. GENERAL

3.1 The NW Region currently comprises two PTE areas, four Unitary Authorities and three “two tier Shire” County Councils. It is these latter, whose schools' travel budgets are much greater than their public transport budgets, who are likely to be most affected by the provisions of Part 6 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006. In general the average length of home to school journeys is greater than in the other authorities and so consequently is the proportion of “entitled” pupils.

3.2 The consultation does not mention the transfer¹⁶ of responsibility for “scholar” (16–19) travel from LEAs to the LSC.

3.3 TWNW approves this provision which can only help reduce the wasteful expenditure by LEAs and Colleges for Further Education on dedicated buses which are often unavailable, even when they have the capacity, to scholars attending competing establishments,¹⁷ or to the general public.

3.4 Entitlement to free home to school transport beyond two or three miles has long been surrounded by anomalies and uncertainties; for example:

- definitions of “nearest suitable routes”;
- attendance by choice at private schools, out of area schools or “faith” schools;
- the power, but not the duty, of LEAs to make discretionary arrangements (eg charging non entitled pupils for places on free school buses, or making provisions for “scholars” aged 16–19); and
- the use of school buses belonging to LEAs to carry fare paying passengers whilst being used to provide free transport for entitled pupils or to provide a local service.¹⁸

3.5 “Pilot” Pathfinder schemes may be able to explore innovative ways of overcoming some of the constraints attending these anomalies and uncertainties, and TWNW welcomes this approach, especially as the Education and Inspection Act 2006 retains the Secretary of State's veto over each scheme.

4. *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel? How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?*

4.1 We are not well enough informed to answer this and suggest that ATCO would be in a better position to respond.

¹¹ s76(1).

¹² s83.

¹³ s85 amends the PPV Act 1981 and TA 1985 s6.

¹⁴ s78 entitlement for eligible pupils in “pathfinder” areas.

¹⁵ Education Act 1996 s444 (as amended).

¹⁶ s83.

¹⁷ eg College A runs a service to B, whilst College B runs to A, each with scholars studying the same subjects! Both could run to C (half way) and exchange scholars.

¹⁸ which must be registered—PPV Act 1981.

5. *Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate pupils' extended entitlements to free school transport?*

5.1 LEAs have had in place since 1944 effective strategies to meet the demands of the current entitlements, and purely from an organisational perspective should be able to adopt these to comply with their new duties. However, the number of new entitlements at the margins (from three to two miles and over six or, in the case of faith schools, 15 miles) will vary significantly between authorities, and may severely stretch some of their budgets.

5.2 There is, especially in rural areas, considerable synergy between the procurement of education transport and public transport, with both tenders often being co-ordinated and let jointly. TOWNW consider that the easement in the requirement to not have to register schools services could have a detrimental effect on such sensible co-ordination.

5.3 Many rural communities rely on school buses in term time and if these are not registered their details may be lost to sites like Traveline.

6. *What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of the proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?*

6.1 Anecdotal evidence in the NW points to no Metropolitan Boroughs applying. This might be expected as the revenue risk to them, where most free transport is procured via the issue of free passes for use on registered local services, would initially be unquantifiable, until it became apparent how many pupils would actually make use of their new entitlements.¹⁹ It is believed that at least one County Council in the NW is considering applying for Pathfinder status.

6.2 The assumption has generally been that Pathfinder authorities would seek to abolish all but protected free travel and instead substitute an average or "flat" home to school fare. However, some urban Local Transport Authorities²⁰ are arguing strongly (in their response to the Local Transport Bill) for children to have similar concessions to OAPs, or at least for there to be a subsidised low flat national child fare, which would have the same effect (except where a change of vehicle is necessary between home and school so creating an "interchange penalty"). Pathfinder status might be one way of testing this proposal.

6.3 Although the provisions of Part 6 of the Education and Inspection Act can be expected to have most impact on Local Transport Authorities and Bus Operating Companies, TOWNW would caution that cognisance needs to be given to its possible effects on rail services which often cater for quite heavy but localised and time sensitive pupil flows. Any adjustments to travel entitlements will need to be "mode impartial" to avoid migration between modes.²¹

7. *Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?*

7.1 Current public transport networks do not adequately cater for pupils who do not use dedicated schools transport. Apart from in London, such networks are not integrated,²² and the present privatised and deregulated public transport industry, together with the dead hand of competition law, makes this all but impossible. However, the provisions of the Local Transport Bill should go a long way to addressing this fundamental deficit.

7.2 Currently, operators, in pursuit of their commercial objectives, tend to serve "honeypot" radial and arterial routes at high frequencies, whilst simultaneously abandoning and deregistering²³ marginal unremunerative but socially desirable services. Many of the latter serve the more remote educational establishments.

7.3 It is also often difficult for operators to serve schools where uncoordinated planning of housing and educational "re-organisations" have resulted in relocations or concentrations of sites in greenfield or dispersed locations. This is inevitable as long as parental choice, the *raison d'être* of the Act, replaces zoning.

¹⁹ There is a clear parallel here with the as yet unquantified financial effects of the new concessionary travel entitlements.

²⁰ Eg GMPTE.

²¹ as is already observable with OAP concessions and might also happen if free school travel in a pathfinder area were to be by bus only.

²² "Integration—are we getting there" Challis and Fawcett, RPCNW 2003.

²³ "tactical" deregistrations are a ploy used by operators to try to force Local Transport Authorities to put these out to tender in the hopes of winning them back at a subsidy.

8. *Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?*

8.1 TWNW expects there to be different effects in urban and rural areas.

8.2 Whilst the provisions may extend parental choice by encouraging:

- (a) “protected”/entitled pupils to attend more distant schools; and
- (b) non entitled pupils to attend more distant schools at an effectively subsidised lower average or “flat fare”

in so doing they could increase the length of the average school journey.

8.3 Encouraging dispersed school travel patterns must make it harder to serve these by public transport and so create a car dependency culture.

8.4 Pupils’ social and school “friendship” networks will not be synonymous at 11 + , especially if siblings attend different schools. Parents may end up ferrying children to both schools and friends.

8.5 The extension of entitlement for some pupils by reducing the statutory walking distance from three to two miles could encourage obesity.

8.6 In some rural areas a new entitlement to free school transport is worthless if no public transport exists until the LEA procures or provides dedicated transport.

8.7 In this connection the easements in the Local Transport Bill relating to the use of small passenger carrying vehicles at separate fares could be helpful to LEAs.²⁴

8.8 Affordability and cost effectiveness are relative terms. TWNW would merely argue that the costs and benefits of schemes should be measured as widely as possible against NATA²⁵ criteria and not against such narrow criteria as the perceived costs of motoring.

9. *How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated “yellow buses”?*

9.1 The answer to this question depends on how success is measured. Some schemes may be relatively expensive, but deliver big, although not financially quantifiable, cross sector benefits.²⁶

9.2 In the NW, for example, the numbers of pupils using Yellow School Buses is greater than in WYPTE which has many more Yellow Buses.

10. *Are education, health and social services working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?*

10.1 No. Despite a duty of co-operation in the Transport Act 1985,²⁷ this has not been evident in many authorities. However, there are many examples, too numerous to cite, of good practice in attempting to perform this duty.

10.2 What makes it so hard is the difficulties which Local Transport Authorities experience in capturing “cross sector benefits”. For example, the savings which LEAs are able to make in their transport budgets in areas where there is a low flat child fare are rarely quantified or refunded to the LTA where this is not the same authority. The proposed ability of PTEs to own PSVs²⁸ may be helpful in this respect, especially in the provision of “Yellow Buses”.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 TWNW considers the provisions to be far reaching and that they deserve testing. Representatives will be willing to expand orally on their views. They are also keenly interested in the outcomes of pathfinder trials, and prepared eventually to comment on these.

April 2008

²⁴ Local transport Bill cc 46–49 re use of PHVs as taxi buses and the use of “Permit” minibuses.

²⁵ New Approach to Appraisal—DfT 1978.

²⁶ eg a reduction in anti social behaviour. Mitchell, M, “*Effectiveness of CCTV in reducing ASB*” MSc dissertation, Sheffield Hallam University, 2007.

²⁷ s88.

²⁸ Local Transport Bill c57.

Further memorandum from TravelWatch NorthWest (ST 04A)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

1. Introduction

1.1 TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) represents all public transport users in North West England. TWNW has already responded to the Committees' initial inquiry and is pleased to have been invited to make the following further written submission to the Transport Committee on the extension of scope of its inquiry into school travel.

2. Travel options for students aged 16 to 19, including those studying at sixth-form colleges and further education colleges

2.1 TWNW's initial response on 17 April 2008 welcomed the transfer²⁹ of responsibility for funding "scholar" (16–19) transport from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to Local Education Authorities (LEAs).

2.2 There has been anecdotal evidence in the NW of wasteful competition between Colleges of Further Education (CFEs) using their budgets to procure free travel and thus "poach" students from the catchment areas of neighbouring CFEs. Some of these students might even be enrolled on courses already available at their nearest CFE.

2.3 It is especially disconcerting that many of these "opportunistic" transport contracts are not procured as registered local services so that any spare capacity can be available to the public at large. This is because the funding CFE will generally wish to discourage competing colleges' students from utilising them.

2.4 LEAs would be better placed than a national body such as the LSC to be more vigilant against such local misuses of funding. The proposed handover in 2010³⁰ to LEAs of the LSC's £11 billion budget for 16–19 year old scholars reinforces this observation.

3. The transport and travel implications (if any) of the new Diploma for 14–19 year olds and the Government's target of increasing the proportion of 17 year olds in full-time education

3.1 The new 14–19 year olds' Diploma option raises a confusing plethora of existing and possible educational and transport policies. In this context the following points should be noted:

- The Diploma straggles the schools, sixth form colleges and CFEs divide.
- Diploma pupils are more likely than other pupils and scholars to be taught at different educational or employment sites.
- They will be expected to travel, most probably by public transport, between these sites. £23 million has been allocated in 2008–09 for this "additional travel".³¹
- Some pupils will already have enjoyed an entitlement to free or subsidised³² schools transport before reaching the age of 16.
- The transfer of responsibility from the LSC³³ for 16–19 year old "scholars" has resulted in that body being replaced in 2010 by a new Young Peoples' Learning Agency responsible for 14–19 year old Diploma students.
- A further complementary new Skills Funding Agency will fund (at £4 billion per annum) other "non academic" trainees and "modern apprentices" in CFEs and private sector training organisations.

3.2 Some, perhaps all, of the above policies, whilst they can be expected to have admirable educational outcomes, display scant regard for their, probably, unintended transport consequences.

3.3 It cannot be right that students and scholars, perhaps even attending the same establishments, should have widely different educational transport entitlements.

3.4 There is a danger that lack of a coherent and generous support of education transport for Diploma students will have a depressing effect on enrolments for these courses and on government's targets for the proportion of 17 year olds in full time education. There will also be a risk of a negative modal shift from public to private transport as parents either drive students to and from college/workplace or help them to obtain and drive their own vehicles.

²⁹ Education and Inspection Act 2006.

³⁰ "Education Guardian" 17/4/08.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Education Act 1996 as amended by the Education and Inspection Act 2006.

³³ "Education Guardian" 17/4/08.

4. *The provision of concessionary travel for young people more generally*

4.1 From a purely pragmatic perspective the above disjointed policies support the case already being made in some quarters³⁴ for the national concessionary fares scheme to be extended to children and teenagers up to what the already described forthcoming provisions will create, namely, a de facto school leaving age of 18 years.³⁵

4.2 There are other compelling factors in support of this argument. Many teenagers who have benefited from free school travel or reduced child fares find themselves at the age of 16 facing what can often be a 100% or more hike in bus (or rail) fares. It is not surprising that they will react by seeking as soon as possible³⁶ to pass their driving test and make use of whatever private transport they can access.

4.3 Yet these disaffected “scholars” are at the same time tomorrows potential public transport users. Once their current dependence on public transport is broken it will be hard to win back when they become adults. The argument for child/teenager concessionary travel can easily be made in this way on sustainability grounds alone.

4.4 To be effective for access to education, child/teenager concessions would need to be valid in both the morning and evening peaks. Transport for London (TfL) appears not to find this an insurmountable problem. However, a formula would need to be devised to capture the cross sector benefits to LEAs who might otherwise escape some of the costs, where there are appropriate registered local services on which concessionaires can travel, of their previous statutory duty to procure or provide free transport for entitled pupils. If a national formula for reimbursing operators for accepting existing free concessionary passes “off peak” could be agreed it might be possible for this to be adjusted to reimburse operators for accepting child/teenager free concessions.

4.5 Some of the most intractable congestion problems are associated with the starting and finishing times of educational establishments. These are often located at out of town sites poorly served by public transport or in urban areas where parking is restricted, but if their students had free or cheap travel entitlement operators would be encouraged to provide education related transport which could significantly reduce such congestion.

September 2008

Memorandum from Sustrans (ST 05)

SUMMARY

1. Reducing car use and promoting walking and cycling on the school journey is a critical component of government policy, the responsibility for which now straddles several government departments. It is critical because:

- The school journey is responsible for around one fifth of peak hour traffic and has a consequent impact on pollution levels and demand for oil.
- All sectors, including schools, must make greater efforts to reduce car travel if the UK is to get anywhere near the government’s target to tackle climate change and reduce CO₂ emissions by 60% by 2050.
- Investing in walking and cycling networks serving schools have much wider community benefits and meet one of the main calls for action in the Foresight report “*Tackling Obesity: Future Choices*”; to change the environment we live in and create public infrastructure which supports walking and cycling.
- Everyone will make a school journey at some point in their lives and it presents a key opportunity to educate children about sustainable lifestyles, teach road safety skills and develop lasting sustainable travel habits.
- Regular daily exercise represents the most effective means of reducing child obesity and has little or no impact on the pressurised school timetable.
- Government has a responsibility to address the negative transport impacts of its education policy resulting from parental choice, rural school closures and extended/specialist schools.

³⁴ most powerfully by the Passenger Transport Executives’ Group (PTEG).

³⁵ 19 in the case of Diploma and “third year” sixth formers.

³⁶ currently at age 17.

2. The Travelling to School Initiative has made steady progress and it is encouraging to see the enthusiasm with which schools have taken up the challenge. As fears about climate change and the obesity epidemic come to the fore, the Government must continue to force the pace of change. Key actions we recommend for government include:

- Setting a national target regarding mode of travel to school which encourages local authorities and schools to be ambitious with their own targets.
- Seek further support from Ofsted in securing schools' commitment to their travel plans.
- Ensure that new school bus arrangements are targeted at those pupils who live beyond notional walking and cycling distances (two miles+ from school).
- Continue to support proven travel behaviour change projects such as Links to Schools, Bike It, Bikeability and the Walk to School Campaign.
- Increase revenue funding for local highway authorities at the expense of major capital transport schemes.
- Ensure that the design and management of new schools sets the highest possible standards for promoting sustainable travel.

3. We also wish to draw the Committee's attention to two recent documents:

- (i) Sustrans' 2008 policy document "Take action on active travel", signed by 57 public health and other bodies, which says "We call on ministers, civil servants, local authorities and all involved to make a big shift now: invest heavily in walking and cycling, and recreate an environment where children can play in the street and adults lead an active life"; and
- (ii) "Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives" a £372 million cross-government strategy published by the Health Secretary, Alan Johnson and the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls in January this year. It supports an integrated approach in England—from early years, to schools and food, from sport and physical activity to planning, transport and the health service. It will bring together employers, individuals and communities to promote children's health and healthy food; build physical activity into our lives; support health at work; and provide incentives to promote health. It will also provide treatment and support when people become overweight or obese.

ABOUT SUSTRANS

4. Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. We work on practical solutions to current transport challenges. Our aim is to transform the UK's transport system and culture so that:

- the environmental impacts of transport—including climate change and resource depletion—are significantly reduced;
- people can choose more often to travel in ways that benefit their health;
- people have access to essential local services without the need to use a car; and
- local streets and public spaces become places for people to enjoy.

5. To achieve our aims we work on a wide range of practical, evidence-based projects. These include:

- The 12,000-mile National Cycle Network.
- Connect 2: our £50 million award-winning programme to increase accessibility in 79 urban areas.
- Low Carbon Travel, Liveable Neighbourhoods and Active Travel: all promoting low carbon, non-motorised travel.
- TravelSmart: our pioneering work in behaviour change, which is leading to a 10% reduction in traffic in the Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns and in other projects.

6. In England, our specific work with schools includes:

- School Travel information service—we support nearly 10,000 schools across the country with regular information and advice about travel plans, safe routes to schools and how to promote sustainable travel to school.
- Links to Schools—Funding from the DfT has enabled us to link over 300 schools to the National Cycle Network.
- Bike It—a team of 30 staff across the country works in schools to promote cycling. Cycling levels have trebled after one year and over a quarter of pupils are cycling regularly to school.⁽¹⁾

We also work with schools in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

Making specific reference to the questions posed in the call for evidence:

What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel? How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?

7. Local authorities and schools have made good progress towards the national target for all schools to have travel plans in place by 2010. School travel strategies have been published in all areas and it is encouraging that a good number of them are selecting mode of travel to school as one of their headline performance indicators in new local area agreements.

8. We understand that evidence from the latest school census data shows small but significant reductions in car use at schools with travel plans. This is a major achievement bearing in mind the fact that school journey distances are steadily increasing as schools are closed or amalgamated, schools seek specialist status and extended schools create variations in the length of the school day. In the background parents are exercising their choice for more distant schools and car use in general continues to rise.

9. A typical school travel plan has been shown to reduce levels of car use by between 8% and 15%, with some schools achieving reductions of 20% and more.⁽²⁾ Schools have reported other important benefits including raised awareness of sustainable travel issues, improved road safety, improved relations with local residents, more opportunities for physical exercise, and alertness of pupils in class.⁽³⁾

10. Once a school has completed its travel plan and received a capital grant to support it, there are however few incentives for schools to continue to implement and develop the plan. Practical support for schools is limited by the large number of schools with whom school travel advisers have to work (usually between 50 and 100 schools each) and most of their effort is focussed on schools without travel plans.

11. To ensure that school travel plans result in a change in travel behaviour, we suggest the following support for schools is required:

- A national accreditation scheme for school travel plans (to which schools must be reassessed on a regular basis).
- Ensuring that every local authority employs dedicated staff to meet their duty to promote sustainable travel to school, just as they do to promote road safety.
- Ofsted and the Sustainable Development Commission work together to ensure that school travel plans are routinely reviewed as part of school inspections.
- DCSF extend their capital grants beyond 2010 to support schools which have been successful with their travel plans. We know of many schools who wish to extend their cycle storage for example.
- Enable more schools to benefit from Bike It, Links to Schools, Walk to School and other practical projects which deliver school travel plan outcomes.

Are appropriate measures in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?

12. As parents choose different schools and schools close, amalgamate or specialise, there is a great deal of uncertainty about school catchment areas and this works against effective planning of school bus services. In addition local authorities may be unwilling to alter well established school bus services for contractual and political reasons.

13. In urban areas, and in some rural areas too, lower speed limits, safe routes to schools and increased provision of cycle training will undoubtedly offer better value, more flexibility, budget stability (as oil prices rise) and wider community benefits than a reliance on school buses. Around half of local authorities have now signed up to the new national standard for cycle training (Bikeability) and are set to benefit from a significant cash injection from Cycling England to extend take up of high quality on-road cycle training. Investing in safer roads will enable the vast majority of children to opt for cycling with terrain, as opposed to distance, being the most significant barrier. Denmark presents an excellent example of what can be achieved: after major investments in road safety, there is now an expectation that children can cycle distances of 1.5 miles to 6.0 miles (depending on their age) before they are entitled to free bus travel, 50% of children cycle to school and 12% travel by car (32% in the UK).

What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of these proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?

14. These questions are best answered by DCSF officials and local authorities who have proposed pathfinder projects.

Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to school journeys?

15. Public transport networks vary depending on frequency of service and the proximity of services to schools and pupils' homes. Unless free or heavily discounted public transport is offered to young people, then it is unlikely to be used. Examples of good practice in this area include Transport for London's free bus travel scheme for young Londoners and the Directions 4 Change project in Dumfries and Galloway which adapted public transport services to suit young people's needs.⁽⁴⁾

16. The new requirement on local authorities to produce school travel strategies, audit walking and cycling networks which serve schools, and report on progress with reducing car use on school journeys is welcome. Nonetheless local authority budgets which support capital investment for walking and cycling on the school journey remain insufficient. Typically in this country we spend just £1 per head on walking and cycling schemes each year whereas this figure is five times higher in much of Europe. Many small-scale capital investments such as local safety schemes, safe routes to schools (Links to Schools) and traffic calming have been shown to offer better value than major capital investments.^{(5) (6)}

17. There is an imbalance in capital and revenue funding that supports school travel plans. Pedestrian and cyclist training, school travel plan advice, Bike It and awareness raising programmes must be supported in parallel with capital investments in walking and cycling. This is borne out in findings from the Sustainable Travel Towns and Cycling Demonstration Towns.

Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?

18. Sustrans is concerned that some of the proposed bus based initiatives may increase levels of car use and reduce levels of walking and cycling. Whilst the removal of free bus travel amongst more affluent families is more equitable, there is a high risk that they may exchange the bus for the car. At the same time, some of the new yellow bus services (in West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and elsewhere) are used by pupils living within two miles (and sometimes under one mile) of school and who previously walked or cycled.

19. We estimate that around 10% of all pupils are driven to school and who live more than three miles from school.⁽⁷⁾ These pupils should be the natural customer base for innovative new bus services. Those pupils who live within two miles of primary school (three miles for secondary) would be better served by investing in pedestrian and cycle training, safe routes to schools and cycle storage at schools.

How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes such as those utilising dedicated "yellow buses"?

20. See comments made above.

Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?

21. Sustrans has worked hard to support respective government departments and show how they share common interests in tackling the school run. We have helped write government guidance, hosted national conferences and been active members of advisory groups such as STAG, STEP for several years. In general, we feel that cross department policies are now in place which will bring about positive change. There are however several major shortcomings which need to be addressed:

22. Government should show leadership and set a national target regarding the school run. Our climate change obligations mean that it is not sufficient for targets to be left to local authorities. A national target would impress on local authorities and schools the scale of change that is required.

23. Primary Care Trust child obesity strategies and Healthy Schools programmes should place more focus on active daily travel and the role of the school journey. Many health professionals continue to focus on diet and sport as solutions to child obesity. We welcome the positive contribution now being made by several primary care trusts who are contributing to school travel and other active travel initiatives.

24. Ofsted should issue stronger guidance for schools which emphasises the role of walking and cycling on sustainability, children's independence including play, and learning opportunities. Their reports are beginning to recognise the role of walking and cycling in improving health, but there are many other benefits for schools. The school inspection process remains the most effective method of influencing headteachers and local policy in schools, and changing attitudes amongst parents. One example of a positive contribution from Ofsted is included below:

25. Monitoring staff travel to school should be a compulsory part of school travel plan guidance, just as it is for other work places. School Travel Plans frequently ignore staff travel and yet teachers are important role models for children and young people and are the principal gatekeepers for messages about school travel.

26. “High levels of participation in sport and physical activities, along with very sensible attitudes to walking and cycling to school, are indications of a strong awareness among students of the importance of healthy living”. (Ofsted report at Bradley Stoke Community School, near Bristol where nearly half of pupils cycle to school).

27. Building Schools for the Future and other new school building initiatives must generate the very best standards of design for sustainable travel. All too frequently new schools are poorly located in terms of their catchment areas, too much thought is given to accommodating cars on the school site rather than planning pedestrian and cycling access, and investment in safe routes to schools is either ignored or left to the highway authority to resolve at the last minute. When budgets overrun, the first cut to be made is usually the cycle storage or pedestrian route within the school. Ultimately the local authority has a conflict of interest between its role as client and as development controller. We urge the DCSF to audit all aspects of schools’ designs (including safe routes to schools) before budgets are approved and oblige developers to meet these plans in full.

REFERENCES

- (1) For more details of Sustrans projects visit www.sustrans.org.uk
- (2) Smarter Choices—Changing the way we travel, Department for Transport (DfT) 2004.
- (3) Travelling to School Initiative—Report on the findings of the initial evaluation, DfT 2005.
- (4) Places to Go, Case Studies Research Report, Play England, 2007.
- (5) National Cycle Network Route User Monitoring Report, Sustrans 2007.
- (6) Valuing the Small—Counting the benefits, CPRE, 2004.
- (7) National Travel Survey, DfT 1999/2001.

April 2008

Memorandum from Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) (ST 06)

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK’s largest train driver’s union representing approximately 18,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and Overground. ASLEF is committed to the re-nationalisation of the rail network. With our long experience and extensive knowledge of the UK rail industry, ASLEF is well placed to comment on the current issues and developments in the sector.

2. ASLEF strongly believes that an integrated public transport network is instrumental in ensuring that children are able to journey to school independently and safely. For social and environmental reasons, policy must provide options for people to travel by means other than by car and accordingly resources must be used to ensure they are beneficial to school children, but also to other passengers and staff working more widely in the transport sector.

THE EXPERIENCE OF ASLEF DRIVERS

3. We consulted widely across our membership for their views on this issue and the responses were consistent. For many the prospect of doing the “school run” train service is often one of great concern and anxiety. Many routes have become well known for pupils travelling to school and our members have often described the problems and dangers caused by some of the children who see the railway as an extension of the playground. Pupils often play “chicken” with the closing doors and will often deliberately prevent the doors closing leading to the train being delayed.

4. While this is certainly not characteristic of overall behaviour by school children travelling by train does it nonetheless represents a significant minority that have a considerably negative impact on the journeys of other passengers and add a great deal of stress and discomfort to the drivers themselves. Whilst much of the behaviour our drivers endure is an irritation and makes journeys uncomfortable for other passengers, the real concern for our members is the unthinkable scenario that eventually a child may fall under a train.

MAKING SCHOOL TRAVEL ON THE RAILWAY SYSTEM SAFER FOR ALL PASSENGERS

5. ASLEF believes that whilst our members have experienced these problems and have concerns, the safe use of the rail network as a method of school travel should be promoted. To achieve this, practical measures should be introduced to deal with the large number of school children on certain trains.

6. ASLEF drivers on Southeastern noted a dramatic improvement when REOs (Railway Enforcement Officers) were deployed on targeted services or at the stations where children join the trains. We would therefore strongly recommend that the Committee consider exploring the utilisation of the rail network for school travel mindful of the need to deploy supervisory staff.

7. Local authorities now have a duty to access transport needs for pupils. This should therefore include the safety of pupils on the rail system. Our membership takes the view that a joint approach between Train Operating Companies and Local Education Authorities should be introduced to ensure that more children are able to use the rail network safely and to ensure that other passengers are not adversely affected. In addition, where trains are becoming increasingly used by school children, special attention should be paid to increasing capacity.

CONCLUSIONS

8. In conclusion, ASLEF strongly support measures that will enable pupils to make full use of the train network to go to school. However local authorities and Train Operators need to ensure that suitable measures are enforced to enable supervision so that journeys are safe for the pupils themselves and other passengers. Investing in staff to supervise “school run” services will enable and facilitate more children to use the train which will be of greater benefit to the whole of society.

April 2008

Memorandum from Stagecoach Group plc (ST 07)

1. Stagecoach Group plc is a major provider of bus, coach and rail services in the UK, USA and Canada. Stagecoach UK Bus Division operates some 7,000 buses and coaches serving over 100 towns and cities in the UK. In each of our operating locations we carry scholars on commercial and contracted local bus services.

2. A survey of our 15 subsidiary company Managing Directors in England reveals that only two were aware of The Education and Inspections Act 2006. Nottinghamshire CC has consulted operators on its School Travel Pathfinder Bid. Lancashire CC has recruited one of our managers as a school transport coordinator. We would have expected greater engagement from Local Authorities.

3. Schools generate a short, high peak for transport for 190 days per year. This creates peak traffic congestion in most urban areas during the “school run”, delaying other traffic including buses. It also creates high peak bus demand, usually requiring more or larger buses than would otherwise be needed.

4. The school day morning peak coincides with bus passengers travelling to work. The school day afternoon peak coincides with the journey home for the growing number of elderly and disabled free concessionary passengers using the so-called off-peak scheme. The carriage of unruly scholars on normal local service buses creates conflict with and is a deterrent to other passengers. The increasing number of free elderly and disabled passengers are particularly intolerant of scholars on “their” buses.

5. Unruly behaviour, vandalism and occasionally assaults create a bad image for school buses, and are a deterrent to fare paying passengers and driver retention. Too many schools and LEAs adopt the attitude that the behaviour of scholars outside school is not their problem. Better behavioural education and stricter sanctions against offenders are required. Ideally all school buses (dedicated or normal local services) should carry paid attendants, but this would be costly for the schools.

6. School buses are expensive to operate. Dedicated buses are only required for as little as 380 hours per year (190 days x 2 hours per day), but require an additional (scare resource) driver and incur all the ownership, maintenance, operating and overhead costs of an all day bus.

7. Scholars travelling on all day local services are relatively cheap to accommodate where sufficient capacity exists, but incur higher costs if larger or additional buses are required.

8. In general Local Authorities will choose the cheapest option to carry entitled scholars, and will not become involved in the carriage of non-entitled scholars, regardless of the external costs of congestion, traffic management and the environment.

9. The unit cost of school bus travel can be considerably reduced if one bus can serve two or more school runs in each peak. The marginal additional cost of a second school run is usually only fuel, tyres, insurance and drivers pay, adding typically 25% to the total cost for 100% more capacity.

10. School buses reduce congestion, improve the environment, and increase the independence of scholars, but are costly to provide. We have consistently recommended that schools should be required to stagger starting and finishing times to maximise transport efficiency and minimise internal and external costs. However, there appears to be no incentive for schools to do so, and unless one is found, then the carriage of scholars in dedicated buses will continue to be a wasteful and inefficient activity.

April 2008

Memorandum from the Passenger Transport Executive Group (*pteg*) (ST 08)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *pteg* represents the six English Passenger Transport Executives (PTEs) in England which between them serve more than 11 million people in Tyne and Wear (“Nexus”), West Yorkshire (“Metro”), South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside (“Merseytravel”) and the West Midlands (“Centro”). Transport for London (TfL) and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) are associate members of *pteg*, though this response does not represent their views. The PTEs plan, procure, provide and promote public transport in some of Britain’s largest city regions, with the aim of providing integrated public transport networks accessible to all.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The provision of good quality schools transport brings wider benefits, including:

- Congestion reduction—on the road and at the school gate.
- Allowing parents (particularly women) to take up employment opportunities that might otherwise be compromised by their need to be available for the “school run”.
- Reducing the numbers of traffic accidents involving children at the school gates.
- Reducing emissions from vehicles that would otherwise be transporting children to and from school.
- Promoting bus travel to the public transport passengers of the future.
- Encouraging children to be healthy through active transport choices.
- Building greater independence and social responsibility through active travel choices.

2.2 The key issues to be addressed in the area of home to school transport are:

- Funding for school transport on an appropriate scale, particularly in rural areas where distances are greater.
- The effect of allowing educational choice—as children will not always attend the nearest school with consequent implications for school transport provision and traffic congestion.
- The importance of encouraging walking and cycling access to schools, including through school travel plans and the design of new school facilities.
- The traditional reliance of school transport providers on ageing vehicles which do not encourage parental confidence in the safety of the service.
- Anti-social behaviour issues relating to school bus services.

3. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT AND PTE RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 While transport to ensure children can get to school is the responsibility of local education authorities (LEAs), most PTEs act as agents for their LEAs to secure bus services on their behalf, using both the mainstream network and through provision of specific schools services. In this way, PTEs are procuring and promoting school travel to an estimated 250,000 pupils (or approximately 14% of all 5 to 16 year olds in English PTE areas) in 36 English local authorities. In England, almost a quarter of pupils travelling to school by bus are using dedicated school transport—especially those with Special Educational Needs (SEN). However, given the better availability and take-up of local bus services in PTE areas, the proportion of local authority organised “free” school transport in PTE areas is often lower than elsewhere in England.

3.2 Generally, children of primary school age living more than two miles from the nearest appropriate school, and secondary school children living more than three miles from the nearest appropriate school, qualify for free school travel. At the discretion of the LEA, these entitlements are sometimes interpreted more generously (often to meet denominational preferences), and have also been recently extended for less well-off pupils by the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Act introduced two new duties for LEAs:

- to publish a Sustainable Travel Strategy for all education travel, aiming to reduce negative impacts—the strategy should link to the Local Transport Plan; and
- extended free school transport rights for pupils from less well-off families—to their nearest school if more than two miles from home (to one of their three nearest schools for secondary pupils).

3.3 The urban character of the much of the areas served by PTE areas, means that school pupils are more likely to live within two or three miles of their school. Government analysis has shown that extended free transport rights are expected to be taken up by less than 20,000 pupils across all PTE areas (assuming school places are available for them to take advantage of the new transport opportunities), at an eventual additional cost of roughly £15 million. The cost of securing bus services in general continues to rise: according to ATCO’s annual survey, in 2006–07 the average cost of re-tendered local bus services was 4.9% higher than the contracts they replaced.

3.4 However, despite legal responsibilities resting with LEAs, PTEs are the strategic body responsible for authority for local transport in their areas, and have acted in a number of ways to improve the quality, attractiveness and safety of school transport and also reduce the problems caused by “the school run”. Some of these interventions are set out in section 5 onwards.

4. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

4.1 We support the current arrangements whereby LEAs are responsible for home-to-school travel (particularly for children travelling longer distances). However, In 2006 school travel accounted for 18% of car trips by residents of urban areas during term time and PTEs believe there is much to be gained from stronger integration between planning for child travel (including the home-to-school trip) and the planning and delivery of wider local transport strategies and policies. This may be more easily delivered though the proposals contained in the Local Transport Bill, which envisages the creation of Integrated Transport Authorities, with enhanced powers and responsibilities. Wider PTA (and in future) ITA objectives for reducing car use for the journey to school should be bolstered by Education Act requirements for local authorities to develop linked Sustainable Travel Strategies for all education trips. Such a strategy, including the development and application of School Travel Plans (which should be in place at all schools by 2010), should bring significant benefits including contributing to wider objectives for reducing traffic congestion.

4.2 As part of this approach there is considerable potential to further increase the proportion of children travelling to school on foot or by bike. This will bring with it wider health and social benefits, as well as reducing the cost of school transport. For example, Merseytravel has adopted a new School Transport Policy which gives highest priority to walking and cycling access, followed by conventional bus services then dedicated school buses, and with the private car at the bottom of the hierarchy.

4.3 There is a need to ensure that policies that encourage travel to school by the most sustainable and appropriate mode, are reflected in Local Area Agreements, and in the redesign and rebuilding of schools—especially through the “Building Schools for the Future” programme.

5. REDUCED FARES FOR SCHOOL TRAVEL

5.1 All PTEs provide convenient and/or discounted ticketing for school aged children which reduces the financial burden on parents and families. Overall PTEs spend about £40 million annually, subsidising the costs of child travel.

5.2 For example:

- In West Yorkshire, Metro offers a “School Plus MetroCard” (which is subject to concessionary travel provisions), providing reduced price bus travel for full time students aged under 18 years.
- Nexus operates a concessionary scheme for children aged 5–16 with fares fixed at £0.40 on weekdays until 1900—there are also pre-pay offers.
- South Yorkshire PTE offer a similar scheme with a 40p fare.
- GMPTE offer a fixed 70p fare concession for under-16s.
- Merseytravel offer a range of discount term-time passes.
- Centro offers half-fare peak travel to under-19 year olds in full-time education—coupled with commercial off-peak discounts.

5.3 In London, the benefits of concessionary fares for children have been taken further—with a policy of free child travel introduced.

5.4 As recommended in the Committee’s recent report, “*Ticketing and Concessionary Travel on Public Transport*”, there is also more that the Government could do to play its full part on the costs of bus travel for children. The progressive extension of the nationally funded concessionary fares scheme for older and disabled people has brought massive benefits for older and disabled people. Meanwhile Child fares have traditionally been pegged to adult fares, which have risen far faster than general inflation. This has major implications for low income families in particular. In setting minimum national standards for concessionary travel, we would suggest that changes to Government policies on child fares should be considered with the aim of achieving an affordable maximum fare in the short-term, and free travel for the journey to and from school in the longer term. This should be complemented by measures to combat overcrowding and to encourage more children to walk or cycle to school.

6. SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING

6.1 PTEs work in partnership with LEAs and local authorities to promote school travel plans and smart transport choices.

6.2 For example, Centro's Sustainable Travel team produce guides on school travel plans and school-specific documents, which outline travel problems and objectives, and a series of practical measures to encourage staff, visitors and pupils to reduce their car use and switch to more environmentally friendly modes—including walking and cycling. Centro also produce regular "Break Free" newsletters on School Travel Plan issues, and other advice and guidance (on all modes) on "letzgogreen.org".

6.3 In Merseyside, the innovative Merseybike scheme is rolling out cycle training for children. There are also "Walk to School" and "Bike to School" weeks which are gaining in popularity year-on-year. Analysis in 2007 revealed that car use fell by 2.4% among School Travel Plan schools against a 5% increase in non-engaged schools.

7. "YELLOW BUS" SCHEMES

7.1 Some PTEs have been pioneers of "yellow school bus" schemes. The largest is In West Yorkshire, where Metro has a 150 vehicle "My bus" scheme providing dedicated home-to-school transport for over 9,000 pupils at 132 schools. "My bus" drivers are specially trained and have a list of all the pupils registered to travel on their bus, so they know whom to expect at each stop along the specially devised route. If a child will not be travelling due to sickness or holiday, parents are asked to telephone the dedicated "My bus" hotline. Each pupil is allocated their own high-backed padded seat with seatbelt. Each bus has a radio/CD player and on-board CCTV and is driven by a dedicated driver. Highways improvements are also made around schools when needed, to allow buses to get as close as possible.

7.2 "My bus" began as a pilot scheme in 2002, which showed that school gate congestion was reduced by attracting significant numbers of pupils—many of whom had previously travelled to and from school by car—to the scheme. The modal shift from car by primary school users from the scheme's inception to 2008 is 64%. Modal shift from car by high school users is lower at 15% (although demand for yellow bus services currently outstrips supply). Children at schools with "My bus" services have shown a higher increase in educational attainment than the county average.

7.3 GMPTE operates a similar scheme which provided nearly 20,000 school trips in 2007, taking pupils to and from 22 schools, on a fleet of 36 buses. Anti-social behaviour on journeys to and from schools has dropped by around three quarters since the scheme was introduced in 2004. Teachers have also noted that attendance levels have improved since the scheme began.

8. IMPROVING THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF SCHOOL TRANSPORT

8.1 "Supporting a Friendly Environment" (SAFE) has been used successfully in a number of PTEs after being developed by South Yorkshire PTE (where all South Yorkshire Secondary schools are now signed up). SAFE promotes and maintains personal safety on all forms of public transport with home to school transport a particular priority. SAFE operates as a partnership between the local PTE, the schools, the police and the local bus operators.

8.2 To receive the SAFEMark Award, a school must draw up and implement appropriate policies and activities, with an agreed timetable of actions—monitored by SAFE co-ordinators.

8.3 Through SAFEMark, PTEs consult with individual schools and their pupils to identify transport problems. A plan can then be drawn up which addresses specific issues, and helps the school meet the criteria for a SAFEMark Award. In turn, the school may capitalise on its Award—using it in publicity to attract students to their school.

8.4 A comprehensive Student Planner is signed annually by all pupils and their parents, and sets out the expected behaviour of pupils when travelling to and from school.

For example, the planner states that at the end of the day pupils are expected to:

- leave the school in a quiet and orderly manner, keeping to pathways;
- cross all roads at safe points;
- go home—not to hang about shops or similar gathering points;
- if going into shops, to behave in a sensible and polite way and to be courteous to shopkeepers;
- at the bus stops—to form an orderly queue, stand back for passengers getting on or off the bus, keep to the footpath, get on the bus in an orderly way and not to push; and
- on the buses—to sit in their seat, behave sensibly, be polite and helpful to the public and to the bus driver, and respect the bus company's property.

9. SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORT

9.1 As well as addressing the needs of mainstream pupils, PTEs play a crucial role in providing transport to students with special needs. “My bus” in West Yorkshire, for example, runs three yellow bus services to two special educational needs schools, serving 60 students.

9.2 In the West Midlands, Centro supports West Midlands Special Needs Transport (WMSNT). This scheme, one of the largest and oldest in Europe, provides “Ring and Ride” flexible transport services for those who find conventional buses difficult to use—mainly the elderly and disabled. It now also provides travel to and from school for some SEN pupils. 118 vehicles are now used for school and non-emergency health trips. Centro also offer “travel training” to SEN pupils to enable them to use mainstream public transport. To achieve this a guide and resource pack for special schools has been produced. Pupils practice reading bus timetables and using journey planners, road safety issues on the way to the bus stop or rail station, boarding/alighting safely, and how to understand and buy tickets.

10. WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

10.1 PTEs also support pupils in the classroom by helping schools to incorporate school travel into their curriculum as widely as possible. Merseytravel has developed a range of education packs which are fully consistent with the National Curriculum. These include a “Here to There” pack for pupils with special needs; as well as packs for infant schools to learn what public transport is; right through to materials for secondary school students studying geography and the environment. The packs are developed by an educational consultant and draft kits are then taken by Merseytravel to clusters of 20 to 30 teachers for analysis and evaluation. The packs are then trialled by two schools per District for one year before they are distributed free of charge throughout the county.

10.2 For younger children, GMPTE has produced “dingding.org.uk”, a free educational website that uses public transport themes to explore a diverse range of subject areas. Helping older pupils towards trouble-free journeys to school by public transport was behind the GMPTE guide “Using buses, trains and trams to get to school”. It is distributed to 26,000 students each year before they begin secondary school. The guide builds confidence on how to read timetables, plan journeys and buy tickets (GMPTE help by taking a mobile “travel shop” into schools), and the guide also gives advice on issues like vandalism like safety.

10.3 Centro runs school workshops for Year Six pupils on use of public transport as they prepare for the transition to secondary schools, and have been working in partnership with the Police and Birmingham Community Safety Partnership to roll out a bus monitor scheme which focuses on promoting responsible behaviour, with pupils acting as “eyes and ears”, but not directly tackling incidents.

11. TACKLING CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

11.1 PTEs also work with schools to educate children about safety and appropriate behaviour, when travelling on public transport, both to and from school, and more generally.

11.2 Recognising that children make more than two million passenger journeys on the Tyne & Wear Metro each year—5.5% of all trips—Nexus has designed and implemented a safety training programme for the more than four hundred schools in the region. In 2004–05 alone, 12,329 children received a visit from the Nexus team. Hot spot schools are identified, along with issues that might be particular to that area. Nexus then targets the schools with “Crucial Crew” visits (comprising representatives from the PTE plus each of the emergency services), one off special events, a teaching zone web site and an interactive DVD about safety on the Metro.

11.3 The “Crucial Crew” model has also been rolled out in Greater Manchester and Merseyside, promoting safer travel to school, by all modes. In Merseyside, “Your Choice” conferences and theatre in education projects address safety and vandalism issues for more problematic schools. Merseytravel also run “Safe-aways”, another programme designed to help children travel more safely, through school excursions making use of different modes of travel, including the Mersey ferries.

11.4 Centro works in partnership with West Midlands Police on “Operation Safer Travel” to support a dedicated team of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who travel on problem routes to prevent and detect problem activity. Recognising the fact that children travelling to school are often the victims of offences (as well as potential perpetrators) Operation Safer Travel places an emphasis on visiting schools to give a safer travel message to pupils. During September 2007, Operation Jevonta was conducted, to target the seasonal rise in robbery that traditionally accompanies the end of the school summer holidays. Incidents were reduced by 35% compared to the same period in the previous year.

Further memorandum from the Passenger Transport Executive Group (*pteg*) (ST 08A)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

During the course of its current enquiry, the Committee has requested further evidence in the following three areas:

- travel options for students aged 16 to 19, including those studying at sixth-form colleges and further education colleges;
- the transport and travel implications (if any) of the new Diploma for 14–19 year olds and the Government’s target of increasing the proportion of 17 year olds in full-time education; and
- the provision of concessionary travel for young people more generally.

pteg does not propose to submit evidence on the first two areas. The travel implications of the 14–19 education agenda are of concern to the PTEs with a significant increase of school trips being made within the school, and access to a range of educational and training facilities being required across the school year. However, it would appear difficult at this stage to draw general lessons from the way in which Local Education Authorities across the PTE areas are tackling this challenge.

We have set out below our evidence with regard to the Committee’s consideration of the pricing of children and young people’s travel and the use of concessionary travel powers.

CURRENT INVOLVEMENT OF PTEs IN REDUCING THE COST OF YOUNG PEOPLE’S TRAVEL

There is no statutory requirement for young people to be provided with affordable local travel, and in many parts of England and Wales the commercial judgement of transport operators is left to set fares should be charged. In some parts of the country there is no discounting of fares before 0900 hours on schooldays, and in others the commercial level of discount is a third, rather than the half fare that has traditionally been charged. This is evidence of the more significant role that children play in the deployment of operator’s peak resources as general patronage has declined over recent decades.

All PTEs provide reduced fares for children as part of their general policies to support those groups least able to afford the commercial fares for local journeys. These policies are usually applied across all modes of public transport to assist in achieving network integration. There is a range of local arrangements with some areas offering half fare travel, whilst others provide a flat fare of between 40p and 70p. In West Yorkshire, Metro provides a “SchoolPlus MetroCard” product which allows unlimited bus travel on most bus services across the whole of West Yorkshire. The ticket costs £8 per week or £29.50 per month and was introduced in August 2003, it is available to young people in full time education up to the age of 19 years.

The success of the ticket has meant that sales have grown to nearly £5 million per annum and almost 10 million trips were made using the ticket in 2007–08.

Since 1 September this year, Nexus has pioneered the concept of “capped cost” travel, with a guarantee that no child under the age of 16 pays more than £1 a day for travel together with a 50p flat fare that is available all day. Unfortunately, in order to contribute to the funding of this considerably enhanced scheme, the flat fare previously available at school times has had to be increased from 40p to 50p.

PTEs also seek to promote travel for older teenagers, students in higher and further education and young adults in general, though these generally take place outside the scope of concessionary travel, through commercial decisions. However, concessionary travel arrangements available for children up to age of 16 years are generally made available to children in full-time education up to the age of 19 through concessionary travel powers. As in most parts of the country, pre-school age children travel free without operator compensation.

FUNDING OF CONCESSIONS

PTEs fund reduced price travel for young people through operator reimbursement arrangements and the annual cost of these is over £40 million across the six PTE areas. These arrangements are negotiated with operators on the basis of estimates of the commercial fares that would have operated in the absence of the scheme and of the degree of generated travel. Whilst such arrangements for the reimbursement of older and disabled patronage have been strongly contested by operators in recent years, leading to appeals, and in some cases applications for judicial reviews, this has not proved the case with child travel and local negotiations have been successful in achieving a satisfactory outcome for both parties. However, there are a wide variety of reimbursement arrangements across the country, with some relying totally on the commercial judgement of operators, for instance some child fares in Merseyside, whilst others rely on complex formula-based approaches to operator compensation.

There is no funding from Central Government to support the subsidy of child fares. The policy adopted is entirely up to the local authority concerned. This arrangement leaves child concessionary travel vulnerable to funding shortfalls, as it one of the few areas where funding can be quickly withdrawn to deal with budget crises. As a result of the under-funding of free local travel for older and disabled people in 2006, Nexus was forced to withdraw the popular “teen travel” ticket which provided teenagers with a 50% discount on the price of a Commercial multi-modal season ticket. Following on from the outcome of appeals against the 2006–07 reimbursement arrangements, Greater Manchester was faced with a back-dated requirement to increase payments for the same statutory concession. One of the actions it was then forced to take, was raising the flat fare from 50p to 70p to reduce operator reimbursement for child travel.

PTEs believe it is entirely wrong that, in terms of managing budgets, child fares have tended to become the “makeweight” in the negotiations over concessionary travel. Following the recent improvements for older and disabled people, over six times as much being spent on supporting their travel as is spent on young people. The first is a statutory requirement and therefore must take precedence. In our view, some form of statutory protection for the child fares is required, with Government funding to match. We agree with the Committee’s recent finding that priority consideration should be given to young people in any further development of Government policy on concessionary travel.³⁷

THE CASE FOR LOWER CHILD FARES

There are a number of important policy benefits that flow from reduced fares for child travel. As regards school travel, the reduction of peak hour congestion, with attendant road safety and air quality improvements in the vicinity of schools is a significant benefit. However it is important that the quality as well as the price of school travel is right. Major steps forward have been made in this area by PTEs in recent years, and our earlier evidence to the Committee highlighted some of these.

However, there are other important aspects of child fares that also need attention. The cost of a family travelling together can often be prohibitive, and can easily exceed the direct costs of making the trip by car including parking. This was one of the driving forces behind Nexus introducing discounted, all-day, every-day fares for children. Innovative pricing policies are needed to ensure that there is every incentive for families to leave the car at home and use public transport when travelling to town and city centres and other attractions well-served by public transport. Equally important, the ability of teenagers travelling independently to social and leisure opportunities at weekends and in the evening can be an important contribution to local social inclusion policies.

Young people who have confidence in using local transport services tend to stick with public transport when they are able to make the choice to buy a car. We have not seen any evidence of the impact of child travel on future travel decisions, but believe it may be a significant element of the choice to purchase a first car.

PTEs however recognise that the research base about the policy impacts of cheaper fares is weak. There is not a sufficiently clear understanding of the benefits that flow from making local travel more affordable and the specific benefits of free travel for school journeys. pteg is currently undertaking research in this area to inform the policy debate and strengthen the case for cheaper travel for young people.

Fundamentally our concern is that the policies employed in this area have a clearer justification in the future in terms of their impacts on reducing car use and traffic congestion, promoting safety and health, educational outcomes and social inclusion, as well as protecting the environment. It appears likely that a careful and considered policy approach will be required in this area if positive outcomes in some, and preferably all, of these areas are to be achieved with a cost-effective use of public funding.

September 2008

Memorandum from the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) (ST 09)

INTRODUCTION

The Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers represents local authority officers in county, unitary and metropolitan authorities across the UK, who deal with policies for and the promotion and procurement of public transport services and the co-ordination of all modes of public passenger travel, including bus and rail services and home-to-school and social services transport, within the context of the wider transport agenda. We welcome this opportunity to offer our initial views on school travel, albeit that we have had little time for full consultation with our membership on the questions posed.

³⁷ Para 100, Ticketing and Concessionary Travel, Fifth Report of Session 2007–08.

Question 1—*What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel?*

1.1 There is a varying degree of progress across the country as local authorities build this duty into their work plans. This has resulted in a wide variety of strategies being produced during the first year. Some authorities will have undertaken extensive research and audits and it is believed that some may have done little at this stage, even to the extent that the decision regarding responsibility for carrying out the work has not been made.

1.2 The timescale allowed for the publication of the strategy was very tight, in particular where an authority had to recruit to carry out the work.

1.3 The DCSF has employed consultants to carry out an initial assessment but we would suggest that these are early days and some authorities may need further guidance.

Question 2—*How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?*

2.1 The effectiveness of school travel plans will vary between local authorities and even schools within a local authority. Similarly, the links with other initiatives such as safer routes to school, concessionary fares schemes, promoting cycling etc.

2.2 Success of the implementation of school travel plans will depend on the initiatives, on-going funding where necessary and may be dependent on having a suitable champion to ensure any benefits and success achieved are maintained.

2.3 There is a danger that for some schools the work may finish with the publication of the school travel plan. With others the impetus may dissipate within time. To some extent, the focus may be on meeting the target of all schools having a school travel plan by 2010 rather than the ultimate objectives. In this respect, local authorities should be encouraged to build into their strategies the way forward beyond 2010. However, this will require on-going funding.

Question 3—*Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?*

3.1 Most if not all local authorities will have put in place arrangements for receiving applications and determining eligibility. The required transport arrangements will follow and will depend on both the demand and the required journeys. Some will simply use existing transport whereas others may require a taxi or car where there is no alternative transport, particularly in rural areas.

3.2 Given that some children who will qualify may live only a short distance from the school attended (just over two miles) we would also encourage the use of cycle allowances where possible.

Question 4—*What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of the proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?*

4.1 We understand that the DCSF has evaluated the proposals and has decided not to accept any for implementation on the basis that none fully met the criteria. Bearing in mind the amount of work that has been invested by some authorities, we wonder if there has not been sufficient discussion with the authorities involved to find a way forward. We would urge the Select Committee to investigate this more fully.

Question 5—*Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?*

5.1 Whilst the quality of public transport may vary between regions and operators, generally, public transport is suitable for transporting the majority of older primary school pupils and those of secondary school age. However, it should be said that parental concerns may focus on the issues of standing passengers where journeys may be long and the use of double-decker buses which appear to give rise to a higher proportion of behavioural difficulties.

5.2 The perception of the use of public transport amongst parents is mixed. Some prefer the dedicated school bus system whilst others see the advantages and flexibility of using public bus and train services. We would wish to continue to encourage the use of public transport but also see the need, where required for dedicated school buses. Overall, we believe the focus should be to improve all services and to continue to work on improving behaviour of children on buses and trains.

5.3 In rural areas in particular there may be a high degree of integration between statutory home to school transport, assisted transport for post-16 students and the general public transport network, and the viability of many public transport services may depend on income from school transport. The integration may take the form either of issuing entitled pupils and students with passes for travel on ordinary public service buses, or of using buses that are used in the morning and afternoon for school transport services to run ordinary public transport services (at marginal cost) during the rest of the day. Anything that reduces the scope for integration of this sort could have serious consequences for the viability of public transport services in such areas.

Question 6—Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?

6.1 This will depend on the particular circumstances, such as demand and the journeys involved. Where existing transport can be used or where cycling allowances are taken up, car use may be slightly reduced and the journeys are likely to be both affordable and cost-effective.

6.2 We are concerned that the choice of three nearest schools to the home address and in particular the extension of rights to those choosing a school on grounds of religion or belief, where journeys may be up to 15 miles, will require taxis or cars (perhaps grants to parents) where no suitable alternative exists. There could therefore be an increase in car usage in some cases which counters reduction elsewhere. These journeys will certainly not be cost-effective or affordable, depending on volume and will hit rural authorities harder.

6.3 It must also be borne in mind that the extension of rights applies to a minority of pupils and those who are not covered by the low-income criteria will continue to use their existing mode of travel. Having made their choice of school, many parents may feel that there is no reasonable alternative but to travel by car. Reasons may be affordability or lack of suitable public transport. In this respect, consideration should be given to increasing support for public transport services, dedicated buses where appropriate and a young person's national concessionary fare scheme.

Question 7—How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated "yellow buses"?

7.1 This depends on the criteria and definition of success. Yellow bus schemes vary in respect of use and objectives. Some are part of the overall statutory home to school transport provision and some are specifically for children not entitled to free school transport. These may be regarded as successful where they raise the standards through dedicated and trained drivers and using vehicles designed for the purpose. Studies indicate that yellow bus schemes which are designed to encourage shift away from car usage also achieve an element of success.

7.2 It is accepted that some schemes are in relatively early days and whilst there is an element of initial success, the schemes do need to be tested over a longer time period of time. Against this, are the issues of affordability, having a two-tier system with regard to standards, and conflict, in cases where they are used for short journeys, with policies to encourage more walking and cycling (both to reduce congestion and to improve health). The use of specific "yellow bus" style vehicles may also makes integration with public transport services more difficult, and where the public transport network relies on school transport income and integrated provision for its viability, this could undermine the sustainability of public transport services.

7.3 Clearly, such schemes are popular with parents and children but we would not see this as the definitive answer to school travel issues but one of a series of initiatives to be applied where appropriate. However, lessons are to be learnt from some of the successful elements of the schemes. These would include properly trained drivers dedicated to routes.

Question 8—Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?

8.1 The degree of joined-up working will vary greatly throughout the country although there is likely to be more success between education and transport authorities than with health authorities.

8.2 It is increasingly common for public and education transport to be arranged within local authorities by an Integrated Transport Unit, in order to achieve efficiencies in provision and a consistent approach to standards and policies. The Local Transport Plan process has also encouraged the closer integration of education transport policies with overall transport policies, and the Education & Inspection Act requirement for school travel strategies has also encouraged further moves in this direction.

8.3 Joined up working with health authorities has proved much more difficult to achieve due to constant changes in health sector organisation in recent years, and the reluctance of some health authorities to engage in considerations of access and transport.

8.4 There also remains a fundamental tension at national level between transport policy and accessibility planning on the one hand, which encourage a reduction in the need to travel and the promotion of sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport; and on the other hand policies on education and health which promote choice, flexibility and specialisation, which lead directly to longer journeys and more dispersed patterns of travel that can not be effectively catered for by sustainable modes.

We would welcome the opportunity to expand on any of the principles or issues discussed above at a Select Committee hearing if that would be helpful.

April 2008

Memorandum from Living Streets (ST 10)

SUMMARY

- Walking to school is the cheapest, easiest, and most effective method of reducing the school run.
- Walking to school currently gets far less government support than it deserves.
- While current revenue funding has helped to secure some welcome infrastructure improvements to facilitate walking to school, it must be both continued after the current 2010 limit, and allow for promotional work as well as infrastructure improvements.
- We want to see funding to extend the successful “WoW” (“Walk on Wednesdays”/“Walk once a week”) initiative beyond its current London base.
- 20 mph must become the default speed limit in all residential areas, particularly near schools.
- Concessionary bus travel should be limited to school students more than two miles away, to encourage those within walking distance to use their feet.
- Health authorities need to promote walking to school to fight childhood obesity.

1. ABOUT LIVING STREETS

1.1 Living Streets works to bring our streets to life, with more walking in people-friendly public spaces. We coordinate the national Walk to School campaign, funded by the Department for Transport.

1.2 The history of Living Streets demonstrates the strength of our agenda. We were formed in 1929, as the Pedestrians Association. We have grown rapidly in the last few years and our work is supported by a network of 98 branches and affiliated groups, 37 local authority members and a growing number of corporate members.

1.3 As well as working to influence others, we also carry out a range of practical work to implement our vision. This includes facilitating Community Street Audits (which engage with the people using streets to identify improvements) and providing training and consultancy to practitioners who design and manage our streets.

2. RESPONDING TO THE INQUIRY

2.1 This response from Living Streets focuses on the benefits—for pupils, parents, road safety, and the environment—that walking to school brings. These are set out in section 3.

2.2 The response draws on our expertise as coordinators of the National Walk to School Campaign since 1995.

3. THE BENEFITS OF WALKING TO SCHOOL

Walking to school brings with it huge benefits. However, projects to encourage more walking are often not considered marketable in comparison with large-scale, high budget initiatives such as free bus travel or subsidised cycle training. The irony is that encouraging walking is often the cheapest yet most effective method of reducing the school run. The time has come to take it seriously—not least for the following five reasons.

3.1 Sociability

Friends and family can walk to and from school together and enjoy some quality time together, rather than being cut-off and cocooned inside their cars.

3.2 *Improving local air quality and reducing Carbon Emissions*

Cars are at their most polluting in the first few miles of each journey as the engine warms up. However, this is just the kind of journey that can easily be replaced by walking. Walking to school emits no CO₂ whatsoever.

3.3 *Health*

Walking to and from school allows adults and children to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. With childhood obesity at record levels, there has never been a better reason to encourage parents and children out of their cars onto the pavements.

3.4 *Developmental*

Walking regularly enables a child to become more familiar with their surroundings and provides them with the opportunity to learn about the weather and changing seasons first hand.

3.5 *Road Safety*

Walking regularly with a child from a young age enables them to develop life skills; preparing children with road safety and personal awareness skills. Meanwhile, having fewer cars on our roads is good for the environment and local communities; fewer cars at the school gate can make it safer for pupils making their way to and from school.

4. ANSWERS TO SPECIFIC INQUIRY QUESTIONS

4.1 *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel? How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?*

4.1.1 In our experience, the situation varies greatly between different local authorities. While some have embraced the concept of sustainable school travel, often via school travel plans, others have been less than effective. However, we are pleased to note that eight London local authorities have chosen to measure the number of children walking to school as part of their Local Area Agreement indicators—we hope to see this trend spread to other authorities beyond the capital.

4.1.2 Similarly, the effectiveness of school travel plans varies. In the right hands they can be excellent. However, we believe that there are currently insufficient incentives to keep up the momentum of STPs in the years after they have become established. Due to the transient nature of those involved (eg parents and staff changing from year to year) there needs to be a robust monitoring system in place to keep checking that the original focus of the plan is not lost.

4.1.3 Furthermore, School Travel Plans should not be considered the be all and end all. The focus needs to shift to coaxing long-term behavioural change out of parents. Perhaps inspiration could come from Scotland, where School Travel Advisors take a more “hands-on” approach in this respect.

4.1.4 The 2010 cut-off date for publishing school travel plans is correct in principle, but further thought needs to be given to what will happen afterwards once the funding ceases to be ring-fenced. Unless there is ongoing support and funding for school travel initiatives, the good work that has gone into developing the plans will be wasted. However, both “tackling childhood obesity” (65%) and “reducing CO₂ emissions” (63%) are in the five most popular Local Authority Agreement indicators. These are easily and cost-effectively addressed by encouraging more walking to school.

4.1.5 Therefore we recommend that:

- Local Authorities have specific funding and support for promoting walking to school beyond 2010.
- Local Authorities focus on high quality School Travel Plans.
- Those with responsibility for school travel in local authorities are given more power to make a difference outside of the school gates by being able to mix both “hard” (ie infrastructure improvements) and “soft” (ie promotional work) measures.
- If dedicated funding is to be phased out, the link between LAA indicators and walking to school is further highlighted.
- Central government provides dedicated financial and promotional support for initiatives such as Walk to School and Walk on Wednesday.

4.2 *Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?*

We believe that free school transport is a good idea in principle, but are concerned that the very nature of a door-to-door service results in no increase in walking levels amongst children.

4.3 *Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?*

While we do not profess to be experts in public transport, experiences in London following the introduction of free travel for under 16s, show that many children are using buses for simply one or two stops—distances that could quite easily be walked. Of course it is preferable for children to use public transport rather than cars to get to school, but universal free travel can actually decrease walking levels. Therefore it is essential that walking becomes perceived as a realistic mode of transport for the majority of the shorter journeys to school.

4.4 *Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?*

We believe that offering free transport to parents only to the nearest three schools is to be welcomed. If we are to be realistic about genuinely changing school travel habits, it is essential to change the current thinking whereby parents consider simply which school is “best” for their child without giving any thought to how the daily journey is to be achieved.

4.5 *How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated “yellow buses”?*

4.5.1 First Group and Runnymede District Council in Surrey have been running a “yellow bus” scheme for the past five years. It currently runs at a loss, so in a financial sense it is unsuccessful. The large American-style buses are disliked by the local community—they are far too big for the streets and intimidating for local pedestrians. They are not “low floor” buses: any potential wheelchair user faces the humiliating prospect of being hoisted up the steps in front of their peers—an astonishing situation over 10 years since the Disability Discrimination Act was passed. Coincidentally, First Group owns the company responsible for the manufacture of the yellow buses. We are not opposed to such schemes in principle, but their current implementation leaves a lot to be desired. We would like to see dedicated school bus schemes run in tandem with other measures encouraging children living within two miles to walk or cycle to school.

4.5.2 “Walking buses” (ie an organised crocodile of children coordinated and accompanied by adult volunteers), when implemented well, provide both the benefits of walking to school and the time-saving for parents not having to accompany their children to school every day. They are also considerably cheaper to implement, and more effective, than dedicated school buses. We would cite Southend and Kent Councils as being particular walking bus success stories. However, one drawback of walking buses comes from their strictly organised nature: with such reliance on volunteers, if too few are available on a particular day, the walking bus is cancelled and all of the children miss the opportunity to walk to school.

4.5.3 In contrast, the Walk to School Campaign and Transport for London’s joint “WoW” (Walk Once a Week/Walk on Wednesdays) initiative represents not only incredible value for money, but it can also be taken up on an ad hoc basis by parents and children. It simply rewards Primary School children with special badges for walking to school once a week. Not only does it lead to a modal shift of between 25% and 30%³⁸ (2004 Transport Committee proceedings claimed yellow school buses lead to a shift of only “up to 10%”)³⁹, but the cost benefit ratio is tiny: it costs just £2 per pupil per year. Funding to extend the initiative beyond its current London base would therefore be welcome.

4.6 *Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?*

4.6.1 In general, we would say that there is much potential to improve joined-up working, in particular between Children’s services and transport at a local level. However, one positive aspect of the current working practices is that School Travel Planners have become an active part of the healthy and sustainable schools programme.

³⁸ Figures from WoW implementation in Cumbria 2005.

³⁹ <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmtran/318/31806.htm>

4.6.2 There are examples of health authorities and school travel advisors working separately and duplicating each others' work. There are also far too many "buck passing" opportunities currently. Each authority's role in promoting healthy and sustainable travel to school needs to be far more clearly defined, and the benefits emphasised at every opportunity. In general we feel that health workers currently are not good at seeing active travel (ie everyday walking and cycling as opposed to exercise regimes) as a realistic health option. Once again, walking is not taken seriously despite the very favourable benefit to cost ratios of investment in walking.

4.6.3 Therefore we recommend that, with childhood obesity as a growing concern, health authorities in particular become involved further in school travel planning, in an effort to encourage more children to walk to school.

April 2008

Memorandum from the National Association of Head Teachers (ST 11)

1. The National Association of Head Teachers welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Transport Committee on the subject of School Travel. The Association represents members across the 0–19 age range and beyond and, as such, is well placed to comment on the transport issues highlighted.

2. While local authorities in the main have attempted to undertake their duty to assess pupils' travel/transport needs, it is sadly true that the outcomes have not been wholly successful. Too often a global approach is taken to address specific issues and this can result in difficulties for particular pupils being overlooked or ignored.

3. Pupils with special educational needs should receive specific consideration to ensure that they are able to access services, courses etc essential to their well-being and development. The use of the statementing process is not, of itself, a universal panacea in such circumstances.

4. Schools continue to work with school travel advisors to develop realistic and relevant school travel plans. These are becoming embedded into school planning and refined through usage. It is, of course, impossible and wholly undesirable for schools to "police" the outcomes of the plans where parents are involved. Parents may well see the rationale for safety measures in the widest sense, for example, but not necessarily agree to their imposition when it relates directly to their child.

5. Although schools may well advocate the use of walking buses, sustainable travel, public transport etc, parents will still choose to drive their children to school for a number of reasons (see below re safety, admission procedures, extended provision etc).

6. It is worthy of note that the issues concerning the reduction of car use, the benefits of using public transport, environmental benefits associated with reduced vehicle usage, benefits, both physical and psychological, to be derived from exercise are all dealt with in schools via PSHE lessons, tutorial periods and other such routes.

7. There appears to have been limited take-up of the pilot/pathfinder schemes and it is fair to say that not all schemes are universally applicable. There needs to be recognition that what is suitable for urban areas, for example, may be totally unsuitable for rural localities and vice versa. This then means that the evaluation and continuation of any scheme needs to be dealt with very carefully.

8. Safety is still a concern with regard to school travel. Whereas minibuses used for school trips are fitted with seat belts for each individual seat, this is unlikely to be the case where schools use public buses to transport the children around. It is also true that many schools use other forms of public transport—tubes, trains etc—when transporting children and this gives rise to other concerns. It is important that there is further clarity surrounding safety measures on all transport used by schools for their pupils.

9. There is still the continuing concern over the need for a "responsible person" engaging with school travel. This impacts directly on how school transport and general public transport do (or do not) integrate successfully. Removing an unruly or undisciplined pupil from a school bus, where a responsible adult is present, is fraught with obvious difficulties. These are compounded if the pupil concerned is travelling on public transport without any supervision.

10. One interesting issue that has arisen over the supervision of pupils on buses is surrounding the use of seat belts. Where a member of staff needs to move to attend to a pupil that is either misbehaving or ill, for example, there is no exemption to the requirement to use a seat belt.

11. Issues covered in sections 8, 9 and 10 above have also been addressed by the Welsh Assembly Government in preparing, within the parameters of the Education Act 2006, its own draft Learner Travel Measure. Some of the provisions of the Measure placed before the Welsh Assembly in April 2008 are transferable to England.

12. Insufficient recognition appears to have been given to the continuing and increasing demands being made on schools and thus on school transport in relation to such matters as extended services. Where schools are providing services before or after the school day, it is not always easy for pupils to access these because of lack of available transport. School buses are tied to timetables designed for the majority, understandably, and public transport is not necessarily catering for pupils outside of “normal” school hours. This then denies services to certain pupils even though the school is making the services available.

13. The changes to the 14–19 curriculum and the Diplomas in particular will place burdens on transport that must be considered. The Diplomas will be offered by a number of providers, not necessarily just the school. Students will be expected to travel between the various providers to receive their entitlement in relation to their Diploma course. This will increase costs and may well produce timetable challenges and all will impact on the transport network, unless collaborating institutions can agree common boundaries to the standard student day.

14. Some other recent changes to the education landscape may well impact on school transport and affect the outcomes of the pilot/pathfinder schemes. For example, if the changes to the admission system, policy and procedures work properly, these could begin to assist with sustainability—allocation to the nearest school etc. However, the closure of special schools may mean that pupils have to travel further to meet their particular needs, thus placing further strain on school travel facilities.

15. Parental choice in relation to schools for their children will continue to have an effect on car use and congestion. There may well be a tension between increased diversity and the new provisions and travel plans themselves. Parents will continue to use their cars in order to exercise their choice with regard to a school for their child where this is not the most accessible or obvious school from the authority’s perspective.

16. There is a considerable amount of work to do in developing stronger relationships between education, transport and health authorities in all areas, including school travel. This will undoubtedly assist the “joined-up” working that is needed in this area but it is also true that this will not happen overnight.

17. Evaluation of the pilot/pathfinder schemes will indicate areas needing further development and these should be borne in mind as this work progresses.

April 2008

Memorandum from Peter J Walker (ST 12)

QUESTION LIST (I have asterisked those to which I am responding below)

1. *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable school travel?*
2. (a) *How effective can school travel plans be?*
 (b) *Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives?*
 (c) *Are benefits successfully maintained?*
- 3*. *Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?*
4. (a) *What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes?*
 (b) *What is the nature of the proposals?*
 (c)* *Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?*
5. (a)* *Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport?*
 (b) *Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home-to-school journeys?*
6. (a)* *Will the new provisions reduce car-use and congestion on the home to school journey?*
 (b)* *Will they prove to be affordable and cost-effective?*
7. *How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those using dedicated “Yellow buses”?*
- 8*. *Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?*

RESPONSES

3. Answers to this can only be local in scope, and hence variable across the region, never mind the whole country. Judging from the type of bus service supplied for school pupil contracts in the Tees-side conurbation, the answer up to now must be “No”. The local transport co-ordinating authority has not yet been able to devise a “smart-card” fare-payment system as far as I know, though it would dearly like to do so, and not just for school bus travel. If the result of extending free travel entitlement is any less than universal across a school’s catchment area and throughout the age-range of its pupils, collecting the fares due (or not due) will be nightmare-ish. No school bus driver can be expected to recognise instantly, by sight, which in a crowd of 30 to 40 boarding his/her bus are or are not exempt from paying a fare.

4. (c) Not so much a response as a comment: it is not clear from this question how the term “effective integration” is to be understood. Nor are we told if a “general public transport network” includes trams and/or trains as well as buses. The place, in such a network, integrated or otherwise, of bicycle-users would also need to be considered. See also the comment on Question 5(a), below.

5. (a) Here, again, subsidiary questions are called for, besides a clearer definition of terms as hinted above, 4(c):

- (i) A network suitable for the over-11s is not necessarily one suitable for primary schoolchildren, never mind those in the 3+ nursery category.
- (ii) “Pupils who do not use dedicated school transport” is by no means a homogenous group. Pupils at some schools may eschew the dedicated buses provided in favour of the public bus (services permitting): some pupils may use the dedicated bus in a morning but return, by preference or by necessity, by a public bus: others again may get a lift to school in the morning but rely on a bus, dedicated or otherwise, after school.
- (iii) Those who attend selective schools or “faith” schools, whose catchment area is unusually wide, may find dedicated buses running to some areas but not all, so that public transport for general use is also called on—often by a high number at any one time when schools close in an afternoon.

With all these points in mind, the overall fact remains that England’s generally anti-diluvian approach to fare-collection on its buses—including most of those dedicated to school use—causes considerable delay and frustration to one and all, pupils and general travelling public alike. Only a revolution in methods of charging school pupils for their travel (pre-paid season tickets seeming to be beyond the managerial wit of most bus operators) can, in practice, render the general public bus network suitable for anybody, never mind schoolchildren crowding on in their dozens each afternoon. In the de-regulated transport climate in which we still live I have little optimism that the present ritual assault-course that passes for fare-collection on most English buses outside London will easily be changed.

6. (a) This question at last hits at the main bugbear of just about every school, of every type and for every possible age-group, throughout the UK. Certainly there is a stronger chance that free bus travel, extended to all below a given age, will remove at least some car-journeys from the proverbial “school run”, but, equally, social attitudes in various parts of each community will militate against complete disappearance of cars at school gates. This will loom much larger in institutions catering for those aged 17 and over, where it now seems *de rigueur* to provide acres of parking space for students as well as for staff, rather than suggesting that other ways of travel are possible.

Below this age, the challenge to those over-protective parents whose children are shielded from bus travel or even walking is immense, but must be made. Even if sharing of cars increases—better, indeed, than one-child-one-adult vehicles—the result for the rest of the community is less than sustainable. Congestion is notoriously greater around school areas in term time than during their holiday weeks, as most members of the public know full well.

6. (b) Affordable to whom? Cost-effective from whose point of view? Insofar as an extension of “free” travel to and from school is very likely to reduce the number of cars on roads near schools at their starting/finishing times, the benefit to the general public will increase. However, when compared with the continuing implications of CO₂ emission for climate change, a purely monetary approach is increasingly inappropriate and totally inadequate.

It is worth noting, on this point, that recent efforts to reduce traffic totals generally in the Darlington borough area have led to the definitely beneficial fact that the town enjoys 10% fewer motorised journeys per annum.

8. It would be nice to be able to say “Yes” to a question such as this. But, when different bus operators are still forbidden by (competition) law to sit around the same debating-table with a local authority’s transport planning officers, or even with anybody else, the answer remains a firm “No”. Only the imminent passing (we hope) of the Local Transport Bill, designed as it is to remove this obstacle to efficient (in any sense) and joined-up (*ditto*) working can make matters any better in the first instance.

The Health Authority aspect is, again, something that is at best in its infancy, not least because, every time anyone looks, yet another cost-cutting plan to re-shuffle treatment patterns around hospitals in neighbouring towns throws many travel facilities into potential disarray. Yet, in a way, a properly-focussed public transport system, widely used to the point where car traffic has been noticeably reduced, can in itself reduce

the number of calls made on hospitals near and far, as well as on doctors' surgeries. The distribution of these in relation to one or a number of schools may also affect pupils' travel needs at times, though not, one would have thought, sufficiently often to justify more than a passing consideration when planning school—and other—transport provision over-all.

It is worth noting, as a final aside, the continuing contrast between British and many European cities' approaches to linking hospitals and/or schools by public transport. Whereas in one large South Tees-side hospital the main talking-point is the difficulty of ever finding a parking-space there, several urban areas in France particularly have transport systems (rail-based, true, but also carefully bus-linked) specifically routed to serve hospitals all over their area, as well as to serve educational hubs, as a matter of basic design. The best we seem to do around Tees-side is:

- (a) to put on some experimental direct bus links to a particular hospital for six months, then to withdraw them on "cost" grounds; and
- (b) to discuss, for well over 20 years now, the possibility of building a rail halt to serve that same hospital (the Whitby to Middlesbrough railway passes its boundary fences), but to dismiss the idea on grounds of high initial costs, or of "franchise" limitations, or usually both.

April 2008

Memorandum from the Yellow School Bus Commission (ST 13)

INTRODUCTION

The Yellow School Bus Commission (hereafter referred to as "the Commission") has been established to examine and quantify the environmental, social, educational and cost benefits of an expansion of the use of buses for home to school transport, particularly as an alternative to the car.

The Commission comprises six members including the Rt Hon David Blunkett (Labour MP for Sheffield Brightside), Baroness Ros Scott (Liberal Democrat peer), Lt Col Tex Pemberton OBE (Conservative County Councillor from West Sussex), Patrick Harvie (Green MSP), John Burch (Confederation of Passenger Transport) and Garth Goddard (County Transport Co-ordinator for Cheshire (retired), most recently seconded as Programme Director for a national transport efficiency project).

The Commission was established by and is supported by FirstGroup plc (hereafter referred to as "First"), which is providing administrative assistance. First does not sit on the Commission. Both the Commissioners and First are committed to ensuring that the Commission's independence is assured.

FACTUAL INFORMATION

The Commission has accumulated information over a six-month period and is being supported by University of Aberdeen in literature review, data analysis and modelling. Some of this material is summarised within this evidence. We would be pleased to provide further summaries of continuing work on the understanding this does not restrict future publication.

In due course, we also intend to look at potential funding opportunities to enable further growth in school bus operation to tackle the environmental, safety, congestion and economic issues presented by the car-based school run.

There is clearly an overlap between parts of our respective inquiries and the Commission is very willing to co-operate with the Transport Committee.

RESPONSE TO THE TRANSPORT COMMITTEE'S SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

1. *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel?*

Assessing the travel and transport needs of pupils

1.1 The Commission has visited numerous school transport initiatives around the UK and discussed delivery with stakeholders including schools, parents, pupils, local authorities, bus operators and business community interests.

1.2 Whilst many local authorities would clearly like to deliver improvements and extensions to their school transport services, and some are operating pilot initiatives to deliver services beyond the minimum legal requirements, the majority are only providing statutory requirements for entitled school travel. Due to budget pressures and rising costs (eg fuel) in the transport sector, there are some examples of authorities withdrawing funding for discretionary transport to school including denominational transport.

Promoting sustainable travel

1.3 Whilst there is an assumption that improved arrangements for free travel are aiding the key issues of accessibility to a school of choice and reducing car usage, it is not clear that the steps already taken (and the new arrangements later this year) will have the intended consequence.

1.4 The Commission has taken the view that there needs to be a joined up approach between the “entitled” group who receive free, but not necessarily appropriate or acceptable travel, and those who do not have such entitlement because of historic presumptions about the ability to walk to school or suitability of alternative travel arrangements.

1.5 Because of this we are looking at both those groups who are not entitled because of geographic proximity, and those who are offered free but often inappropriate transport which does not offer the safety, reliability, or reduction in car usage and congestion, which is necessary to achieve a coherent, comprehensive policy.

1.6 The Commission has also been engaging in ways in which walking, cycling, and car to bus transfer as well as dedicated bus pick-up, can be integrated with existing and future bus arrangements.

1.7 Welcome efforts are being placed in improving the opportunities to walk and cycle. However in many areas this can ignore the practicalities of those living beyond a mile from school. The provision of dedicated school buses, which focus on safety and quality, offers the opportunity to address this issue, complementing existing and future walking and cycle initiatives.

1.8 Such proposals could also complement existing local initiatives developed through partnership between local authorities and operators, such as West Sussex’s “3-in-1 Card”, to encourage a bus culture amongst the potential adult public transport users of the future.

SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS

2. *How effective can school travel plans be?*

2.1 The effectiveness of school transport plans will depend on the policies they contain and leadership and commitment in encouraging and delivering behavioural change. So far these have largely focused on initiatives that can be delivered through modest capital or small scale revenue funding.

3. *Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives?*

3.1 Whilst on our visits the Commission has been told there is adequate linkage to Local Transport Plan objectives; this is not something which we have analysed in detail.

4. *Are benefits successfully maintained?*

4.1 The Commission is not in a position to comment on School Travel Plan trends over time.

EXTENDED ENTITLEMENTS TO FREE SCHOOL TRANSPORT

5. *Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?*

5.1 Recent legislation and educational policy certainly widens access to school transport, but the basic inequity of dividing the school population into those given free transport and those paying the local bus (or train) fare is perpetuated. Furthermore, in an age in which it is unrealistic to expect the average pupil to walk more than a mile to and from school each day, the offer of more widely available free school transport for those on low incomes still only applies beyond two miles.

5.2 In effect, the existing entitlements to free school transport represent only a marginal improvement on what was laid down in the Education Act (1944), despite major social change. Evidence gathered by the Commission suggests that secondary pupils will not walk up to three miles each way to and from school (up to six miles per day). Most significantly, from the point of view of addressing the school car run, the overwhelming view of parents of primary school children appears to be that a walk of up to two miles each way to and from school (up to four miles per day) is unrealistic and, at the same time, dispatching their children unsupervised on local public transport is out of the question.

5.3 In today’s social environment this points to the need to enable education authorities to offer subsidised school transport at a price and quality that parents and pupils are willing to use as an alternative to being driven to school. Entitlement might apply to all living beyond one mile from their chosen school, thus avoiding any undesirable modal shift from walking and cycling, but with consideration as to whether entitlement has to be to free transport, rather than an agreed and affordable contribution that makes widespread, subsidised transport (co-ordinated and properly supervised) a reality for the bulk of pupils across the country.

PATHFINDER SCHEMES

6. *What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes?*

6.1 We understand that none of the bids have been accepted by DCSF, basically because they all have failed to propose an alternative to the existing statutory framework. This required the removal of free entitlement in favour of a modest charge for all public transport journeys to school. This is regrettable, as this could have presented an opportunity to pilot a more holistic approach to school transport charging and eligibility.

6.2 It is understood that Pathfinder funding was very limited when considered in the context of the current overall spend on school transport in the UK. Funding is a key issue for any expansion of school transport to provide significantly wider availability that is both more equitable and more attractive to parents and pupils than using less sustainable means of transport.

6.3 If bids are to be re-invited then adequate funding and clear instructions on eligibility revisions would present a great opportunity to deliver the type of comprehensive dedicated school transport that the Commission is considering.

7. *What is the nature of the proposals?*

7.1 Whilst the Commission has not had sight of all bids, we understand that a number contained worthy and innovative proposals to improve school transport, but did not meet the requirements of DCSF, particularly as regards experimental charging.

8. *Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?*

8.1 While this question is academic in the light of the failure of all the bids, the Commission would like to make the important point that it considers that local authorities will not be in a position to achieve effective Pathfinder bids without a joined up approach. This can potentially be best achieved through an integrated transport unit, even if, at the end of the day, it proves more cost effective to separate a significant proportion school services from the local bus network.

SUITABILITY OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

9. *Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport?*

9.1 The 2006 National Travel Survey reveals that 85% of children aged 7–10 were usually accompanied to school by an adult. Reasons given for this included traffic danger, fear of assault, convenience, school too far away, child might get lost, child might not arrive on time and fear of bullying.

9.2 As parents are generally unwilling to allow primary school children to travel alone on the public bus network, a dedicated school bus network is favoured. This is supported by a DfES/Confed survey published in February 2004, where a study of parental and pupil attitudes towards school transport found that 44% of parents who drove their children to school would consider switching to existing standard dedicated school buses, whilst 76% would consider switching to an “improved” service.

9.3 Such improved dedicated services can be operated to ensure all drivers are fully trained in the issues that affect the school journey. Further safeguards can be put in place including use of registers, codes of conduct, seat belts, and ensuring specific arrangements if a parent is not at the bus stop to collect the child.

9.4 Yellow school buses and other forms of dedicated transport have been shown to remove or overcome the concerns of parents and allow children to travel unaccompanied, saving considerable time for parents.

9.5 Teachers have cited benefits of dedicated school transport for all ages, including the ability to deal with issues such as attendance, punctuality and behaviour on the journey to school.

9.6 Young people, both through the Youth Parliament and on our visits, have commented regarding the lack of respect that they often feel they get when using existing transport arrangements, particularly the public network, and their concerns about reliability, interchange requirements, and routing. The latter as a result of services often designed for adult passengers.

9.7 Whilst there are examples where the local bus network is used without problem for pupil travel to secondary schools, problems can occur particularly where volumes are high. The Commission recognises that certain school transport flows can help maintain public bus services; however such benefits may offset suppressed general demand where people prefer to use their cars, as they are uneasy about using buses during times when school children are being transported.

10. *Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?*

10.1 Local Transport Plans should be designed to address all the travel issues facing the area they cover. Offering an adequate alternative to parents driving children to school is likely to be one of the most effective ways of reducing congestion.

10.2 Effective Local Transport Plans are most likely to emerge from authorities that take an integrated approach to their responsibilities for local bus, school and social care transport, providing delivery mechanisms that address travel behaviour of the network users.

IMPACT OF NEW PROVISIONS OF THE 2006 ACT

11. *Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey?*

11.1 The Commission believes that the new provisions in recent education legislation will be welcome in bringing changes to help children from low-income families. However this does not address modal shift for the large proportion of pupils who are still not provided with an attractive alternative to parental escorted trips in private cars.

11.2 Changes to the education system and increasing concerns about the environment will only bolster the case for dedicated school services.

11.3 With greater parental preference, going to the nearest school will no longer necessarily be the case. According to the 2005 Pupil Level Annual School Census, 55% of secondary pupils already attend a school other than the nearest one to their home. The emphasis on extended school day (together with further proposals relating to deployment) will almost inevitably lead to an extension of travel but potentially without the co-ordination. Furthermore, as new diplomas are developed for 14–19 year-olds, sharing of resources between schools (involving bussing children between schools within school hours) will become a greater necessity.

11.4 As a result yellow school buses, or other forms of dedicated school transport, could make a significant contribution to efforts to tackle climate change.

12. *Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?*

12.1 We have not made an assessment on the adequacy of levels of funding under the Education and Inspections Act. However it is clear that funding remains the major obstacle for a wider delivery of dedicated home to school transport.

12.2 Pathfinder offers the opportunity to introduce charges for those currently entitled to free school transport, as part of a process of widening the service offer to a greater number of potential users who are currently not catered for as they live less than three miles from their catchment school. In this context any charges applied to all users would need to be carefully considered to ensure positive modal shift was achieved. If successful, this would bring added benefits from reduction in congestion and in wasted parental hours, as well as wider social benefits in areas such as safety and environmental sustainability. The Commission is currently undertaking detailed cost benefit analysis to consider the benefits of such widespread use of these initiatives.

EXISTING INNOVATIVE SCHOOL TRANSPORT SCHEMES

13. *How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated "yellow buses"?*

13.1 The Commission has undertaken a number of visits to meet organisations operating yellow school buses and other dedicated school transport operations and collected evidence via a nationwide yellow bus tour. Some initiatives are specifically aimed at non-entitled children and the car run, while a number of local authorities have introduced yellow buses to improve their statutory school transport provision. The valuable features we have observed are as follows:

13.1.1 Quality Improvement

Due to cost pressures and tendering, school transport services are often operated by older double-deck vehicles cascaded down from local bus services. This vehicle type often results in safety and behavioural issues. It is clear that parents, school and young people appreciate the introduction of high quality, well-structured school bus initiatives. Nearly all the initiatives visited had purpose-built high capacity single deck yellow buses, but one or two used repainted second hand local bus vehicles. Whilst replacing double deck vehicles used for school services with single deck vehicles has some clear benefits, there could be some immediate logistical issues regarding availability of suitable vehicles and potential increases in buses and staff requirements, which will need to be considered. The Surrey County Council Pegasus Project is a very highly specified initiative, operated by First, to deliver high quality low floor school transport (not yellow buses), which also delivers socially necessary service in the off peak.

13.1.2 High Levels of Care/Supervision

Most initiatives use a dedicated pool of specifically trained drivers who are interested in this work, particularly those approaching retirement or with child care responsibilities, as it offers flexibility, regular Monday to Friday hours, and alignment with school holidays. This enables them to get to know the pupils using their buses and helps enormously in ensuring good behaviour on yellow school buses. CCTV adds to the ability to monitor behaviour, and some initiatives also provide escorts to enhance care and supervision. In West Yorkshire, Metro has developed “The Passenger Transport Academy” in partnership with other organisations. This is an initiative aimed at raising the quality standards of driver training across the industry, through the delivery of innovative learning training solutions, whilst some operators, including First, have significant training programmes already in place for dedicated yellow school bus services.

13.1.3 Reduced Congestion

This is a general issue; local traffic levels are noticeably lower in school holidays. Over the past 20 years the number of children being driven to school has almost doubled. The 2006 National Travel Survey showed that 41% of primary school children and 20% of secondary school children are being driven to school each day. The average length of the trip to school for children aged 5–10 increased from 1.3 to 1.5 miles between 1995–97 and 2006, and for pupils aged 11–16 increased from 2.9 to 3.4 miles. About one in five cars on urban roads at 0850 during term time is taking children to school. Congestion and indiscriminate parking can also be a real safety hazard in the vicinity of the school gate. Robert Gordon College, Aberdeen, cited congested access to its city centre location as one of the reasons for introducing yellow school buses. A recent yellow school bus initiative for Kempshott Infant and Junior School, Basingstoke has radically reduced traffic and congestion in the vicinity of the school by addressing non entitled school travel.

13.1.4 Partnership

Given that funding is a key problem in relation to the proliferation of the yellow bus concept for non-entitled children, the initiative at Runnymede, Surrey benefits significantly from partnership. Key partners in this initiative are Runnymede Borough Council (which has no education or transport responsibility) and some local businesses. These provide funding on the basis that modal shift could reduce severe local congestion and removal of car run responsibilities make worker arrival more reliable. The further development of sponsorship by business may present a potential opportunity for future funding.

13.1.5 Competition

Some local authorities (eg West Sussex, Norfolk, Staffordshire and Cheshire) have purchased yellow buses for direct operation to stimulate competition following localised lack of interest from the commercial sector in bidding for school bus operation, generally reflected in particularly high tender prices. These in-house operations, while rarely involving more than a small proportion of the total bus provision for free school transport, have demonstrated that authorities have been able to operate small fleets of large passenger vehicles in a cost effective way. They are generally regarded as effective in moderating local tendency towards exceptional growth in contractor prices. The authorities that have pursued this approach also saw it as an opportunity to address quality, supervisory and behavioural problems. Operators have also shown a willingness to purchase new yellow school buses through improved lengths of contract or where appropriate local authority funding has been made available, either through capital grants for vehicles or revenue to support improved vehicle specification. We are also aware that some authorities have purchased vehicles which are then let with the contract, a practice that is not uncommon in the US, which has attracted new market entry. Furthermore inter-peak school work can be packaged with contracts to improve the flexibility and utilisation of dedicated vehicles.

13.1.6 Commercial Operation

Funding issues generally mean that yellow bus operation is unlikely to be profitable. However Newport Borough Transport, a municipally-owned bus company, operates a number of yellow school buses on a profit-making basis with income from fares and scholar passes. The commercial success of this operation depends significantly on staggered school start times.

13.1.7 Saturation

Government funding has supported the MyBus initiative in West Yorkshire. Whilst this is not full saturation, this is the most extensive yellow bus initiative with about 150 low floor vehicles operated under contract by various operators. The quality, behavioural and popularity characteristics are all present and some vehicle double running has been achieved. Whilst initial data on modal shift appears to not necessarily match DfT’s expectations, additional analysis may need to be considered to establish truly the overall long term modal shift. The Commission applauds the funding of such an approach, but is concerned that conclusions could be drawn

from a single set of statistics, and also when full saturation has yet to be achieved. Saturation approaches could be tried elsewhere (eg in a small/medium sized town and rural environment or an even wider context) where lesser local bus networks together with high levels of school runs by car may produce greater levels of modal shift. In an interesting initiative Monmouthshire Council recently introduced in-house provision with ten yellow school buses offering a complete dedicated service to Caldicot School.

13.1.8 Pupil Reaction

Responses at most initiatives visited showed that yellow bus users often prefer to travel by bus than go by car as they can travel with friends. This increases pupils' independence and provides more opportunities for social interaction and preparation for the school day. Provision of dedicated school transport can help improve social inclusion by providing a way home for those wishing to attend after school clubs and activities. A positive experience of travelling by bus has the potential to lead to increased use of public transport in later life.

13.1.9 Costs

The cost of high quality dedicated school transport in the UK is high, particularly in comparison to the US, partly because of the current lower volumes of purpose built yellow buses, and also because American vehicles are designed specifically for the safe transportation of children. In contrast to the US, local authorities and operators seek to achieve cost effectiveness by employing school buses as much as possible outside the journey to and from school, but as the scale of yellow bus operation expands this may become increasingly difficult. To ensure the effective and wider use of dedicated school transport there are two key issues that need to be addressed:

- Bus Service Operators' Grant

BSOG is currently not available for dedicated school transport services, thus placing an unnecessary cost burden on school transport provision. The industry is being consulted under a review of BSOG that is currently being undertaken

- Staggering School Hours

School buses operating solely for one return journey per school day are unlikely to be cost effective. Staggered start and finish times amongst groups of schools is the single most effective action which can radically reduce school bus costs. This is a widespread feature of yellow bus operation in the USA, but proves very difficult to achieve in the UK given the autonomy of schools here. Furthermore, breakfast clubs and after school clubs (extended schools activities) provide an effective platform to enable double running even within the same school. This will potentially become more widespread as the extended schools programme is adopted by all schools in 2010.

JOINED-UP WORKING BETWEEN EDUCATION, TRANSPORT AND HEALTH AUTHORITIES

14. *Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?*

14.1 It is evident that many local authorities now integrate the organisation of their passenger transport functions.

14.2 It is understood that Central Government departments are working together on the Travel to School initiative, and on the evaluation of major projects such as MyBus. More could potentially be done to encourage the delivery of more holistic solutions, particularly through increased funding.

14.3 It is important that we integrate much more clearly the issue of provision of transport for disability and special needs, which constitutes such a large proportion of the current allocation of resources, in a much more cost effective, equality based and open manner.

14.4 We have not assessed the interaction with health authorities in terms of transport. However we are aware that the NW Centre of Excellence has recently published guidance for health agencies and local authorities entitled "Providing Transport in Partnership". This kind of integrated approach, especially through transport brokerage initiatives, can present an opportunity for greater productivity and efficiency.

April 2008

Further memorandum from the Yellow School Bus Commission (ST 13A)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

SUMMARY:

1. In summary the Commission's additional evidence is as follows:
 - Both the commercial public bus network and services supported by local authorities, alongside walking and cycling, are the more sustainable modes of transport to education for 16–19 year olds. Apart from providing public bus services with significant patronage, young people benefit from first hand experience of travelling by public transport independently, potentially encouraging future use.
 - The 14–19 education reforms and Scottish 16+ Learning Choice provisions are likely to result in increased transport demands from those in further education. Local authorities are required to ensure that neither undue costs nor inadequacy of transport provision prevent pupils from accessing education provided under these reforms. Current rules on entitlement to free transport provision largely do not consider both current travel demand and many educational policies such as 14–19 education reforms, or parental preference. Recent changes to entitlement have only targeted those entitled to free school meals, whilst transport funding related to 14–19 reforms is targeted only at rural areas. A more holistic approach to school transport is needed. For older pupils this should utilise local bus networks where possible. Where required due to levels of demand or behavioural issues, dedicated school transport services such as yellow school buses should be offered.
 - The Commission recognises that young people have concerns about the cost of public transport. To ensure that the benefits of modal shift are maintained the funding of improved school transport or improved concessionary fares should not be at the expense of other service provision. Furthermore, it is noted that free fares for young people can see modal shift over short distances from more walk trips.

INTRODUCTION

2. The Yellow School Bus Commission (hereafter referred to as “the Commission”) has been established to examine and quantify the environmental, social, educational and cost benefits of an expansion of the use of buses for home to school transport, particularly as an alternative to the car.

3. The Commission comprises six members including the Rt. Hon. David Blunkett (Labour MP for Sheffield Brightside), Baroness Ros Scott (Liberal Democrat peer), Lt Col. Tex Pemberton OBE (Conservative County Councillor from West Sussex), Patrick Harvie (Green MSP), John Burch (Confederation of Passenger Transport) and Garth Goddard (County Transport Co-ordinator for Cheshire (retired), most recently seconded as Programme Director for a national transport efficiency project).

4. The Commission was established by and is sponsored by FirstGroup plc (hereafter referred to as “First”), which is providing administrative assistance. First does not sit on the Commission. Both the Commissioners and First are committed to ensuring that the Commission's independence is assured.

RESPONSES TO THE TRANSPORT COMMITTEE EXTENDED SCOPE

5. The following response, is additional information directly in response to the extension of scope, covering:

- Travel options for students aged 16 to 19, including those studying at sixth-form colleges and further education colleges;
- The transport and travel implications (if any) of the new Diploma for 14–19 year olds and the Government's target of increasing the proportion of 17 year olds in full-time education; and
- The provision of concessionary travel for young people more generally.

6. This should be read alongside the Yellow School Bus Commission's original evidence to the Committee submitted in April 2008.

7. The Commission would also wish to draw the Committee's attention to the publication of its Report and Recommendations. A copy is being made available to all members of the Committee, and is also appended to our submission. We have made references in brackets where responses relate to commentary within the Commission's report.

TRAVEL OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS AGED 16 TO 19, INCLUDING THOSE STUDYING AT SIXTH-FORM COLLEGES AND FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

8. In addition to walking, cycling and travel by private car or motorbike, transport for 16–19 year olds to reach their place of education is provided through both the commercial public bus network and services supported by local authorities.

9. Public bus use by this age group often provides services with significant patronage, particularly where further education colleges and campuses are centrally located. This also allows young people first hand experience of travelling by public transport independently, with the potential to encourage future use into adulthood.

THE TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS (IF ANY) OF THE NEW DIPLOMA FOR 14–19 YEAR OLDS AND THE GOVERNMENT’S TARGET OF INCREASING THE PROPORTION OF 17 YEAR OLDS IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION

10. The 14–19 education reforms, as well as Scottish 16+ Learning Choice provisions, are likely to result in increased transport demands from those in further education (as discussed in Section 2.3 of the Yellow School Bus Commission Report and Recommendations).

11. Local authorities are required to ensure that neither undue costs nor inadequacy of transport provision prevent pupils from accessing education provided under these reforms. However, current rules on entitlement to free transport provision largely do not consider both current travel demand and many educational policies such as 14–19 education reforms, or parental preference, for the majority of parents. Although changes are being made, they have targeted those entitled to free school meals.

12. Free transport provision currently entitles only those attending the school closest to them. However, due largely to education policy reforms, many pupils do not attend their closest school. Thus, there is a lack of synchronisation between school transport policies and other education reforms.

13. New policies often require that schools share resources, resulting in increased transportation needs for pupils between schools, particularly outside routine school start and finish times. The Commission notes that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has made available up to £23m to support increased transport provision brought about by the 14–19 reforms. However, this funding is only available for these additional travel requirements in rural areas. The shortfall in transport funding potentially has a negative impact on the uptake of new education policies, where those requiring transport assistance are not provided for.

14. A more holistic approach to school transport, considering the travel demands of all primary and secondary age pupils is advocated by the Commission. For secondary age pupils this recommends utilising local bus networks. Where unavailable, or where required due to levels of demand or behavioural issues, dedicated school transport services such as yellow school buses should be offered. This approach would support the reforms in 14–19 education, and the Government’s target to increase the proportion of 17-year olds in full time education.

THE PROVISION OF CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE MORE GENERALLY

15. The Commission recognises that young people have concerns about the cost of public transport. Such issues have been raised by both the UK Youth Parliament and the National Youth Agency; the latter in their recent report into young people’s bus travel (as discussed in Section 2.5.5 of the Yellow School Bus Commission Report and Recommendations).

16. To ensure that the benefits of modal shift are maintained the funding of improved school transport or improved concessionary fares should not be at the expense of other service provision (as discussed in Section 5.1.2 and 6.2 of the Yellow School Bus Commission Report and Recommendations).

17. The Commission has also noted that free fares for young people can see modal shift over short distances from more sustainable modes such as walking and cycling (as discussed in Section 5.6 of the Yellow School Bus Commission Report and Recommendations).

September 2008

Memorandum from Modeshift (ST 14)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Modeshift is a non profit organisation which exists to support those professionals working to encourage young people and school communities to travel in a sustainable and active way. The majority of our membership consists of Local Authority School Travel Advisors (STAs) but also includes Healthy Schools Advisors, Road Safety Professionals and others with an interest in the field of school travel and transport. At present we have 375 members, from 121 different organisations (mainly English LAs).

1.2 Modeshift exists to enable its members to:

- meet and share experiences and ideas either in person or on online;
- challenge current modes of thought and seek new ways forward;
- to progress within their profession and develop experience and qualifications that will open career opportunities in other areas; and
- have a voice at a national level in matters concerning sustainable school travel.

1.3 Modeshift aims to work through its members to bring about a change in travel behavior resulting in:

- less traffic;
- cleaner air;
- an improved environment;
- healthier kids; and
- better quality of life for communities.

1.4 Modeshift is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into School Travel. We have set out our comments in accordance with the inquiry's terms of reference. This evidence has been compiled from members' responses and represents input from 25 different Local Authorities across England.

2. *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel?*

Assessing travel and transport needs of pupils

2.1 A consortium of 8 SW Local Authorities and more recently Transport for London (analysing data for the 33 London boroughs) is working on data processing using the School Census Mode of Travel (plus other supporting fields from School Census). This will provide detailed information on modes used in relation to the spatial distribution of pupils. In addition to map based output from postcode plots, this process produces a number of valuable spatial calculations that allow LAs to set SMART targets for sustainable travel.

2.2 Calculations include:

- Actual threshold distances for each mode.
- Numbers of pupils living within these threshold distances of their schools.
- Numbers not attending their nearest school.
- Numbers being driven from within the walking threshold of their school.

2.3 The other benefit that comes from this approach, both in the SW and in London, is that it enables Authorities to see and plan for cross border movements. This links heavily with the evolving 14 to 19 reform and proposed move to sub-regional provision based on "travel to learn areas" rather than administrative boundaries.

2.4 The School Census data, if used to its potential, clearly offers vital opportunities to gain a better spatial understanding of pupil mobility. However, there exist however concerns that the quality of this data is not always as robust as it could, be and that whilst it provides a standard methodology for reporting data, local variations in the methodologies for collecting and updating data annually mean significant inaccuracies can exist. This is an issue which needs to be and can easily be resolved where work is carried out with schools to show how useful accurate data can be for them as well as for Local Authority school travel and transport planning. This can be as simple as annual feedback using maps creating a virtuous feedback loop that encourages and rewards accurate data collection by schools.

2.5 School Travel Plans (STPs) are reported as the primary means for most Authorities in assessing the needs of pupils and also as the principle delivery channel for promoting sustainable transport at a school level. Coverage of STPs good with most Local Authorities on target to achieve 100% by 2010 (or 2009 in London).

2.6 *Case Study: South West*

In addition to the work with the School Census data LA are also using web based technology (ViewFinder—www.viewfinder.infomapper.com) to gather information (actual and preferences) directly from young people. This incorporates a route plotting tool that enables pupils to plot their actual and preferred routes to school and to identify issues along those routes. This technology negates the need to plots/model journeys against road centre line data. This is crucially important as young people rarely follow the routes that road centre line analysis will suggest and thus will provide more accurate data on the routes chosen, helping to target infrastructure and other measures more accurately.

2.7 Some Authorities have employed consultants and/or additional staff (eg GIS mapping experts) to carry out audits of infrastructure and routes but limited resources and staff in most areas has meant that this aspect of the assessment is not as advanced as would perhaps be wished.

2.8 An issue exists with regards to assessing the needs of pupils attending private/independent schools. As there is no requirement to complete and return school census data and in many areas these schools have proved “hard to reach” in terms of developing STPs it can be difficult to define the school routes and needs of this section of the school community.

Sustainable modes of travel strategies

2.9 Most Local Authorities report that work has commenced on the delivery of the new duty with many having draft Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategies in place. In many cases, however, this has been a revised version of the pre-existing STP strategies and may not, at this stage, completely meet the expectations of government.

2.10 There exists in many Authorities a level of confusion and uncertainty as to what is expected by government under the new duties as clear guidance has not been forthcoming. This could result in the duties being interpreted differently across the country and could make it difficult to assess the strategies and their impact when they are finally completed.

2.11 It is felt in some areas that the recent MVA evaluation of strategies was somewhat limited and is unlikely to assist greatly with the development of effective strategies in the future.

2.12 Where work in this area has progressed well, a number of Authorities report the establishment of cross department working groups which have increased the levels of joint working between Children’s Services and Transportation departments at a local level. This is by no means universal and in some areas the new duties appear to have been given little thought to date. The reasons for this are reported mainly as lack of staff or funds but some Authorities report reluctance by senior managers to assume ownership of the duties and as such responsibility for it has not yet been decided on a local level.

Promoting sustainable transport

2.13 All Local Authorities have committed to the promotion of sustainable travel for the school journey and have been acting upon this through existing STP and Safer Routes to Schools programmes. There appears to be little evidence that the Education and Inspections Bill has yet significantly changed activity in terms of implementation of measures.

2.14 There exists a wide range of activities and campaigns used by Authorities to promote sustainable transport. Most popular are reward schemes such as the Walk on Wednesdays (WoW) scheme and other similar incentives based schemes; Walk the World, Wizard Ways to get to School, Star Walkers, Medal Motion etc.

2.15 In the main, activities to promote sustainable transport are currently led by the School Travel Advisors (STAs) in each Authority. There is real concern as to where the capacity to carry out this work will come from once the funding for STAs comes to an end on 2010.

2.16 In some areas work has begun to influence parents and pupils at the point at which they are deciding on schools, rather than waiting until they have chosen and then attempting to change their travel behaviour. Such schemes encourage parents to make a fully informed choice/preference for schools where transport is part of the decision making process and not something to consider after the fact.

2.17 Case Study: Starting School

Somerset County Council and others have begun to include information in Primary Admissions guides encouraging parents to consider how they will travel as part of making their preference choice, rather than waiting until they have their school place.
(eg: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/media/6A4/1B/StartingSchools1.pdf>).

2.18 Case Study: Upgrade7

Transport for London has developed a new resource targeting pupils and parents at the transition stage from primary to secondary school. Specific materials and information have been produced for parents, pupils and teachers to ensure that transport options are considered when thinking about the move to secondary school. Further information can be found at www.upgrade7.org.uk

3. How effective can school travel plans be?

3.1 STPs provide a framework to support schools in dealing with travel issues that affect them, including the range of activities in place to reduce car use for travel to school. However, it must be remembered that as STPs are unique to the issues and concerns of the school they focus on, that not all STPs will be focusing on reducing car use and therefore modal shift will not always be the only (or indeed principle) definition of success or effectiveness.

3.2 If we consider modal shift away from use of the private car for school journeys as one measurement of the effectiveness of STPs then significant evidence exists to show shifts of anywhere from 1% to 15% at a Local Authority level and as much as 40% at individual schools.

3.3 The educational policy of parental choice is always going to impact on the ability of travel plans to change behaviour. Spatial analysis has made clear that mode of travel chosen is inescapably linked to distance—if your school is beyond a realistic walking or cycling distance then you are unlikely to walk or cycle regardless of the campaigns and encouragement of the school. (Data analysed to date shows that current thresholds for walking sit at 800 metres for Primary schools and 2,000 metres for Secondary schools).

3.4 On a local level, anecdotal evidence shows that STPs are effective in helping achieve a wide range of benefits beyond that of modal shift away from the car. Benefits include improved health (both physical and mental), carbon reduction, education achievement, improved attendance, improved perceptions of safety on routes to and from school as well in a change in the attitudes of young people as expressed through their preferred mode of travel.

3.5 Further work is needed to assess and monitor these wider benefits more formally to provide statistics and robust evaluations which capture and quantify the anecdotal results which are being reported at present. This is especially important for rural schools where modal shift may not be practical due to the location of schools and distances travelled, but also in high density urban areas where schools already have high number of children travelling sustainably (most usually walking) and there is no room for further shift. In these situations the effectiveness of the STP will lie in its ability to influence and embed positive attitudes to sustainable modes of travel encouraging use later in life.

4. *Are School Travel Plans linked with other transport initiatives?*

4.1 In an increasing number of Local Authorities STPs have become integral to the delivery of school based transport initiatives and interventions, however, there is no national consistency and in some areas this remains an isolated programme. This is largely due to staffing/funding shortages and on occasion a lack of engagement at senior officer level in the programme/issues.

4.2 It is important to note that STPs are, however, increasingly being linked to initiatives outside of the transport sphere. The programme is a crucial part of the Healthy Schools programme (though how integrated they are can vary dramatically from LA to LA). The advent of the Sustainable Schools agenda has seen STPs as a key delivery arm enabling schools to meet the objectives outlined under the Transport gateway.

5. *Are benefits successfully maintained?*

5.1 Modeshift members (48%) have reported that it may be too soon to accurately judge how successfully the benefits have been maintained. As a programme STPs are still relatively new and behaviour change can take time, even generations, to become embedded in the population. However, initial finds are encouraging and show a consistent drop in car use or at least a slowing against the national trend of increased car use.

5.2 The key to successfully maintaining STPs and the benefits they generate lies in ongoing support to schools in implementing their plans and in encouraging them to voluntarily report back on their progress and achievements. Local Authority staff, in particular STAs, are critical to this process as evidence from school communities indicates that without dedicated support and funding, STPs are likely to become little more than a paper exercise. The existing support in place at local level is in future jeopardy as funding for STA posts draws to an end in 2010 and many Authorities may not prioritise their internal funds to enable their continuation after this time.

5.3 A need exists to ensure that schools maintain their interest in the STP programme and that they continue to provide monitoring data on the various benefits realised through STPs. To this end Modeshift is leading on the roll out of a national Accreditation Programme which rewards schools for maintaining their STPs and encourages them to report annually on progress and achievements.

6. *Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?*

6.1 LAs are amending their home to school transport policies to take account of the extended entitlement in line with legislation and the entitlements are being considered in the development of the new Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies.

6.2 There is an issue that parents in many areas will still be unaware of the changes and this may take some time to rectify.

6.3 A large number of Local Authorities have expressed concern as to the costs of covering extended entitlement against already stretched budget and staff resources.

7. *What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of the proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?*

7.1 It is understood that the proposed pathfinder schemes will not be going ahead. There is significant disappointment with this at Local Authority officer level as significant work was undertaken to complete the bids. Modeshift members would be interested to learn where the government departments propose to divert the funding which was earmarked for the pathfinders. It is hoped that it will still benefit the school travel programme. Modeshift would be extremely interested in assisting with any consultation of Local Authorities to gain views on how funding should be spend.

8. *Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport?*

8.1 Public transport should be used wherever possible as it not only supports the network but also offers greater flexibility of travel, in particular for older students who may travel at various times of the day. It can also provide greater flexibility than dedicated contracts to meet other agendas such as Extended Schools or the 14 to 19 curriculum. As journeys to school or college play an important role within networks providing additional revenue which can often support a level of frequency that would not otherwise exist.

8.2 The issue of public transport access is a real problem in the more rural areas. For school communities living in rural areas, public transport is not always available on routes or at times needed to cater for home to school transport. As such the existing network might not be suitable for those not eligible for or without access to dedicated school transport. This presents particular rural challenges in meeting the 14–19 and extended schools agendas where network capacity is not sufficient to meet demand at different times.

8.3 The movement of pupil passengers can vary significantly from year to year as the popularity of schools change. In some cases the public networks can struggle with overloads, in particular at the start of term, which can also have a negative effect on other members of the public trying to use the services. This could be alleviated through better communications between Children's Services and Transport Authorities.

8.4 It is worth mentioning that for pupils and parents public and school transport currently sits at the bottom of the list of preferred travel modes. This must be recognised and addressed if increased usage is to be achieved.

9. *Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?*

9.1 Most LAs consider that their LTPs (or LIPs in London) do make sufficient provision in the field of school travel and transport. Most LAs have established Safer Routes to Schools (SRtS) and STP programmes which accept that travel demand management and “smarter” more sustainable travel options are essential tools to ease the travel and transport issues faced by school communities.

9.2 A concern greater than the support given by, and appropriateness of, transport planning is that of the lack of recognition in most Children's Services departments that home to school journeys are an educational as well as a transport matter. This is especially the case when looking beyond the logistics of dedicated school transport for those with entitlement under the legislation.

9.3 An issue exists with regard to the evidence base upon which LTP's (and Children and Young People's Plans) address and plan for home to school travel issues. Current guidance for the development of the strategy under the new duty places considerable expectations on STPs to deliver much of the required evidence base. In many authorities this will be problematic as their STPs are unlikely to be accessible or sufficiently detailed to be used as a coherent strategic resource. There is also the very real issue that many STPs will be significantly out dated as the current Government target (to gain 100% coverage) has turned the development of Travel Plans in many areas into a numbers game, with little time or resource being available to support the maintenance of existing plans.

9.4 The use of systems such as Accession is widespread but concerns have been expressed that it should not be relied upon alone as it calculates against the nearest school. Evidence shows that in some areas as many as half the pupil population are not attending their nearest school thus providing misleading information with regards to accessibility of school places.

10. *Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?*

10.1 Initial findings show that if provisions continue to be supported, funded and staffed then yes, they will reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey. They must however be delivered in an informed and considered way recognising the reality of people's lives and the choices they are able to make.

10.2 The impact of these provisions will be tempered by management of parental preference and by local and national strategic decisions taken with regard to issues such as school locations and developments. Central support is needed to resolve some of the long standing policy and guidance issues/conflicts if broad scale modal shift is to be achieved.

11. *How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated “yellow buses”?*

11.1 The Yellow Bus model comes from a system where children are allocated a school. Its translation to an educational system where parents have choice over where to send their child is always going to be compromised. There are obvious logistical difficulties of guaranteeing transport to a chosen school by a network that would have to mimic a public transport system better than that currently in existence. To support a public transport network and a shadow school transport network is not considered by many to be the best use of funding and resources.

11.2 A better solution than dedicated “yellow” buses could be to stimulate greater public transport coverage and use thorough the move to a “County Ticket” approach and replace specific contracted services with public transport passes provided on a sliding scale of discount. Through this and positive encouragement of public transport usage the wider public transport network is supported and we could deliver a generation of public transport users (ref: Rural transport—Long Distance Learners 2007 which can be found at: http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/consumption/groups/public/documents/general_resources/NCC055449.pdf)

11.3 *Case Study: Kent County Council*

Kent is the first authority outside of London to offer bus travel free at the point of use (£50.00 admin charge) for all secondary school aged children. A pilot of the Kent Freedom Pass scheme operated in three of the county districts in 2007–08 was very successful (Surveys suggest that 27% of Kent Freedom Pass applicants were previously driven to school) and is due to be rolled out countywide by 2009.

12. *Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?*

12.1 Despite plans and policies at national and local level which speak of partnership working, in practice, Education, Transport and Health are not sufficiently “joined up” at a strategic or practical level although some excellent examples do exist at Local Officer level implementation. A lack of communication and joined up working is also present internally within each of the three areas at both local and national levels resulting in conflicting policies and shifting priorities which make true partnership working, at best, difficult.

12.2 The Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategies required under the new duties do present an opportunity for all three areas to work together to build a joint way forward in addressing the issues faced but reports from Las indicate that this opportunity is not being seized in many cases. More regularly the new strategy has been developed by the Transport teams with limited input and support from other areas. At a local level sustainable school travel and transport, beyond formalised home to school transportation is still seen as the responsibility of the Transport Authority and “not an Education problem”.

12.3 A key example of the need to improve working relationships can be found in the fact that there is little evidence to show that the schools estate is managed on a spatial basis ie provision of schools/capacity where children actually live. Popular schools are expanded in areas of poor access and new schools are built or relocated away from their existing populations, often without adequate cycle facilities, in difficult locations (eg at the end of cul de sacs), or with large car parks and/or “turning circles” which encourage car use by enabling it. These issues need to be addressed if programmes such as Building Schools for the Future and Primary Strategy for Change are not to impact negatively on the progress made promoting sustainable modes.

April 2008

Memorandum from Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership (ST 15)

(Merseyside Local Transport Plan Partnership: Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral Councils and Merseytravel, the Passenger Transport Authority)

1. *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel? How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?*

(a) School Travel Strategies

- (i) School Travel Strategies have been developed by Merseyside’s five District Councils and Merseytravel, following the Merseyside School Travel Strategy adopted as part of the LTP and in response to the Educations and Inspection Act. Good progress has been made in implementing each of the strategies and collaborate work across the Metropolitan area continues in the next stages of this implementation. School Travel Plans are being utilized as

the main mechanism for assessing travel needs and promoting sustainable travel and are taken forward as an integral part of Merseyside's Travel Behaviour Change / Smarter Choices programme, TravelWise.

(b) School Travel Plans

- (i) Transport has a large impact on the quality of life of children and young people and the Merseyside LTP delivers a range of programmes to ensure that their needs are met and that positive travel behaviours are encouraged. School Travel Plans address safety, environmental, health and social objectives for LSPs and the Merseyside programme is developing extremely well.
- (ii) School Travel Plans (STPs) are the main mechanism for meeting LTP mode share objectives and the mandatory target for school travel and contribute to congestion reduction targets. STPs are steered by the Merseyside School Travel Strategy, adopted in 2006 as part of the LTP and by each partner's School Travel Strategy, adopted in 2007 as part of the Education and Inspections Act Requirements.
- (iii) The Merseyside LTP partnership are committed to continuing and expanding the School Travel Plan programme, seeking to engage with all schools by 2010 and to bring about more sustainable travel patterns for these journeys.

(c) Effectiveness

- (i) Analysis in 2007 revealed that the mode shift was achieved in School Travel Plan (STP) schools in the first LTP. Car use fell 2.4% among STP schools against a 5% increase in non-engaged schools and walking and cycling increased. However, a sharp decline in bus use among secondary schools is being witnessed and these trips are being replaced by car journeys. Increases in walking and cycling are projected to be outweighed by dramatic reductions in bus use in secondary schools over the remainder of the LTP period, particularly as more secondary schools will be engaged.

**2010 TARGET PROJECTION BASED ON MAXIMUM NO OF PLANS
ADOPTED IN MARCH 2008**

	<i>Total no of schools</i>	<i>Adopted</i>	<i>Adopted in March 2008</i>	<i>Total adopted by March 2008</i>	<i>Total left</i>	<i>2008–09</i>	<i>2009–10</i>
Knowsley	70	46	12	58	12	6.0	6.0
Liverpool	197	90	33	147	62	31.0	31.0
Sefton	121	64	12	76	45	22.5	22.5
St Helens	72	38	23	61	11	6.0	5.0
Wirral	143	71	25	96	47	23.5	23.5
Total	603	309	105	438	177	89	88
%	100	51	19	71	29		

- (ii) The LTP target for mode share on the journey to school has now been set at 28.8% car use for the journey to school by 2011, against a baseline of 29.9%. Car use increased overall by 5% for the journey to school during 2001–2006.
- (iii) Reaching DfT/DfES goal of engaging with all schools by 2010 and managing schools to ensure all are effective in supporting LTP target for improved mode share remains a significant challenge. Analysis of the Merseyside data base suggests that in year 4 of engagement, the effectiveness of a Travel Plan begins to reduce, demonstrating the continued need for input to schools to achieve mode shift. This requires constant revising of necessary inputs from advisors to achieve the mode share outcomes and maintain the quality of the programme and will be a continued challenge with over 600 schools to manage.
- (iv) The introduction of school travel to the PLASC system has been very welcome however the lack of clarity in the requirements and definitions is leading to very poor data results. Clear guidance for schools regarding the collection of this data and the definition of the categories of information are essential to ensure the robust ongoing framework which we have put in place through our own data collection is able to be maintained under PLASC. Mandatory requirements for these fields would be welcomed for all schools.

(d) Links to other initiatives

- (i) Increasing the use of sustainable modes for journeys to school will not only have an impact on localised congestion but will assist other policy areas such as road safety and the "Choosing Health" agenda in tackling levels of health and obesity. The partnership engage with a number of wider partners in addressing these issues and school travel is considered in a number of relevant strategies including congestion reduction, obesity strategies, the Road Safety strategy.

- (ii) The TravelWise Merseyside programme co-ordinates all areas of Smarter Choices activity across Merseyside and ensures that the School Travel Plan programme benefits from the closest integration with other initiatives such as Merseybike, our successful Cycle training scheme, the Bike –It pilot and Sustrans Links to Schools programmes, and wider TravelWise campaigns such as Cycle marketing and workplace travel plans. STPs also link to Sustainable and Healthy Schools. Links are also in place with public transport operators through their schools liaison officers and Merseytravel’s Community Links Team which addresses issues relating to public transport use.
 - (iii) Work with secondary schools will increase in coming years as the need to address flexible learning pathways increases and strong efforts are being made to increase collaboration with Building Schools for the Future programmes to ensure design is most supportive for sustainable school travel. The School Travel Plan programme is also integrated with the Merseyside Bus Strategy and we will be working to ensure that use of the most sustainable travel choice is maximised so that planning school bus services is supported by engagement with the travel plan processes.
 - (iv) Capital funding from Local Transport Plan towards physical improvements at schools comprises upwards of £500,000 per annum from the Local Authorities and is focused on School Travel Plan Schools.
 - (v) The case for school travel plans in delivering a range of LAA targets needs to be made in all authorities, particularly as the funding for LA based STAs is now part of the LAA process.
- (e) Are benefits successfully maintained?
- (i) The effectiveness section above indicates some concern here. Merseyside authorities are working on an approach to ensure effectiveness can be maintained, this includes phased approach to support following 2010 target, curriculum work to embed activity without as much external support and access guides for all schools as required in the Strategies. This is a key challenge and with few staff resources will be an area of continuing challenge. Risks to ongoing effectiveness include:
 - (ii) Failure to secure long term funding of School Travel Advisors.
 - (iii) In working with all schools, effectiveness of travel plans likely to reduce as resource spread too thinly.
 - (iv) Falling bus use.
 - (v) Increasing choice and travel distances.

3. *Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?*

- (a) The long term benefits of encouraging greater use of the public transport network rather than dedicated buses are wide reaching and include increased demand for public transport services, increased awareness of the public transport system by young people and a more cost effective approach to service delivery. There are problems with capacity on many buses at peak times which present difficulties for all passengers. The welcome for young people using public services is not universal and behaviour issues can affect other passengers. The quality of the bus experience for young people and all users is not as consistently high as would be necessary to stem the rapid decline in bus use being experienced in Merseyside schools.
- (b) Merseyside’s Local Transport Plan contains a number of measures to address the journey to school and these are included within congestion, road safety, TravelWise, air quality and accessibility areas of action.

4. *Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?*

- (a) While the new provisions go some way to improving the potential to reduce car use and congestion there remain a number of significant issues:
- (b) Progress on mode shift is dependent on the School Travel Plan programme. There are insufficient STAs to manage the ongoing input to STPs at all schools. In working with all schools, effectiveness of travel plans likely to reduce as resource spread too thinly. Current STA posts are only funded up to 2010 and this is a massive risk to mode share objectives.
- (c) The Cycling England funding has made a major contribution to increasing the attractiveness and safety of cycling and this scheme needs to be continued.
- (d) Wider policies and greater to improve the environment for cycling and to reverse the decline in cycling to school are necessary however.

- (e) Falling bus use is the result of many factors as in wider use but the service for young people is not considered a priority and customer care is not prioritised by many bus companies, or reflected in pay and training provision.
- (f) Increasing choice, schools specialization and collaborative and flexible learning patterns are increasing both travel distances and the number of trips being made however and these factors work in direct contradiction to the objectives of the Act.

5. *How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated “yellow buses”?*

- (a) In Merseyside a school travel hierarchy has been adopted placing modes of transport in the following preferential order:
- (b) Walking, cycling, public transport, school transport, car sharing and private car use.
- (c) Yellow buses are not a priority in this approach as they are considered not to contribute to long term transport behaviour objectives, ie encouraging young people to adopt sustainable travel as part of their normal lifestyles, nor to active travel and health objectives nor to provide best value for money in a metropolitan area.
- (d) The Merseybike Cycle training scheme has grown to the largest in the country in two years and is delivered by a local social enterprise. This innovative approach is considered highly successful, where the training is integrated in to the School Travel Plan and wider cycling encouragement. The potential for cycling to meet the difficult journey patterns encouraged by the school choice agenda, flexible learning is considerable.

6. *Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?*

- (a) Merseyside has established greater co-operative working with LEAs as a result of the Education and Inspection act requirements and continue to work together on this agenda. Merseyside authorities will be working together to introduce journey planning and access guides to all schools for example and liaison takes place with regard to planning for school transport services. Greater scope exists to improve this collaboration and to improve liaison at the early stages of planning—for example to ensure that Planning and development decisions with regard to schools closures, new schools, BSF programmes etc are developed with transport implications in mind, rather than as an add on. This should be a requirement in the schools development process. The PCTs remain supportive of the objectives for increased safety, activity and reduced pollution associated with schools travel and are particularly supportive of the childhood obesity issue. However, there is a failure to act upon the recognition that walking and cycling present the most powerful tools in tackling obesity in the long term, a tendency to rely on PE and to exclude the means of integrating activity into daily lifestyles as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer Wanless report of 2004. There is a lack of priority given to walking and cycling and public transport use in physical activity strategies and for the health sector to give an appropriate lead in working with the education sector.

April 2008

Memorandum from the Confederation of Passenger Transport’s (CPT) School Transport Committee (ST 16)

The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) is the trade association representing the interests of bus, coach and light rail operators within the United Kingdom. This response is submitted by CPT’s School Transport Committee following extensive consultation within our organisation and member companies.

What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel? How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?

1. There is a clear need for an independent review of home to school transport systems and for the results of that review to be used to develop and implement Dedicated School Transport Services. These dedicated schemes must generate a quality service offering the highest standards of safety and reliability. Fundamentally the key decision in school transport networks until now has been cost.

2. High quality Dedicated School Transport Services should generate modal shift and thereby ensure that fewer children are taken to school in their parents’ cars. The immediate benefit of this will be to reduce congestion and pollution. Long term, pupils using these services will develop personal and social skills and those habits and attitudes which will underpin their travel decisions in later life.

Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?

3. CPT believes that logistically there is a long way to go before these arrangements can be said to be in place. The impact on existing local bus operators networks are not clearly understood and capacity and resource issues will need to be resolved.

What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of the proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?

4. CPT understands that none of the proposed Pathfinder schemes will be progressed and consequently is unable to comment on the potential for these initiatives.

Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?

5. There are many geographic variations in provision throughout the UK. Historically, the tendering process for home to school services have been so cost critical that quality has been ignored. Authorities have been seen to be reluctant to enforce quality requirements for fear of increasing costs. Too often the award of a contract has been based only on price; thus the resulting services have been seen to range from the highest standards of professionalism to the very shoddy. In some cases Operators providing these services have received little or no support from the schools and Local Authorities this has led to further erosion of the quality of service.

Decisions about placing students on existing commercial and contracted local bus service networks are often made based on cost, rather than suitability. This can mean that the length of route can be unsuitable and the type of vehicle or environment may not be conducive to encourage students and pupils to make use of public transport in later life.

Having said that there are very good examples of service provision that do meet the needs of students and pupils, but there is no consistency nationwide.

Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?

6.

- We hope to see the introduction of National Guidelines supported with funding to develop Dedicated School Transport Services which offer consistently high quality services designed to fit the specific needs of each community.
- Without doubt changes to the existing system will have commercial and economic implications for Operators supplying these services. It is essential that Dedicated School Transport Services attract adequate funding to both establish and maintain the services.
- Dedicated School Transport Services should be eligible for Bus Service Operators' Grant.

We hope that Transport Planners will work closely with local Operators, their local service providers, to plan efficient and effective schemes for vehicle utilisation.

How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated "yellow buses"?

7. In some areas initiatives have generated quality Dedicated School Transport Services, with particular attention being paid to the provision of high standards of customer care. Often these have been developed with the benefit of additional funding derived from national schemes or local initiatives. Many have been very successful in so far as they exist. CPT has supported the recent Yellow School Bus Commission Initiative and has contributed extensively to the evidence gathering exercise conducted by the group. This has clearly shown that where finance is available to provide a quality dedicated project, much can be achieved.

Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?

8. Currently developments within education, such as increased parental choice, the requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and the introduction of new diplomas for 14—19 year olds will require a radical overhaul of Dedicated School Transport Services. It is envisaged that in the future schools will not just require morning and afternoon peak services but may need a more flexible Dedicated School Transport Service available throughout an extended day. Evidence at CPT suggests that many operators have yet to

be engaged with the process for ensuring that this provision will be available. Furthermore with the complications of the expanded concessionary fare scheme and existing capacity issues there, much still needs to be resolved before sufficient resource for expanded schools capacity is available.

9. In looking to the future we must appreciate that different geographic areas have differing needs and clearly no one scheme will fit all; a geographically wide spread rural population will demand different travel solutions from a densely packed urban area. These different solutions must all conform to minimum quality standards in this way we will ensure the highest levels of safety and reliability of service provision for all pupils.

10. These minimum quality standards should include:

Drivers:

- hold a full pcv licence;
- undertake continuing training programmes (this should also apply to escorts) to develop pupil management skills, safer driving etc. It is envisaged that these topics could be offered as units within the Driver CPC qualification; and
- be CRB (enhanced) vetted and approved (this should also apply to escorts)—we hope to see the management of this system being improved so that one check would be accepted by all authorities. Ideally this check could be a component of the driver's vocational licence. We do certainly see some improvement in arrangements on the horizon with the commencement of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) registration system in 2009.

Vehicles:

- conform to construction and use legislation;
- undergo a servicing regime which includes regular preventative maintenance; and
- inspections. We recommend that all vehicle used for Dedicated School Transport Service conform to the standards set out by the Traffic Commissioners for O Licence holders.

Operators:

- conform with regulatory and compliance standards at least equivalent to those required of operator licence holders and regulated by the Traffic Commissioners.

Contracts:

- demand and enforce agreed standards of service provision;
- provide a structure of support for Operators and Drivers for managing difficult and unruly pupils;
- guarantee a seat for each pupil—we would not support pupils (under 16) being allowed to travel as standees; and
- guarantee that where appropriate pupils be given a separate Dedicated School Transport Services, thereby ensuring they are not required to share their transport with adults who have not undergone CRB (enhanced) checks.

CPT would be pleased to have the opportunity to expand on specific issues if required in due course.

April 2008

Memorandum from the RAC Foundation for Motoring (ST 17)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The RAC Foundation for Motoring is an independent charity established to promote and conduct research into the environmental, economic, mobility and safety issues relating to use of motor vehicles. Our vision is to advocate innovative transport solutions for safer roads, safer drivers, greener cars, improved mobility and a fair deal for motorists.

1.2 The Foundation welcomes the Committee's inquiry into school travel, which is timely. During the morning rush hour in urban areas (8.00–8.59 am) 12% of all the traffic on the roads is due to the school run, peaking to almost 1 in 5 cars (18%) at 8.45 am (DfT, Travel to School, Personal Travel Factsheet, 2008). There is a noticeable difference on the roads during holiday times not only because of the reduced school run, but also because commuting trips during peak hours reduce by approximately 15% (DfT, 2008).

2. LOCAL AUTHORITY PROGRESS ON CARRYING OUT SCHOOL TRAVEL DUTIES

Q. What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel? How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?

2.1 The RAC Foundation does not have any direct experience of local authority work on school travel and transport, but from our various dealings with other organisations it appears that school travel initiatives have certainly risen up the agenda, especially as a way to reduce congestion on the roads and improve the health of young people. Nationally, approximately 40% of schools have travel plans (DfES, Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance, 2007) and the RAC Foundation supports the ambitious intention to achieve 100% uptake, even though it is unlikely this target will be met by 2010 as planned. Travel plans alone however, are not effective unless they are active and therefore the government should focus future targets on the number of active plans, rather than the existence of plans *per se*.

2.2 School travel plans are undoubtedly effective at reducing car borne travel to school. The Smarter Choices Report (DfT, 2004), one of the most authoritative sources on the impact of travel planning, found that programmes could reduce car travel anywhere between 0–52%. Local circumstances as well as pupil and parental buy-in are essential for achieving the most significant reductions in school run traffic at peak times and it is important that this is recognised.

2.3 It is unclear whether school travel plans are adequately linked with other transport initiatives. Often, as is the case in many areas of planning, school travel planning is hived off into a silo. Better integration of accessibility planning, parking policies and inter-school transport initiatives would be useful.

2.4 Despite individual school travel plan success stories, when the findings in the National Travel Survey (2006) are assessed, the proportion of primary school children travelling to school by car has increased from 38% (1995–97) to 41% (2006), whereas the proportion of secondary school children travelling to school by car has levelled off at 20% (DfT, Travel to School, Personal Travel Factsheet, 2008). A new approach is undoubtedly required to encourage more sustainable school travel, even though the longer-term decline trend in students walking to school and the increase in travelling to school by car has levelled off in recent years (DfT, 2008). The statistics suggest that the benefits from school travel planning are being maintained, but further work is undoubtedly required.

3. ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXTENDED ENTITLEMENTS TO FREE SCHOOL TRAVEL

Q. Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?

3.1 The RAC Foundation is not qualified to pass judgment on whether appropriate arrangements are in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport, but we are qualified to provide comment on the impact that school travel has had on individual journey patterns and traffic congestion at peak times in recent years.

3.2 Choice in education policy has undoubtedly had a detrimental impact on journey lengths, times and traffic congestion. The most recent National Travel survey statistics illustrate this fact very clearly. In 2006 the average primary school child traveled 1.5 miles to get to school, an increased distance of 15% in comparison to the 1995–97 baseline when the average primary school journey was only 1.3 miles. A similar trend is true with secondary schools. In 1995–97 the average secondary school pupil traveled 2.9 miles to get to school. This has increased to 3.4 miles in 2006, a 17% increase in the distance travelled.

3.3 Over the past 10 years (since 1995–97) school run traffic during the morning peak (08.00–08.59) has increased from 10% of the total traffic to 12% (NTS, 2006). School run traffic peaks at 08.45, accounting for 18% of all car trips on the road. If all parents and children could be encouraged to embark on the school run without the car just one day a week a 20% reduction in overall weekly traffic could be secured and this is the approach that many authorities have been taking to the issue. However, it must be remembered that a large proportion of car based school travel is part of a trip-chain with the parent or guardian traveling directly to work.

The complexity of school travel must be embraced in future policy, but equally the transport implications of extended entitlements must be addressed from the beginning, rather than being left to the school travel planners to deal with after a location decision has been made.

4. THE ROLE OF PATHFINDER SCHEMES

Q. What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of the proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?

4.1 The RAC Foundation is not able to talk specifically about the pathfinder scheme, but the use of the general public transport network for school travel has implications beyond school travel, which are worth considering.

4.2 The Foundation has previously published research on the issue of car dependence, which ascertained that there was potential to move 20% of motorists to another other forms of transport for some of their journeys (RAC Foundation, 1995, Car Dependence). Equally it was found that 20% of motorists would find it near impossible to make any changes to their car use.

4.3 The role of public transport was assessed within the report, and even though reliability and punctuality are often identified as the characteristics that will encourage people to make the switch to a mode other than the car our research found that the attitudes and behaviour of fellow passengers had a significant impact on peoples propensity to use public transport. Therefore making more use of the general public transport network for school travel may drive away existing and/or future public transport customers, which will have a negative impact on the wider sustainability agenda.

4.4 The Foundation recognises that the amalgamation of home to school and general public transport may be advantageous from a cost perspective, and in some areas it may even make a general public transport service more viable. We would urge decision makers to aspire to develop a public transport system that will encourage people from their cars where possible. The amalgamation of the two needs is likely to be a backwards step.

5. PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN SUITABILITY FOR DEALING WITH HOME TO SCHOOL JOURNEYS

Q. Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?

5.1 Section 4 adequately deals with the Foundation's views and concerns about linking general public transport and school travel too closely. However, if dedicated school transport is not available, general public services should seek to pick up any additional demand, but in many areas, timetabling is not linked closely enough with the start and end of the school day, which will cause problems for this idea.

5.2 Local transport plans are certainly the place where local authorities should consider home to school needs in a strategic fashion. High performing authorities already appear to have made the link between local transport plans, accessibility planning, bus strategies and home to school travel, but this should be encouraged across the board. Accessibility planning tools would be particularly useful to consider more fully as school travel problems are often linked to a number of schools or organisations sharing the road space at the same time. Accessibility planning could therefore help determine where non-transport policies such as staggered opening times could have an impact and this should be encouraged.

6. EFFECTS OF NEW PROVISIONS ON HOME TO SCHOOL JOURNEY

Q. Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?

6.1 The new provisions for the school journey certainly look to reduce car use and congestion in the long-term. The most positive change is the general duty on local education authorities to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to support sustainable travel, which spreads the burden of responsibly more equally and fairly between the local education authority and the local transport authority. Whether this approach is cost effective remains to be seen and detailed analysis should be completed to ascertain this.

7. EFFECTIVENESS OF EXISTING HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SCHEMES

Q. How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated "yellow buses"?

7.1 Yellow bus initiatives have been very successful in some countries as well as areas in the UK where they have been introduced. 85% of children between the ages of 7 and 10 were usually escorted by an adult to school in 2006, and the main reasons given for this choice was the fear of traffic danger (32%) and fear of assault or molestation (25%) (DfT, Travel to School, Personal Travel Factsheet, 2008). Yellow bus schemes are designed with the safety of the child in mind and therefore the idea is often very popular amongst parents, but there is a problem with designated buses being redundant throughout the course of the day.

7.2 The RAC Foundation does not have a strong view on whether yellow bus initiatives should be rolled out. Local authorities should make decisions on this matter in relation to the problem at hand and the finances available. This often-expensive option is not necessarily warranted or needed to achieve the intended traffic reduction effect.

7.3 Walking buses, grass roots schemes with rewards and the opportunity for supporting infrastructure have been very successful for some schools in encouraging a change in approach. Schools and the authorities should also think more laterally about car use, as for a number of parents, in fixed hour employment, car travel is the only option. This is where park and walk schemes, especially when local facilities (such as the pub, shop or post office) have provided parking opportunities, can help improve congestion and safety at the school gates.

8. INTER-AGENCY WORKING ON SCHOOL TRAVEL

Q. Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?

8.1 The latest guidance from the DfES is the most comprehensive guidance to date on linking transport to school with travel choices. However, a great deal more can be done and it certainly does not appear that education, transport and health authorities are sufficiently joined up. Locally the wider uptake of accessibility planning tools would go a long way to improve the situation and nationally joint objectives and targets in the relevant departments in the first instance would help provide common objectives for those working on the ground. The RAC Foundation believes this is the area which needs the greatest degree of work to secure lasting improvements in home to school transport.

April 2008

Further memorandum from the RAC Foundation for Motoring (ST 17A)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

1 *Introduction*

1.1 The RAC Foundation for Motoring is an independent charity established to promote and conduct research into the environmental, economic, mobility and safety issues relating to use of motor vehicles. Our vision is to advocate innovative transport solutions for safer roads, safer drivers, greener cars, improved mobility and a fair deal for motorists.

1.2 The Foundation welcomes the Committee's extended inquiry into school travel for the 16–19 year olds. Education trips account for 6% of all trips made per person per year (DfT, 2007a), but for those in the 16–19 categories engaged in education and training, it comprises a significantly greater proportion of trips. If more 16–19 year olds are to be more fully engaged in continuing education, transport and travel arrangements should feature strongly within plans.

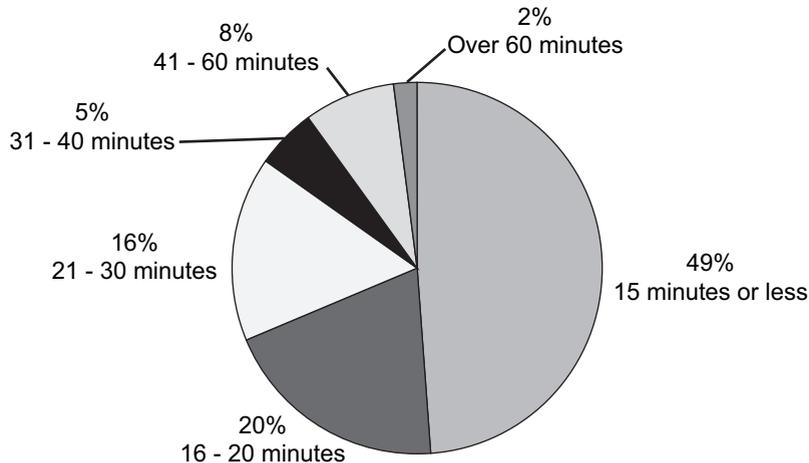
2 Travel options for students aged 16 to 19, including those studying at sixth-form colleges and further education colleges

2.1 Travel options for students aged 16 to 19 are often complex, varied and geographically dependent. Although transport costs and availability is not the key consideration for parents and students when making their further education (FE) choices (SDG, 2002), it can add to the cost of taking up an opportunity. College reputation and course content are usually the driving decision factors when it comes to choosing or deciding on a FE course (SDG, 2002), which can leave pupils with expensive and complex travel patterns.

2.2 The most recent statistics available show that 49% of 16–19 year olds are within 15 minutes travel, by foot or public transport of a college or similar FE institution, which makes FE a much more inaccessible resource than primary or secondary schools where 90% of primary school and 61% of secondary school children were within 15 minutes, on foot or by public transport, of their nearest facility (DfT, 2008a). Figure 1 below shows in more detail the travel times by foot and public transport for 16–19 year olds attending FE courses.

2.3 There are no national publicly available figures on how 16–19s are currently travelling to FE facilities. When pupils move from primary to secondary school, their bicycle and bus usage increases and car use decreases (by 20% in the case of car) (DfT, 2008b), but it is unlikely that these patterns of travel are maintained when pupils move to FE institutions, due to further distances required, and greater availability of car travel.

Figure 1: Shortest journey time to local college facilities on foot or by public transport (DfT, 2008)



Source: DfT (2008) National Travel Survey 2007 interview data

2.4 In 2007 38% of 17–20 year olds held a full driving license (DfT, 2008a). License holding has increased amongst this group in recent years, but levels have not increased to levels previously experienced in 1992/1994. Car travel is therefore more likely to feature as a significant travel mode amongst this group, especially for men who are more likely to hold a license at this age (41% men versus 34% females between the age of 17–20 held a license in 2007).

2.5 With car license holding at this age, one would expect greater car travel to FE institutions and a degree of car sharing amongst peers. Education trips, when considered in their entirety, have an average car occupancy rate of 2 people per vehicle, which is the highest car occupancy rate of all trip purposes. Despite this overall evidence of car sharing, only 2% of the journeys currently shared are for travelling to school, college or university (DfT, 2007c).

2.6 Despite the greater availability and use of cars within this age cohort, they are also the most frequent users of rail, bus and taxis, illustrating that those between the ages of 16–19 wanting to access FE are potentially both flexible and multimodal. 17 to 29 year olds were more likely to use the bus for travelling to and from education, than for any other reason and average trip lengths by bus were longest for education and escort education, at 4.6 miles. Men are more likely than women of this age group to use buses overall (DfT, 2007d).

2.7 It is clear that FE institutions are more difficult to reach than compulsory primary and secondary schools, and although 16–19 years olds are more multi-modal in their travel choices, those living in more remote areas, or those who cannot afford costly transport fares or the costs associated with owning and running a car, access to FE and transport provision could make a significant difference when an individual decides whether to continue their studies.

3. The transport and travel implications of increased numbers of 17 years olds in full-time education

3.1 Since 1996 the distance travelled to education or for escort education purposes has increased 10% (DfT, 2007b), which is a slower rate than increases for other travel purposes. In 2007 the average distance travelled to access education was 3.3 miles, and the average time taken to reach the destination was 21 minutes (DfT, 2007b). Unfortunately, these figures are an average of all education trips, and therefore the figures are likely to be significantly higher for FE travel.

3.2 If a new Diploma for 14–19 year olds were introduced, or steps are taken to increase the number of 17 year olds in education, this would have very definite implications for transport, especially if education institutions continue to go down the ‘specialisation’ route, making certain courses only available at a few locations. Actively encouraging more home-to-education travel will put an increasing pressure on existing infrastructures, and the budgets of young people, who may require further financial support.

3.3 18% of car trips by residents in urban areas take place in term time during the morning rush hour, for both commuting and school travel purposes (DfT, 2008b), and therefore a measure that encourages young people to remain engaged in FE rather than moving straight into the workplace, will have a minimal impact on congestion overall, although it may increase congestion in term time. Accessibility concerns and the financial implications of any new moves need to be fully worked through and researched.

4. *Provision of concessionary travel for young people*

4.1 Concessionary travel for young people across the majority of the country is means tested. This is positive as those most in need have access to transport support, but by the very nature of current support a number a significant number of young people will be falling through the net.

4.2 London boroughs, supported by TfL offer 16–18 year olds in full time education free travel and a discount to child fare level for those aged 16–17. This type of approach, which is based on an analysis of the costs and benefits, should be considered more fully by other authorities, especially those with a higher proportion of remote rural communities.

September 2008

Sources:

DfT (2007a) Regional transport statistics: 2007 edition

DfT (2007b) Transport Trends 2007

DfT (2007c) Public experiences of car sharing

DfT (2007d) Public Transport Statistics Bulletin GB: 2007 Edition Supplement

DfT (2008a) National Travel Survey 2007 interview data

DfT (2008b) Travel to School Personal Travel Fact sheet March 2008

Steer Davis Gleave (2002) Transport for Students in Further Education

Final Report 2002. See: <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-transport-transportforstudentsinfe2002-re.pdf>

Memorandum from FirstGroup plc (ST 18)

INTRODUCTION

First is a UK based international transport group with bus and rail operations spanning the UK, North America and Continental Europe.

In the UK we are the largest bus operator running more than one in five of all local bus services. A fleet of nearly 9,000 buses carries three million passengers a day in 40 major towns and cities. Included in this number are nearly 200 high quality special school buses which operate primarily on home to school transport journeys. These have been introduced since 2000 when we launched our plans to bring US style dedicated yellow school buses to the UK.

In North America, we are the largest provider of student transportation with a fleet of approximately 62,000 yellow school buses carrying 4 million students every day across the USA and Canada.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SET BY TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

1. *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel? How effective can school travel plans be? Are they adequately linked with other transport initiatives? Are benefits successfully maintained?*

Duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils

1.1 We are aware that under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, a general duty was placed on local education authorities (LEA) to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable school travel. The result of this duty appears to be the accelerated production of School Travel Plans (STPs) and other linked documents. There is a Government target for all schools to have these in place by 2010 and generally most LEAs appear to be on target to achieve this. Typically, STPs involve a survey of existing travel patterns to and from school, surveys amongst pupils to identify improvements and action plans to turn these visions into reality.

1.2 To this extent, LEAs appear to be well under way to carrying out their statutory duty to assess need. With central Government funding available for school travel advisers, there should be little problem in delivering this target.

Promoting sustainable travel

1.3 There are two aspects to the promotion of sustainable travel by local authorities. On the one hand we are aware that most local authorities do a lot to advance sustainable travel. For example their education departments will often issue advice on alternative ways of travelling to school and how the experience of cycling and walking can be enhanced. Similarly, pupils include school travel planning in their curriculum activities as part of life skills training.

1.4 But there can still be a disconnect between good work done in these fields and wider education policy. A central focus is parental choice and to promote competition between schools. While we do not wish to make any comment on the policy in itself there is no doubt that the abandonment by some pupils of local neighbourhood schools has led to more complex and longer home to school trips which are difficult to make by any mode other than private car. Transport Statistics Great Britain provides a good illustration of this issue. In 1993–95 the average journey distance per person per year for a car passenger for educational reasons was 47 miles. By 2006 this had risen to 76 miles.

1.5 The recently announced Diplomas for 14–19 year olds are another example of an education policy that might create significant additional movement requirements. Students will be encouraged to seek out the right courses at a range of academic institutions rather than being tied to one for the conventional “A” level.

1.6 As an operator the frustration is that these education policies sometimes appear to have been created with little thought to the travel requirements and an expectation amongst parents and pupils that we should be able to respond to all needs when this is not always possible.

How effective can school travel plans be?

1.7 We do have a concern that STPs can be good documents for identifying problems and issues but weak on delivery. Research carried out by the Department for Transport’s (DfT) Operational Research Unit in 2005 concluded that despite the fact that there had been an increase in the number of STPs completed since 2003–04 there did not appear to have been a significant reduction in car use (ie statistically significant) in “after” surveys in those areas where STPs had been implemented.

Linkage with other transport initiatives
Are benefits maintained?

1.8 We think there is awareness amongst transport planning professionals that the school run is an important issue in addressing congestion and, generally speaking, Local Transport Plans and other strategies will acknowledge the important role reducing car dependence can contribute to modal shift objectives. However, in terms of execution, a problem is that school transport initiatives require both capital and revenue funding. In transportation the availability of central Government grants or permission to borrow for capital expenditure means that physical elements of school plans have a higher chance of implementation eg local traffic management schemes around schools while other, potentially higher value measures (school bus improvements, travel behaviour initiatives) do not because they require ongoing revenue funding which is generally scarce.

1.9 In terms of the maintenance of benefits the DfT study (mentioned in paragraph 1.7) concluded that ongoing benefits of STPs depended largely on the enthusiasm of the school after the initial period. Some head teachers do not see access to and from school as their responsibility and in these situations any benefits are likely to be limited once the initial burst of interest has waned.

2. Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?

2.1 We believe the eligibility for assisted home to school transport still has scope to be widened. Free transport was enshrined in the 1944 Education Act for children attending their nearest appropriate school if they lived more than two miles away and were eight years or less and three miles away if over eight years old. But in a modern context, such a blunt criterion means assistance is dependent on place of residence rather than assessment of genuine transport need.

2.2 Recent legislation has extended free transport to those on low incomes but this is only an incremental change on the provisions of the 1944 Act with free school transport still unavailable to anybody under two miles. According to CensusAtSchool (a web based organisation that collates self completion questionnaires on school related activities), despite the increase in education trip lengths, over 80% of primary school children and over 50% of secondary school children still travel two miles or less to their nearest available school.

2.3 But these groups are deprived of free or assisted school transport even though we believe there is evidence that there is reluctance amongst parents to allow children to get to and from school unaided particularly for the younger age groups. This contributes to a situation where, according to the National Travel Survey, only 7% of primary school children travel to school by bus whereas in the United States, which generally has less restriction on distance eligibility, the figure is around 55%.

2.4 Our opinion is that in today’s social environment, reducing the eligibility criteria to around a mile from the closest school would be an appropriate mechanism to increase the number of parents that would be willing to use bus services for the home to school run. At the same time it would not discourage walking and cycling for those living reasonably close to school.

3. *What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of the proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?*

Pathfinder applications

3.1 The Government indicated that it had intended to provide funding for up to 20 local authorities that were prepared to use the additional powers in terms of charging and eligibility contained in the 2006 Education and Inspections Act. As noted, this extended free transport for the most disadvantaged pupils but also allows charging for all transport services provided except pupils specifically exempted.

3.2 Our understanding is that no bids have been accepted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). We believe this is because none of the bidding local authorities were prepared to remove free entitlement in favour of a modest charge for all school transport journeys.

3.3 We think this is regrettable. Apart from testing out new charging and eligibility powers the Pathfinder schemes were expected to pilot a number of new initiatives and address long standing school accessibility issues such as trial innovative purchasing arrangements, use new route planning technology and address school access problems by, for example, saturation use of Yellow School Buses.

3.4 We hope the bidding process will be re-started, with clear guidelines as to what is expected from bids.

What is the nature of the proposals?

3.5 We have not had sight of any of the bids. We understand that a number did contain some innovative proposals but, as discussed, did not meet the DCSF requirements on experimental charging.

Effective integration between the school and public transport network

3.6 Again, because we have not had sight of any of the bids this is difficult for us to answer. However, as a general point, we feel the school market is a distinct market segment and the best way to address pupils' needs is through dedicated vehicles that are seen as part of the school day. When this happens, issues such as behaviour, safety and security are much more easily managed and the environment on the general public transport network is also better. This is the North American model we have experience of and it is very successful.

4. *Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport? Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?*

Suitability of general public transport network

4.1 Generally, we believe there is a better way to move pupils from home to school than widespread use of the standard public transport network. The core principles we have in our North American school bus operations illustrate how dedicated school buses can provide features we are unable to deliver on the regular public transport network. For example we require that:

- The driver must be able to see groups of pupils—which means using a single floor vehicle. (Many problems at school opening and closing times occur on the top deck of double deck buses where supervision is difficult).
- Buses must have the same driver every day who knows the names of the students.
- Drivers must be highly trained, including safety, security and child behaviour for the age group they are carrying.
- The service must be as near door to door as possible.
- Most vehicles are crewed by two people, with a monitor in addition to the driver to oversee pupil behaviour.

4.2 Given these core principles which work very well in North America, we believe the future success of school transport lies in creating a distinct service offering for a distinct market entity. It may not be the optimal solution in every instance, for example where the existing public transport mode share is high but we believe the creation of specialised services for pupils will also create a better product offer for other public transport users on the general network, releasing capacity and timings to accommodate mode shift from private vehicles.

Local Transport Plans

4.3 Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, local authorities have a duty to promote sustainable modes of travel. An element of this is the production of an annual transport strategy by the local authority. This should be a statement of the authority's overall vision, objectives and a work programme for improving accessibility to schools. The guidance requires that this should be produced in the context of the authority's

Community Strategies and the Local Transport Plan. A framework is therefore provided for linkage. However, as described earlier, there can be delivery issues as school accessibility improvements may need revenue funding support which is not widely available through the Local Transport Plan process.

5. Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective?

5.1 The 2006 Education and Provisions Act could potentially affect car use and congestion on the home to school journey in two ways: firstly the duty to promote sustainable travel and secondly the extension of eligibility for free travel and charging. With regard to the duty to promote sustainable travel, the requirements here appear to be focussed on identifying problems, auditing existing sustainable provision, promotion and strategy development without the supporting delivery mechanisms. We fear the duty might lead to over analysis, without clear implementation timescales or funding in place—once problems have been identified—to effect changes on the ground.

5.2 The extension of eligibility for free travel extends only to children from lower income groups living two miles from school. While this is worthwhile it will not address mode shift for the large number of other pupils faced with car journeys to school because they do not have an attractive alternative.

5.3 As outlined earlier, changes to the education system mean that pupils are likely to be travelling longer distances and making more complex journeys, so the need for more innovative schemes of the type that were supposed to be delivered under the Pathfinder initiative will become even more important. In particular the provisions of the 2006 Act in allowing a degree of charging for all pupils (except those specifically exempt) would make the possibility of introducing networks of Yellow School Buses more affordable. We believe parents would be willing to pay a small daily charge if this was funding an improvement in quality and provision that schemes such as Yellow School Buses can provide.

5.4 The question of cost effectiveness has been addressed by the Sutton Trust, who carried out a study into the implementation of a national network of Yellow School Buses in the UK in 2005. (Sutton Trust, No More School Run: Proposal For a National Yellow Bus Scheme in the UK). Modelling work in connection with this study showed that for a cost of £184 million, a national yellow bus scheme for primary school children would result in benefits of £458 million (a benefit cost ratio of 2.5:1). The benefits were divided between parental benefits of £349 million and wider society benefits of £109 million. In cost effectiveness terms, this indicates initiatives like Yellow School buses do represent good value for money.

5.5 Returning to the affordability issue, as noted, costs to the public purse can be offset by a parental contribution although we have always maintained Yellow School Buses can be made even more affordable if school hours are staggered thus allowing vehicles to make two or three trips in the morning and afternoon shared between schools. Again, this is a situation that is commonplace in North America.

6. How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes such as those utilising dedicated “yellow buses”?

6.1 Given our role as the largest operator of Yellow School Buses in the United States, we obviously believe in the role they play. However, independent research commissioned by the DfT in 2003 “Evaluation of First Yellow School Bus Schemes” found a number of positive attributes arising from pilot projects introduced by First in Hebden Bridge, Runnymede and Wrexham. These included:

- User likes:
 - Door to door pick-up and drop off.
 - Exclusive use for schoolchildren.
 - Driver regularly allocated to the route with extra training for pupil behaviour issues.
 - A guaranteed seat for each child.
 - CCTV to assist in behaviour, safety and security issues.
- Positive mode shift from car to bus.
- Better experience for other public transport users on local bus services no longer used by pupils (Runnymede).

The MyBus initiative in West Yorkshire is the most extensive UK yellow school bus initiative with approximately 150 accessible vehicles operated under contract to West Yorkshire PTE by a number of operators (including First). This has been very successful in terms of improving the quality of the school run for pupils with consequent behavioural benefits. Although we understand mode shift results have been less than projected, this probably reflects the fact that the density of networks in West Yorkshire means that most pupils were previously going by bus before and there has been abstraction from one to the other. However, this should not be seen negatively; the benefits in freeing up extra capacity on local bus services are significant.

6.2 A further development would be the saturation coverage of the type of operation seen with MyBus in an area where existing public transport provision is less than in West Yorkshire and car dependency on the school run higher. In such a scenario we would expect mode shift from car to bus to be higher.

7. *Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?*

Locally

7.1 Most local authorities integrate the organisation of their passenger transport functions so that synergies can be obtained in the planning and procurement of supported services.

7.2 We understand this can sometimes involve health authorities when transport brokerage facilities are created, looking to match movement needs with available services for a range of agencies.

7.3 There are also instances where the promotion of sustainable travel initiatives such as walking and cycling are being supported by health authorities because of the health benefits to schoolchildren.

Nationally

7.4 It is understood that nationally Government departments are working together on the Travel to School initiative and on the evaluation of major projects such as MyBus. However, more could still be done. As outlined earlier with the 14–19 Diplomas, policy making in education still seems to be developed with little thought for the movement needs created. Transportation and movement must be integral to education policymaking, rather than an afterthought.

April 2008

Further memorandum from FirstGroup plc (ST 18A)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

INTRODUCTION

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In North America, we are the largest provider of student transportation with a fleet of approximately 62,000 yellow school buses carrying four million students every day across the USA and Canada.

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

- The provision of transport for students aged 16–19 to sixth-form and FE colleges should be procured through an integrated approach. To encourage or enable students to continue their education post 16 concessionary fares or scholar passes should be provided for public service buses or dedicated school buses where appropriate.
- The Diploma for 14–19 year olds will increase the requirement for transport as courses and work study programmes will increasingly be held at different locations in order to maximize resources. Dedicated school transport services should work alongside the existing service network to provide the appropriate transport, especially for the movement of students who are 14–16 years old and for whom the educational authority maintains a duty of care.
- We welcome the introduction of concessionary fares for students where appropriate. However concessionary fares, if not structured and distributed appropriately, is unfair to operators and to other passengers as it can place inordinate demands on services at peak times.

 RESPONSES TO REQUEST FOR FURTHER WRITTEN EVIDENCE BY TRANSPORT SELECT COMMITTEE

 1. *Travel options for students aged 16 to 19, including those studying at sixth-form colleges and further education colleges*

1.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities in England to promote fair access to educational opportunity. This means that Local Authorities must ensure that students are not prevented from attending 14–19 education at college or sixth form because there are no transport services to take them there or because they cannot afford the fares.

1.2 The help with transport costs given to 16–19 year olds varies by local authority. Local authorities may look family income, distance from home to the nearest college offering the chosen course and a range of other factors.

1.3 Local authorities must also ensure that college students are treated no less favourably than those studying at school sixth forms.

1.4 We encourage the use of buses by young people since we hope they will become frequent users in adulthood.

1.5 We aim to offer products which parents can buy for their student children in advance. We provide a range of child (5–15) and student tickets for those aged 16+ in full time education including season tickets and multi-journey tickets.

1.6 Where sufficient demand exists good bus services can be provided easily.

1.7 Where school transport is procured through an integrated transport unit, enhancement to the existing bus network can complement and work alongside the dedicated school transport requirements

 2. *The transport and travel implications (if any) of the new Diploma for 14–19 year olds and the Government's target of increasing the proportion of 17 year olds in full-time education?*

2.1 The 14–19 reforms are designed to encourage more young people to continue learning for longer and to gain the qualifications they need to progress into further and higher education or employment. Students will be encouraged to seek out the right courses at a range of academic institutions rather than being tied to one for the conventional “A” level.

2.2 This has important consequences for learning where travel might need to take place during the school day. This will inevitably lead to increased demand for school transport services, particularly where resource-sharing means that students will be required to attend several different establishments as part of their course, including transport during the day.

2.3 In rural areas, the greater distances to travel between resource-sharing institutions may lead to greater costs of delivery and more time spent travelling.

2.4 These changes to the education system mean that pupils are likely to be travelling longer distances and making more complex journeys, so the need for more innovative schemes will become even more important. In particular the possibility of introducing networks of Yellow School Buses will become more affordable as a degree of charging for all pupils (except those specifically exempt) is a provision of the 2006 Act. We believe parents would be willing to pay a small daily charge if this was funding an improvement in quality and provision that schemes such as Yellow School Buses can provide.

2.5 The usage of an existing fleet of school buses during the day to move students between resource-sharing institutions will increase the efficiency of the fleet and ensure only a marginal cost is required for the increased number of journeys.

 3. *The provision of concessionary travel for young people more generally*

3.1 We recognise that low income groups are often heavily dependent on bus travel and provide a range of Student tickets for 16+ in full time education. Historically we have offered children aged under 16 reduced fares on a commercial basis, although often at peak times there is some “crowding off” of morning peak adult passengers by school children generally. In some cases dedicated school buses remain preferable.

3.2 We oppose blanket free or cheap fares for all children at all times as this can lead to anti-social behaviour, threats to staff, damage to property, and may discourage other passengers from using the services especially during the evening at weekends. Free fares can also lead to some abstraction from walking for short distances.

3.3 We would welcome appropriate concessionary travel for young people provided that reimbursement arrangements make sure proper compensation is available to public transport operators. The system introduced for concessionary reimbursement for bus travel for elderly/disabled persons hasn't proven to be easy to administer. It would be important that any national concessionary travel arrangement be properly funded.

3.4 There is a road safety benefit in young people travelling by bus or train rather than by car or motorbike. Travelling as a bus passenger is statistically the safest mode of travel on land, with the risk of death as a car passenger 9 times greater than as a bus passenger per kilometre travelled. Travelling by motorbike is even more dangerous, with the risk of death 370 times greater than travelling as a bus passenger. (Source: Road Casualties Great Britain, 2006, table 52, see Appendix).

September 2008

Memorandum from Transport for London (ST 19)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Transport for London (TfL) is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into School Travel. We have set out our comments in the sections below in accordance with the inquiry's terms of reference.

1.2 Around one third of non-walking journeys made in London between 08.00 and 09.00 on weekday mornings are education-related in some way, including student and escort travel across all types of educational institutions. Children and young people's travel is a major component of London's total travel demand. During the year 2007–08 there were approximately 380 million trips on London's buses by children and young people.

1.3 With regard to mode of travel for school pupils across both primary and secondary schools, walking and bus dominate at with around two-thirds of all trips, with car use a significant proportion at around one-fifth. Comparatively, London has less walking and car use than the UK as a whole, but more bus and rail usage.

1.4 The introduction of free travel for children and young people on London's buses and trams contributes significantly towards government intentions that transport should not be an obstacle in the context of educational attainment.

1.5 TfL, therefore, has a strong interest in understanding and influencing how, and why, school communities travel as these trips constitute a significant demand on the transport network at peak times.

1.6 Clearly admissions policy, school location and other education sector decisions have a direct effect on transport demand and costs. Given the major influence on transport demand and transport impacts represented by education travel, TfL considers that there has generally been insufficient engagement between education and transport on strategic issues. Choices made in the education sector have significant effects on attainment of government objectives relating to transport and sustainability. Earlier consideration of transportation issues within education sector decision-making can give better support to delivery of wider government transport objectives without compromising educational objectives.

1.7 TfL has undertaken work looking at this interaction. Relevant policy areas include the programmes for renewal and expansion of school building stock, individual school relocations, the extended schools programme and school hours generally, the introduction of reforms for the 14–19 curriculum and diplomas, and policies on admissions. TfL would welcome steps towards greater and earlier involvement, assisting with consideration of the transport impacts arising from choices made in the education sector.

1.8 Turning to organisational arrangements in London, TfL's role is to implement the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy, including managing the transport services and infrastructure for which the Mayor is responsible. TfL is part of the Greater London Authority (GLA) group. The Mayor's strategy for children and young people ("Making London Better for all Children and Young People") is designed to integrate GLA activities with impacts on this area, including transport accessibility and safety issues.

1.9 The London boroughs are responsible for many local aspects of school transport. They prepare Local Implementation Plans (LIPs) which set out their ongoing programme for implementation of the Mayor's Transport Strategy (MTS) in the local context. These include their local strategy for school travel plans. TfL is a major source of borough transport investment funding, including for example for bus priority, 20mph zones, school travel planning, and associated schemes such as road safety measures.

2. *What progress has been made by local authorities in carrying out their duties to assess the travel and transport needs of pupils and to promote sustainable travel?*

2.1 In order to assess the progress made by London local authorities in this area, TfL has amended the LIP Annual Report Progress Guidance for London boroughs. From 2008 it will be a requirement for boroughs to include, annually, their "Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy" as required under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This will allow TfL to support boroughs with the fulfilment of their duties and take a London-wide view of the needs that have been identified. Annual progress reports are due for submission to TfL by London boroughs in September.

2.2 Each London borough is committed to the promotion of sustainable travel for the school journey through their LIP. All boroughs participate in the “Walk on Wednesdays” campaign as well as other promotional events and campaigns which encourage and enable travel to schools by means other than the private car. Further details of the campaigns and initiatives currently in place in London can be found in the annual School Travel Plan (STP) report produced by TfL each September.

2.3 In London it is estimated that 70% of schools (over 2,300 schools) will have an STP in place by May 2008. The travel and transport needs of pupils at these schools will have been considered and reported through the consultation processes involved in the development of approved plans. An annual report is requested from each London school with an STP and the submission and approval of this ensures that boroughs have regular updates on the needs and concerns of school communities with regards to travel and transport as well as a method of determining the success of measures implemented to meet those needs.

2.4 In assessing the potential for sustainable travel, analysis undertaken by TfL shows that walking is the quickest mode of access for nearly three quarters of Londoners getting to their nearest three primary schools. This even incorporates the need for choice. However, when considering secondary schools and further education colleges, walking accessibility is much poorer with only 2% of Londoners finding it quicker to walk. Under some circumstances travel can be considered a barrier to choice of school. In addition to this, there is the issue that people often do not travel to their nearest school or college.

3. *How effective can school travel plans be?*

3.1 Journeys by car make up approximately one third of short (less than 1 km) trips to primary schools. Shifting some of these trips to walking is a priority. Initial experience is indicating that STPs can make an effective contribution to this.

3.2 STPs provide a framework to support schools in dealing with travel issues that affect them. They support take-up of the range of transport-sector measures in place to help in reducing car use for travel to school. TfL’s monitoring of STPs is carried out primarily through the iTRACE database. This system holds data on pupil actual and preferred mode of travel and is updated at least annually when schools return their annual progress reports. The most recent report shows an average 6% reduction for car journeys between 2004 and 2007 at London schools with an approved STP in place. The next report is due in summer 2008 once the results of the annual reports have been input.

3.3 *Case study:* New City Primary School in Newham has an excellent track record in cutting car journeys to and from school. In their most recent mode of travel survey the school were able to report that 100% of trips to and from school by teachers and pupils were made by sustainable modes (ie by public transport, cycling, walking or car shares).

3.4 STPs are effective in helping achieve a wide range of benefits beyond that of modal shift away from use of the private car. Other benefits that are being reported include improved health (both physical and mental), carbon reduction, education achievement, improved attendance, and improved perceptions of safety on routes to and from school. Further work is, however, needed to assess and monitor these impacts more formally to provide statistics and robust evaluations which capture and quantify the anecdotal results which are being reported by schools at present.

3.5 STPs are effective only when they are supported and encouraged in the longer term. The plans themselves, whilst the impetus for change, are in danger of becoming redundant if local authorities do not continue to employ School Travel Advisors to work with schools on their implementation and ongoing monitoring and review. TfL research shows that schools consider the presence and ongoing support of a School Travel Advisor as the main reason for being able to sustain engagement in the STP programme.

4. *Are School Travel Plans linked with other transport initiatives?*

4.1 School Travel Plans (STPs) are integral to the delivery of school based transport initiatives and interventions in London.

4.2 Implementation of engineering schemes to improve routes to and from school and to enable walking and cycling measures (previously referred to as “Safer Routes to Schools” measures) are, in London, dependent for their funding on the presence of an approved STP. Measures are only considered where they address an identified need or concern which has resulted from the consultation phase of STP development.

4.3 The Mayor’s Cycle Parking Initiative for Young People, now entering its fourth year, is linked explicitly to the STP programme in that only schools with approved STPs are eligible. This programme has resulted in over 10,000 secure cycle parking spaces being installed in schools which have committed through their STPs to promote cycling to school for staff and pupils.

4.4 The presence of an STP is one of the criteria considered when allocating funding to London Boroughs’ Local Safety Schemes and many other TfL-funded engineering schemes with works in the vicinity of a school.

4.5 Information gathered through STPs is proving invaluable in informing the targeting of other transport initiatives and activity. For example, issues raised through STP development and implementation are being fed into forward planning by the new Safer Transport Teams within the Metropolitan Police.

5. *Are benefits successfully maintained?*

5.1 The STP programme in London has been in operation since April 2004 and as such it is still at an early stage in its implementation. The 6% modal shift at schools with an STP in place is encouraging.

5.2 A need exists to ensure that schools maintain their interest in the STP programme and that they continue to provide monitoring data on the various benefits realised through STPs. To this end TfL has created a region-wide Accreditation Programme which rewards schools for maintaining their STPs and encourages them to report annually on progress and achievements. The introduction of this scheme has seen a large increase in annual reporting and provides a long term structure for effectively monitoring the implementation of STPs.

5.3 TfL is working with Modeshift—the national organisation supporting School Travel Advisors—to help offer the accreditation scheme nationally.

6. *Are appropriate arrangements in place to accommodate extended entitlements to free school transport?*

6.1 London's widespread public transport and the existence of free or cheap fares on TfL services mean that there is comprehensive accessibility to a range of schools.

6.2 Travel on buses and trams in London is free for under-16s, and also for those aged 16 and 17 in full-time education. Children under 11 can also travel free on TfL rail services (the London Underground, the Docklands Light Railway and the London Overground). Discounted fares are available on rail services for older children and students, including those provided by other train operators.

6.3 The scope and the quality of the bus network in particular has increased dramatically in recent years. Over 90% of London homes are within 400 metres of a bus service and bus routes run close to all secondary schools. There are around 70 schoolday-only routes provided to supplement the main network. Although open to all they are designed as dedicated routes for particular schools.

7. *What is the status of applications to undertake pathfinder schemes? What is the nature of the proposals? Will any of the pathfinder schemes be able to demonstrate effective integration of school transport with the general public transport network?*

7.1 TfL cannot respond directly to this question as this process is under the jurisdiction of the Department for Children, Schools and Families. However it is understood that no London borough pathfinder schemes were proposed.

8. *Is the general public transport network suitable for pupils who do not use dedicated school transport?*

8.1 Providing for travel to and from school is an integral component of transport network planning in London. The most recently-available pan-London surveys of modal shares for travel to secondary school apply to 2006–07. They show that 46% of children were using bus or tram to reach school, 31% walking or cycling, 9% using rail, and 14% car or van.

8.2 The bus network is kept under regular review, with actions taken as required to continue delivering appropriate services. All bus routes use modern, low-floor buses suitable for wheelchair access. This has benefits for all users and is of specific assistance to the transport needs of children with disabilities.

8.3 Children's security on and around public transport is an important factor for parents, and for children themselves. Although most young Londoners feel generally safe when using public transport, some have expressed concerns about their personal security when waiting for or using services. Additionally, for some children and adults, larger groups of school children can represent a sometimes intimidating presence. Safety of children is an agreed priority area for the relevant agencies. Security on buses has been enhanced by CCTV coverage, now on all TfL buses. TfL and the Metropolitan Police work together with other agencies in the Transport Policing Initiative and with the new Safer Transport Teams. This is delivering co-ordination between transport providers, the police and other partners and is a component of TfL's Community Safety Plan.

8.4 TfL provides a comprehensive transport education service to schools across London as part of the Safety and Citizenship Initiative. Staff from TfL work with teachers to introduce children to the skills and knowledge needed to make safe use of the public transport networks. This service is well-regarded and is in the course of further enhancement, with course content updated and integrated across all the TfL modes of travel.

9. *Are Local Transport Plans appropriate in relation to home to school journeys?*

9.1 London boroughs prepare LIPs linked to the Mayor's Transport Strategy rather than Local Transport Plans, which are only required outside London. In the first LIPs, boroughs were required to submit a STP strategy. These strategies covered the boroughs' delivery of the STP programme and their promotion of sustainable travel to school.

9.2 The LIP Annual Report Progress Guidance has been amended as indicated in section 2.1 to require the submission of a "Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy". As such, the delivery of the STP programme in each borough must be guided by that strategy ensuring that sustainable home to school journeys are a core deliverable of all LIPs.

10. *Will the new provisions reduce car use and congestion on the home to school journey? Will they prove to be affordable and cost effective? How successful are existing innovative school transport schemes, such as those utilising dedicated "yellow buses"?*

10.1 Generally, car use for home to school journeys is lower in London than in other areas. Further progress is being made, for example as shown by monitoring of modal share at schools with existing travel plans.

10.2 The Education and Inspections Act created new duties for the London boroughs. TfL is supporting this by integrating the resulting strategies into the LIP system, as described above.

10.3 Extended entitlement to free home to school transport is not expected to have a very significant additional impact on public transport demand in London due to the pre-existing networks and free travel schemes.

10.4 There are no "yellow bus" schemes as such in London. Usage rates of public buses are high for secondary schools and continued development of the bus network will ensure that this remains the case.

10.5 At primary schools, as would be expected with their typically more local catchments, use of public transport is lower than for secondary schools at 13%. Measures to support a shift from cars to walking for the shorter trips are being prioritised.

11. *Are education, transport and health authorities working in sufficiently joined-up ways in relation to school travel, nationally and locally?*

11.1 Although the STP programme has provided a wealth of opportunity for education, health and transport to work together, in practice this joined-up working is perhaps not as effective as it could be, with the issues related to school travel viewed as "a transport issue".

11.2 In developing school travel plans there has been joined-up working between the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Transport, and with TfL in London. Engagement of Local Education Authorities in the programme, although improving, remains somewhat limited in a number of areas on a local level.

11.3 School travel issues are given full consideration within TfL's work to develop and manage the transport networks it is responsible for. Engaging with our stakeholders in London is an integral part of those wider development processes. We also work to ensure that our own activities are joined-up, with good operational links between those responsible for STPs, bus network development and management, stakeholder engagement and so on.

11.4 In the coming years, proposed changes in education policy present a number of opportunities and challenges. The development control issues raised by programmes such as Building Schools for the Future, Primary Strategy for Change and Academies will require close liaison between the transport and education sectors. In addition the travel and transport implications of increased mobility of pupils during the day as a result of the 14-19 reform will require input from all areas to ensure that the safety and accessibility needs of pupils are adequately catered for. Taking full account of transport issues when planning the location of new schools and academies will improve the accessibility of education. It will also enhance the effectiveness of initiatives which increase demand for travel outside "normal" school hours, such as the Extended Schools Programme.

11.5 TfL considers that there will be benefits if the transport and education sectors working together can achieve greater and earlier consideration of transport issues within education's decision-making processes.

Further memorandum from Transport for London (ST 19A)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Transport for London (TfL) is grateful for the opportunity to provide the Committee with a supplementary memorandum following the extension of the scope of its inquiry into School Travel. As requested by the Chair, this paper includes additional information about the provision of concessionary travel for young people. In support of our oral evidence to the Committee, we also include more information on some of the innovative school travel schemes that have been implemented in London and on the importance of continued Government funding for School Travel Advisors.

2. CONCESSIONARY FARES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Prior to 2004

2.1 Before 2004 only children under five travelled free on TfL services. Those aged five to 15 paid a child fare for bus and tram travel as shown in table 1.

Table 1

CHILD BUS FARES IN 2003

	<i>Single Trip</i>	<i>One Day Bus Pass</i>	<i>Weekly Bus Pass</i>	<i>Monthly Bus Pass</i>
Outside Zone 1	40p (70p)	100p (240p)	£4 (£7.50–£8.50)	£15.40 (£28.80–£32.70)
Including Zone 1	40p (100p)	100p (300p)	£4 (£11.50)	£15.40 (£44.20)

(bracketed figure = equivalent adult fare)

2.2 A system of child fares also applied on London Underground and the Docklands Light Railway (DLR). Single fares for children ranged from 40p to £1.50, with the equivalent adult fares ranging from £1 to £3.70. Similar discounts were offered on period passes.

2.3 Fare discounts for children were funded by TfL. Free travel to and from school for entitled children was funded by Local Education Authorities (LEAs), as normal. Some chose to issue standard bus passes or Travelcards instead of a scholar's pass. As now, London LEAs did not provide bus services directly other than for children with Special Educational Needs.

Current scheme

2.4 Children under eleven travel free on London buses and trams, the Tube, the DLR and London Overground. Children aged 11–15 years travel free on buses and trams and at child rates on the Tube, DLR and Overground.

2.5 Young people aged 16 to 18 resident in a London borough and in qualifying full-time education or on a work-based learning scheme can travel free on buses and trams and at approximately half-price on the Tube, DLR and Overground. All other 16 and 17 year-olds can obtain half-price fares on buses, trams, Tube, DLR and London Overground. A 30% discount scheme also exists for 18+ students in qualifying full-time education.

2.6 These arrangements were introduced progressively: from January 2004 for children aged 5–10; from September 2005 for ages 11 to 15; and from September 2006 for 16 and 17 year-olds. They apply at all times. An Oyster Photocard must be used by those aged 11 and over, and by any 5–10 year-olds travelling unaccompanied on rail services. This requirement initially did not apply to children aged 11, 12 and 13 on buses/trams but was extended to this age group from June 2008.

2.7 Free travel was designed to support low income families; to provide better access to education, places of culture, sports facilities and play spaces; to increase young peoples' independence and allow them to play a wider role in community life; and to encourage use of public transport as part of a wider move from private to public transport in London.

Initial Experience of Free Travel

2.8 A March 2006 evaluation of free travel for 11–15 year-olds provided information on its impact in the first six months of operation. Research was conducted with London residents, 14 and 15 year-olds and parents of 11–15 year-olds.

2.9 The main reported benefit of the scheme was the savings to passengers. The scheme also increased accessibility—four in five 14 and 15 year-olds thought that the scheme made London a lot more accessible. Of 14 and 15 year-olds who used the bus more, two in five were making some trips by bus that were previously made by car. Three in four were making bus trips where they had previously walked. (More than one previous mode is possible.) The proportion of reported anti-social behaviour involving under-18s had stayed the same, though within a total that had risen overall.

Mode shares for travel to school

2.10 TfL monitors mode share for travel to school on a rolling basis. There are two principal sources, the London Travel Demand Survey (LTDS) and iTrace which collates mode-use data collected by schools with travel plans.

2.11 LTDS is based on travel diaries kept by London households. The figures can be compared with results from the 1991 and 2001 London Area Transport Surveys (LATS). iTrace is relatively new, giving insight into the early impact of travel plans. It is based on pupil “hands up” surveys for travel on the day of the survey in each individual class/school, whereas LTDS is for the usual mode of travel.

2.12 iTrace currently has data for 637 schools with established and monitored travel plans. Comparing 2006–07 and 2007–08, there were increases in bus use (0.7%), cycling (0.6%) and walking (1.8%). Travel to school in a car driven by the parent or guardian fell by 3.7%. Car-sharing also fell. The number of “park & walk” schemes rose. See table 2.

Table 2

iTRACE MODE SHARE RESULTS—SCHOOLS WITH ESTABLISHED TRAVEL PLANS

<i>Primary Schools</i>			<i>Secondary Schools</i>			<i>All Schools</i>		
<i>%</i>	<i>2006–07</i>	<i>2007–08</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>2006–07</i>	<i>2007–08</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>2006–07</i>	<i>2007–08</i>
walk	58.4	60.2	walk	31.2	34.1	walk	50.9	52.7
bus	5.9	5.9	bus	38.7	39.1	bus	13.4	14.1
car	26.2	22.4	car	13.1	11.7	car	23.8	20.1
car share	4.1	3.7	car share	4.0	3.3	car share	4.2	3.8
park + walk	2.2	3.7	park + walk	2.2	2.0	park + walk	2.4	3.6
cycle	1.9	2.7	cycle	1.7	1.8	cycle	2.0	2.6
train	0.7	0.7	train	7.3	6.1	train	2.3	2.0
other	0.6	0.7	other	1.8	1.9	other	1.0	1.1
total	100.0	100.0	total	100.0	100.0	total	100.0	100.0

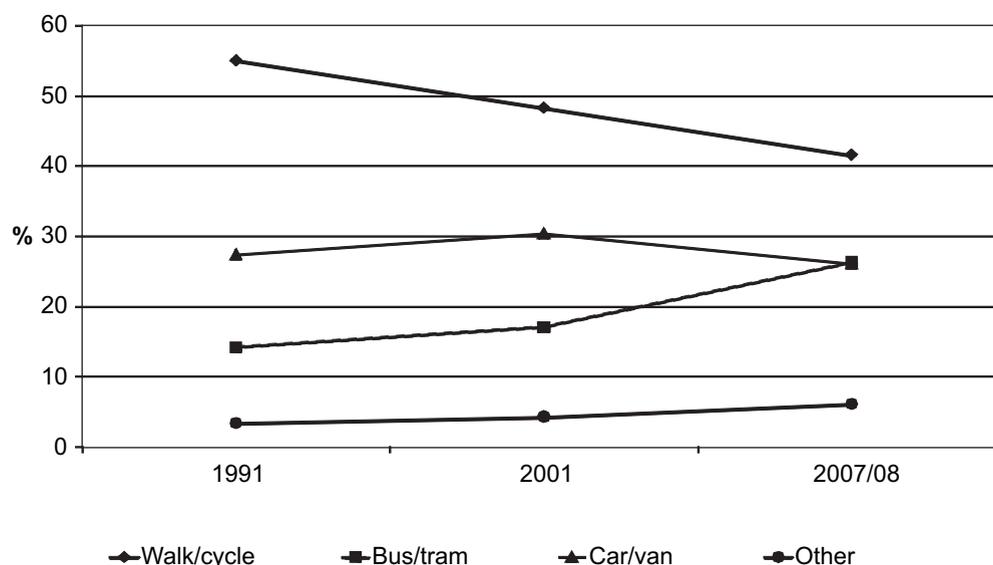
“All schools” refers to the 637 schools with comparable data across 2006–07 and 2007–08 and includes special and independent schools.

2.13 These successful recent results in schools with established travel plans can be seen in the wider context of longer-term change provided by LTDS and LATS. Between 1991 and the most recent data (2007–08), walking fell from around 55% to around 42% for children aged 5–16. Car use rose from 27% to 30% between 1991 and 2001, but has subsequently fallen back to 26%. Bus use has grown, particularly after 2001, reaching 26% in 2007–08. This bus use has been accommodated on the network, which has been generally expanded over this period. Regular review is required as school travel patterns can change relatively quickly.

Chart 1

MODE SHARE RESULTS FROM LTDS AND LATS

Children 5 -16: usual main mode of travel to school



2.14 Clearly these changes will have been influenced by a wide variety of transport and educational policies, themselves changing over time, and other social and economic factors. The combined effect of recent policy appears to be leading to a reduction in car use, and there are signs from schools at the forefront of travel planning that the longer-term fall in walking may be slowing down.

Anti-social behaviour and crime

2.15 There were concerns that free travel would lead to an increase in crime and anti-social behaviour on public transport. Behaviour after school is an important concern for staff and passengers, including young people themselves.

2.16 Official bus-related crime figures from the Metropolitan Police show that levels of bus-related crime in 2007–08 were 14% lower than the previous year. There were 15 crimes per million passenger journeys on the bus network over this period. In the first quarter of 2008–09 this trend has continued with a further significant fall in recorded bus-related crime of over 13% compared to the previous year. TfL analysis shows that bus-related crime allegedly involving one or more under 16 suspects in 2007–08 was 24% lower than in 2006–07.

2.17 TfL works with the police and various other agencies in an intelligence-led approach to improving safety and security. The primary objective is to tackle local crime and disorder priorities on and around the transport network. These are identified through local intelligence and engagement with local communities. Achieving the objective is a shared responsibility for a number of organisations, demanding effective partnerships. Four regional Joint Transport Action Groups have been established by the Metropolitan Police working with TfL. They bring together all the key stakeholders with an interest in safety on public transport in London to discuss local priorities, action and performance in the region on a regular basis. Staff deployment decisions are made on a joint basis and activity is coordinated with other policing and crime reduction activities across the network.

2.18 Overall therefore the bus network is a low-crime environment. Nonetheless, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour remains an important requirement for users of the transport system. Since his election in May 2008, the new Mayor of London has made further reductions in the levels of crime and anti-social behaviour on the transport networks a key priority. An early action was to secure increased policing for London's public transport systems, with an additional 440 uniformed officers being introduced during 2008 and 2009. Additionally there are early indications that the recent changes to Oyster card requirements have made a useful contribution in this area.

Summary

2.19 Free travel for children and young people has improved accessibility to education, supporting Government objectives. Availability of the whole network rather than dedicated services complements initiatives such as the extended school day and 16–19 consortia. The potential for increased anti-social behaviour is a concern for passengers (including children) and others. TfL is working with the police, schools and other agencies in a joint approach to dealing with such issues. Mode shares at schools with established travel planning show reductions in car use and increases in walking and public transport use. The public transport network has adapted to accommodate the demand for travel and this is kept under regular review.

3. INNOVATION

School Travel Plan Accreditation

3.1 The London School Travel Accreditation programme was launched in April 2007 and has just completed its second year. The scheme was developed in response to a reported need for a distinctive way to reward schools that continued to develop and improve their school travel plans once in place, combined with an incentive to meet monitoring commitments. The scheme has three levels each representing a level of participation and innovation by London schools as well as reported levels of modal shift. It also provides a framework for the School Travel Programme after 2009 (once all London schools have a plan in place). There are now 441 accredited schools in London with targets set for 2009. Celebration events are held for schools with specifically designed rewards featuring the “quality mark” of the scheme in the appropriate colour.

3.2 Following interest from the rest of the country the London scheme is being developed into a national scheme and TfL are working closely with Modeshift (who will administer the national scheme) on how this will be delivered.

Cyclicious

3.3 TfL has funded the innovative teenage cycling project “Cyclicious” in the London Borough of Hounslow. The scheme was developed by the borough and targets teenage girls and encourages them to cycle to school on a regular basis. The programme has been specifically designed to tackle the main factors which contribute to low numbers of teenage girls cycling to school in London—these being safety, lack of confidence and a desire to “look good”. The Cyclicious campaign includes a course of on and off-road cycle training, workshops involving a “smoothie bike” (an exercise bike that makes smoothies) and a bag of beauty accessories.

Curriculum Materials

3.4 TfL encourages schools to incorporate sustainable travel into the curriculum to ensure long term engagement and sustained development of travel plans. The School Travel team has produced a number of curriculum resources for use in schools including:

- Key Stage 2 cycling resources tied to the Tour de France.
- Every Journey Matters book detailing sustainable journeys to school around the world.
- Democs—a consultation tool based on a card game which encourages pupils to share opinions and experiences on school travel.
- Journey Times—a media resource encouraging pupils to discuss opinions and experience of the journey to school.

3.5 To support the demand for resources for secondary schools, a new Key Stage 3 cycling curriculum resources pack is currently being produced for eight curriculum areas.

Transition Pack

3.6 As a response to research undertaken by TfL’s Smarter Travel Unit into key potential areas for behavioural change, a transition pack has been developed aimed at school children making the move from primary to secondary school. The pack entitled “Upgrade” contains a set of resources for teachers, parents and pupils on the new journey to secondary school. The resource identifies the key issues for the three audiences and is used in the final term at the primary school and the first term at the secondary school. The resources are also specific to each participating borough and contain localised travel and schools information and detailed maps. The Upgrade transition pilot project has been rolled out to 10 London boroughs targeting 27,000 pupils and parents at 570 schools.

Policing and Behaviour

3.7 A police seminar has been held linking School Travel Advisors (STA) with their local Safer Neighbourhood teams to encourage joined up partnership working. This best practice event was led by the good work already operating in Newham where the police teams work with local schools and pupils to identify “hot spots” for litter or graffiti along the routes to schools. The audit then leads to remedial action being undertaken by the police and a sense of ownership and community by the pupils involved.

4. SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN PROGRAMME RISKS

4.1 TfL wishes to acknowledge the financial support given to the London boroughs for STA posts under the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)/Department for Transport (DfT) Travelling to School initiative. This support has been invaluable in the implementation of the London School Travel Plan Programme.

4.2 The DCSF/DfT STA funding is not normally enough for one whole post for two reasons: (1) the cost of living and salaries in London; and (2) the allocation is based on the number of Local Education Authority maintained schools in each borough. The funding is therefore supplemented by TfL through Local Implementation Plan funding process.

4.3 TfL is very concerned about the potential discontinuation of the DCSF/DfT funding after 2010. Although it is understood this was initially put in place as “pump priming” for the Travelling to School initiative, to enable the development of school travel plans, what is very clear is that once the document has been produced, work does not stop. The implementation of the actions and monitoring detailed within the plan are still to be completed and an account of progress (annual review) written each year. It is highly unlikely that without the support of STAs, this will be completed by schools.

4.4 It is understood that future funding for STA posts will need to be bid for by the relevant part of the local authority as part of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). This does not appear to be well understood by the London boroughs and given the three year LAA funding agreements commence this year funding is unlikely to be available for STA posts after 2010.

4.5 Consequently the personnel, and the wealth of knowledge and experience, will be lost if boroughs are unable to fund these positions. This situation is likely to be replicated across the rest of the country.

September 2008

Memorandum from Sian Thornthwaite (ST 20)

BACKGROUND

1. I have been working in the field of school travel and school transportation since 1987. I completed my MSc research into the transport implications of rural school closures in Northumberland in 1988. I undertook a PhD into the statutory provision of school transport services in the UK and USA, which was awarded in 1991. The PhD was subsequently published as a text book used widely in the UK. During my PhD research I was awarded the Tulip Travel Scholarship by the University of Newcastle upon Tyne to undertake research into school transportation in the US. This enabled visits to relevant federal agencies, state organisations and local school districts. I also was a delegate at the five yearly National Standards Conference, which establishes standards and guidelines for school bus construction and use for the US. I completed a MA in Child Law in 1997.

2. I have worked for Northumberland County Council as a school transport administrative assistant in 1988 responsible for day to day administration of special needs transport and season tickets. From 2000–01 I was a Transport Strategy Officer for Derbyshire County Council and responsible for implementing the authority’s award winning b_line young persons’ concessionary fare scheme.

3. The majority of my professional career has been in consultancy and I worked with more than 50 local authorities over the past 20 years on all aspects of school transport ranging from policy advice, route reviews, retendering, training and monitoring. I have worked with London authorities, unitary authorities, rural shires and urban districts/PTEs.

4. For 10 years I was managing director of a specialist school transport consultancy STC from 1991–2000, and this company has recently reformed following a sabbatical for me to undertake a Sloan Fellowship at London Business School.

5. Over the past 10 years, I have managed numerous national school transport reviews including a review of special needs education for DfES, of the yellow bus scheme (for DfT), of the implications of the coach and bus directive (for DfT) and of the post 16 transport pathfinders (for DFES). I managed special school transport reviews and contracts on behalf of a large Shire authority and have provided extensive support and advice on inclusion of children with special needs within school travel plans and sustainable travel policies/strategies and training.

6. I have published extensively on school transport, child safety and children's travel issues including for many years being contributing editor to *School Transportation News*, *Coach and Bus Briefing* and *Croners' Health and Safety Briefing*.

7. I was specialist adviser to the Education & Skills Select Committee on the School Transport Bill, and have been an expert witness providing evidence to two judicial reviews relating to home to school transport and a high court case.

8. I have more than 20 years of experience of school transportation in the US, at federal, state and local level, and remain actively involve in transportation issues there. I have worked for the US Department of Defence advising on contracting for school transport for overseas forces' children, and provided school transportation advice in Europe and the Middle East.

INTRODUCTION

9. I have extensive home to school transport data accumulated over the past 20 years, and continue to monitor expenditure and provision at both the local and national level.

10. The following general points are made. Overall gross expenditure is budgeted for 2007–08 at £983 million for England alone, equivalent to almost 29% of the overall LEA budget. Approximately a fifth of this is accounted for by transport to primary schools, 10% by post 16, and a third by transport to secondary schools. The largest sector remains transport to special schools. The expenditure for post 16 pupils overall is budgeted at £64 million of which, a third is for post 16 pupils with special needs.

HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

11. A duty to provide home to school transport was introduced in the post war era, with the objective being to facilitate attendance to school by pupils, irrespective of means or location, linked to the introduction of compulsory secondary education. Minimum accessibility criteria were introduced setting acceptable walking distances from the nearest appropriate school.

12. However, local education authorities had wide discretion to provide transport over and above the statutory minima. Generally LEAs used this discretion, until relatively recently. They also had considerable discretion as to how they met their obligations—whether providing entitled pupils with a season ticket for use on a local bus, a place on a contracted vehicle, the provision of bike, the reimbursement of mileage or provision of boarding provision at school.

13. The statutory walking distances were deemed appropriate at two miles for under 8s and three miles for over 8s. By the 1950s the walking distances were being challenged as unsuitable and unsafe. However, repeated test cases until the late 1980s continued to emphasise that the route was assumed to be walked, accompanied as necessary, and that the authority should look at a range of factors including age and ability of the child in determining whether it was safe.

14. Today, the legislation regarding entitlement to home to school transport is extremely fragmented and reflects the piecemeal and incoherent framework introduced since the late 1990s.

15. Currently, special needs transport accounts for the majority of home to school transport expenditure in many local education authorities, and this is set to increase. It is this transport provision which is disproportionately expensive, and complex. As a result of this trend, many authorities are having to trim expenditure or provision of mainstream transport to enable them to continue to deliver special needs transport.

16. Until special education transport is recognised and adequately funded, the remainder of an authority's home to school transport funding will remain vulnerable and therefore their overall sustainable transport and school travel objectives will be difficult to achieve.

ENTITLEMENT TO FREE SCHOOL TRANSPORT

17. Generally over the past 20 years there has been a gradual erosion of the provision of discretionary home to school transport by local education authorities (the notable exception has been in Scotland, although recently this is also changing due to financial pressures). Until recently many authorities reduced the walking distances to provide additional children with free transport by bus, or provided concessionary place scheme to provide reduced cost travel, examples include Northamptonshire which halved walking distances until recently.

18. The introduction of the Further & Higher Education Act prompted the introduction of post 16 transport charges, as local education authorities ceased to continue to be able to provide free transport to school sixth form pupils, but not those attending college, hence a levelling down of entitlement.

19. As a result, school travel plans and sustainable travel policies introduced in recent years have been working against a backdrop of a general reduction on home—school transport provision—a solution to encouraging greater bus travel that, arguably, could have been a more effective solution in the longer term.

20. More recently the Learning and Skills Act introduced the post 16 transport partnerships and required a distinct post 16 transport policy (although publication of the authority's home to school transport policy overall was already required). Today many authorities have a mainstream 8–16 policy that rests uneasily with the post 16 partnership derived transport policies, which again will be inconsistent with the emphasis on 14–19 delivery.

21. Whilst the pathfinders have undoubtedly led to some innovative schemes at the local level, the short term nature of the funding has meant that some schemes were often made to fit the funding, rather than the local needs, resulting in a piecemeal level of provision and complex entitlement criteria across the LEA/colleges and schools/private operators that makes accessing services often difficult and complex for young people.

22. The Education & Inspections Act 2006 has recently widened entitlement and increased choice for those on low income, but created a difficult framework for authorities to work with both in terms of the assessment of eligibility and of delivery of transport.

23. Free school meals eligibility and entitlement are often very different, and in some areas there is a clear racial distinction between entitlement and take up with specific ethnic groups having a perception of stigma attached to FSM. Using this as a gateway to an additional benefit of free transport would merit examination, as would the poverty trap this creates.

24. Link to maximum working tax credit—the sharing of information remains problematic. Again establishing the potential impact of take up is difficult as the fuzzy matching of records between HMRC and education data bases is required to identify who potentially is entitled.

25. Denominational transport remains contentious at the local level, and increasing entitlement to those on low income is likely to be offset by withdrawal of free transport to those currently entitled to home to school transport on denominational grounds. Some of these journeys are among the longest children travel, and therefore any shift away from school transport will have a disproportionately adverse effect on mode shift towards car use.

26. Any increase in choice—will create a more diverse pattern of journeys that will inevitably add to costs for local education authorities outside the main metropolitan areas, or where there is insufficient peak hour capacity to absorb additional pupils travelling on routes.

27. Overall, the current home to school transport policy framework is not coherent. A clarification and consolidation of the legislation would be welcomed. This should use the 1944 core but be updated to reflect the 14–19 agenda, educational priorities, young peoples' needs and place a clear lead responsibility on the LEA to: identify transport needs; meet clear and consistent statutory requirements; and publish one coherent policy that links with the authority's transport strategy.

28. However, education needs must be the priority for this provision and drive this legislative change. Transport should be provided to support and facilitate access to education. Our current problem with the legislative framework is that objectives have become inconsistent and muddled and this is reflected in the provision of school travel plans, school transport and other children's travel provision.

29. In part, the legislation reflects the original objective to provided a minimum accessibility criteria for all; in part it is now about ensuring equity between FE providers; in part it is to facilitate choice to some pupils; in part to encourage diversity/inclusion of lower income groups; and in part to further attainment by underachieving pupils, and finally it is to encourage sustainable travel.

SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS

30. Whilst any move to reduce car usage is welcome, school travel plans were introduced against a real context of declining provision of home to school transport and hence pressure on rising car usage, and encouraging choice and longer journeys. (The length of journey to school in 2005 was on average 1.5 miles for a pupil of primary school age and 3 miles for a secondary school pupil—equivalent to 2.3 miles on average. These have all increased since 1995 when the average for primary school was 1.3 miles, for secondary 2.9 miles and 2.1 miles overall). With parental choice, extended school, and rural school closures/academies and greater specialisation this trend is likely to continue in coming years and provide a greater challenge to transport providers, funding and to sustainable travel objectives.

31. Their impact inevitably can be greater in urban areas, where distances travelled are on average shorter and the available transport options greater. The needs of rural schools and a recognition of the lack of choice, long journey times, high transport costs and limited availability of options needs to be reflected in Government policy.

USE OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK

32. Since the 1960s the Transport Acts have required local authorities to coordinate local bus, school transport and social services transport to achieve overall value for money. The interrelationship between the supported local bus network and the school transport network is fundamental in many particularly rural areas. It remains true that many rural areas have a transport network largely as a result of the school services that are provided, and conversely the purchase of season tickets on commercial local buses often contributes to their viability.

33. From a safety perspective, public transport in the UK has an excellent safety record, and in a typical year there are no bus occupant fatalities on the journey to and from school. There is no clear safety case for the introduction of dedicated school bus fleet, yellow or otherwise. Much of the road safety literature emphasises the need for child road safety to be taught to deliver consistent messages. Having a distinct fleet with differing safety rules, as in the states, may lead to safety risks being increased. The safety statistics from the US highlight the number of children hit by overtaking vehicles, or by their own vehicle as they cross in front of it. On average six children a year are killed in a school bus in the US, but seven are killed around the vehicle—usually crossing in front and/or hit by a passing vehicle.

The training of children to use a fleet that is suitable for all uses has the merit of being inclusive, consistent and safe as well as more cost effective.

JOINED UP WORKING

34. There has been much discussion about transport coordination and its potential benefits for many years, and especially since the 1974 local government reorganisation, which introduced the concept of transport coordinating officers.

35. There remains a fundamental obligation on the local authorities to coordinate transport to ensure value for money, and that has merit in continuing. Inclusion of the health authorities in the existing provisions may be worth consideration given the level of overlap between adult care, children's services and non emergency health sector transport provision.

36. In the past 20 years I have worked with authorities that have had Integrated Transport Unit, distinct departments responsible for commissioning, with authorities that have outsourced various stages of the supply chain. There appears no one model that fits all or achieves clear benefits. What is striking is that it is the willingness of officers at different departments to communicate and to understand the framework within which each is operating, so that opportunities for synergies and joint working can be identified, and ways of dealing with barriers negotiated.

37. Whilst Integrated Transport Units may have benefits in achieving more coordinated procurement, and reducing transport costs, there is a need to ensure that the needs of the end users are not compromised. A greater coordination between statementing officers, special needs officers/SENCOs, school staff and transport staff would be beneficial in many authorities, to ensure that transport is appropriately and most cost effectively provided.

April 2008

Memorandum from the Sustainable School Travel Team, North Yorkshire County Council (ST 21)

One overlooked item in the school travel bill is the extent to which authorities can now start targeting assistance at the schools with highest car usage.

The new school census in 2007, for the first time, collected mode of travel data. Postcode data is also collected, the centroid of which gives an approximation of where the pupil lives.

North Yorkshire County Council has created a GIS calculation procedure that takes the postcode and school location and estimates a "crow fly" distance to school. This is then used to estimate 85 percentile "reasonable" walking distance, cycling distance and eligibility for free school buses.

The location of each parent can then be compared with the "reasonable" distances and a measure of need for the car estimated. An indication is then made of the number of cars who, all other things being equal, should not be travelling to school.

Among the interesting facts discovered by this process is that there are 1,050 pupils living within reasonable cycling distance to Harrogate High school but only 350 living the same distance from the similar sized Northallerton College. Almost 200 North Yorkshire schools have virtually no pupils living within cycling distance.

An issue for the committee to consider is the extent to which an individual council should be spending its council tax payers' money on complex calculation procedures that would be applicable to all authorities and could be refined by a qualified statistician and then supplied to all authorities as added-value data.

May 2008

Memorandum from Danielle Adams (ST 22)

I understand the Transport select committee is looking into school transport.

Since April 2007 school transport has been cut in Hertfordshire. We had had such a good system. There was free transport to faith schools in Hertfordshire.

I have experience of the transport provided to the Jewish schools. My older two children went to the Jewish school out of borough. (The in borough school is over subscribed). One of my children still uses this free service with an escort on board. It is well run and if there are any problems the local authority deal with it immediately.

By having this transport it means less cars on the road using less petrol. It is definitely a green initiative.

My youngest child goes to the in borough Jewish school, although he had a sibling place at the out of borough school. He does not qualify for free transport as last year the council decided there were going to phase out free school transport. Siblings at the school in his class still get the free transport. The roads are getting very congested and the problem is only going to get worse. There are a high concentration of private schools in this area and the roads cannot take the volume of traffic.

There was a very large public meeting regarding stopping free transport to faith schools. The local MPs were against it. The public meeting was held to give the illusion of democracy. They could not care less. The views of the parents were completely disregarded.

What a terrible example to set pupils on environmentally friendly initiatives. Herts pupils were envied by the pupils from Harrow, Barnet and Brent but instead of the transport scheme being expanded into more boroughs it is being phased out!

In the United States pupils travel to school on yellow buses. Our media views the USA as uncaring about environmental issues. I think our government is very hypocritical. I understand why the council feel it is unfair to provide transport to faith schools but then there should be government funding to support free transport initiatives to get cars off the road. Reducing congestion does not just help the parents but everybody involved on the roads during rush hour and keeps pollution levels down.

My daughter is transferring to secondary school in September. She is going to a Jewish secondary school, about four miles away. I received a form yesterday that I filled out for assisted transport. However it said that I am not entitled to even paid transport (by that I mean I am paying for it £85 for half a term) as the transport is for pupils on income support and I can only have a space for my daughter if there is room on the bus. There are a lot of families in the same position as us. The form also told us to make other arrangements for September in case there is no room on the transport. I take it they mean use a car!!! This was a standards form. I believe that it probably went to families all over Hertfordshire but I can't be sure.

I hope this information is of interest to you.

June 2008

Memorandum from Eric Smith (ST 23)

I was fascinated to read in tonight's Liverpool Echo (July 7th) that a Ms. Dewar, Travelwise Coordinator, had spoken to your committee.

Apparently the problem in Liverpool, which causes few children to cycle to school, is a lack of bike sheds in schools. What utter nonsense. The reason is that only a totally irresponsible parent would permit a child to cycle to school, because there is nowhere safe to cycle. Ms. Dewar hasn't cycled anywhere recently, or she is very brave!

Painting gutters red (often on very dangerous narrow roads) and calling the result a cycle path is no substitute for fully separated cycle paths, as found all over Holland.

Liverpool is full of wide dual carriageways often with wide pavements. Cycle paths could be built but there are none. Many roads have been recently upgraded...an ideal opportunity to install proper cycle paths. But, with a few minor exceptions, our Council failed to do so.

July 2008

Memorandum from Bexhill Rail Action Group (BRAG) (ST 24)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

1. *About Bexhill Rail Action Group*

Bexhill Rail Action Group (BRAG) is a non-party political campaign group based in south East Sussex. BRAG's principal objective is the improvement of rail services on the East Coastway line between Brighton and Ashford, and between Hastings and London on the "South Central" route via Haywards Heath. BRAG also has a secondary interest in services operated on the "South Eastern" mainline between Hastings and London via Tunbridge Wells.

BRAG works closely with other stakeholders including MPs, District Councils and Passenger Focus, and also has maintained a regular dialogue with the local train operator

BRAG is making this submission at the suggestion of the local Passenger Focus representative Ms Sharon Hedges

2. *Young People and Rail Travel: A disadvantaged group?*

BRAG notes the following issues of need nationally outside of London:

- Students and young people must pay full fare when they reach the age of 16.
- This applies to those in compulsory education—who are not eligible for free school travel paid for by their local authorities—who reach the age of 16 before the end of Year 11. This is inequitable because a student who is 16 in September will have to pay full fare for the whole school year, while a peer whose birthday does not fall until the following July or August will be eligible for concessionary travel for whole of the same school year.
- 16 and 17 year olds attending college must also pay full fare for rail journeys to and from college, and do not qualify for free rail travel regardless of how far the nearest sixth form college is located—there is no financial assistance from Local Education Authorities. Young people must also pay full fare for leisure travel by train.
- 16 and 17 year olds are unlikely to have the financial means to support themselves, and the financial burden falls on their parents.
- Although 16 and 17 year olds are more likely to be financially disadvantaged than many retired people, especially the "young old" (60-65 years), the latter receive free bus travel [and other travel concessions depending upon where they live].
- The legal age for sitting a driving test is from the age of 17 onwards, so by definition car ownership and mobility in the 16-18 age group is very low.
- It is government policy to encourage the use of public transport, and greater social inclusion.

Locally in the Hastings and Rother districts of East Sussex, the following also applies.

- There are limited Sixth Form Colleges. The only colleges in the district are in Hastings and Bexhill down on the coast, or in the next county, Kent.
- There are no Sixth Forms at rural secondary schools in Rye, Battle or Robertsbridge. Effectively for many, other than Hastings or Bexhill, the nearest alternative colleges/schools with sixth forms are located in Ashford, Kent and Tunbridge Wells. Although there are small sixth forms at schools in Hailsham, Wadhurst and Heathfield (all in neighbouring Wealden District), there are capacity and access issues from the rural Rother District.
- Many young people in the rural parishes consequently must make a journey of up to 15 miles to college, with no financial assistance for rail travel; there is some limited assistance with bus travel in East Sussex through a Pathfinder scheme, but the bus network is limited, and the scheme does not cross the border into Kent.
- The Hastings and Rother Districts have below average national income, below average car ownership, limited rural public transport, and an inadequate road network. There are many hidden pockets of rural poverty.
- Given the high proportion of elderly residents in East Sussex, it is invariably this group rather than young people that has a higher profile and a first call on resources at County level. There is no prospect of a local scheme for young people, similar to that in Greater London, being implemented here.

3. *The 16–25 Railcard: An empty Easter egg . . .*

The 16-25 Railcard has evolved over the years from the original Student Railcard, to the Young Person's Railcard, and has recently been re-named once again. Over the years the price of the card itself has increased substantially while benefits from the card have progressively diminished.

Originally offering half-price travel, this concession was reduced to a third by British Rail in the mid-1980s; and its usefulness has been further blunted by the application of additional restrictions, especially minimum fares at peak travel times, which generally happen to be when many young people need to make local journeys to school, college or university; effectively the card is now worthless for many young people.

The cards have also generally attracted discounts only on network-wide fares—which in many cases have increased relentlessly in price above the rate of inflation on an annual basis—but not on most operator-specific promotional fares; this includes many advanced purchase deals, as well as the *Pricebuster* and *Daysave* products offered by our local train operator.

Furthermore, the card does not attract any reduction on the cost of season tickets.

4. *A More Equitable Deal?*

BRAG would like to see the following changes to give young people fairer access to rail travel:

- As a minimum, an extension of half-fare arrangements for those over 16 completing compulsory secondary education in Year 11. This can be policed simply and effectively by enabling anybody with proof of age to buy concessionary travel up until 31st August after they turn 16.
- Ideally, half-fare arrangements should be extended to all 16 and 17 year olds, or better still until the 31st August after turning 18 on proof of ID [for those at college].
- Consideration should also be given to the re-creation of a Student Railcard, distinct from the 16–25 Railcard. This card should be available to full-time students in both further and higher education, and would offer the following:
 - (i) 50% discount instead of 34%;
 - (ii) Access to half-price season tickets;
 - (iii) Abolition of minimum fare rules.

Bexhill Rail Action Group sincerely hopes that the Committee will make equitable recommendations in relation to these issues.

July 2008

Memorandum from Nottinghamshire Transport Services (ST 25)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

OUR GROUP

The group consists of 37 rural local authority education and transport officers working together to make a reality of equal access to learning for young people in rural areas. We are delighted to have this opportunity to share its views with the Transport Select Committee. We would welcome the opportunity of presenting our position to the Committee.

We are a flourishing body which meets 4 times a year to manage our work together on access and transport for education and training. We are seeking to improve the understanding and response from government and others who do not fully appreciate the significant challenges involved in providing access to young people in rural areas. Whilst the urban authorities make their views clear through the powerful PTE lobby, there is no equivalent for rural authorities.

Too often urban policy and delivery models are imposed on rural areas without any “rural proofing” or understanding. This is followed by desperate efforts to cover up the deficiencies in planning, provision, services and funding necessary for making well intended opportunities a reality. We use our combined understanding and experience to collaborate in securing real benefits for young learners. We also seek to protect the rural authorities from being expected to make good the inevitable liabilities that flow from “urban based policy development in Whitehall.”

Our agenda is based on achieving equity and access for young learners in rural areas. It includes:

- (a) an equitable framework of policy and support for national transport concessions to support authorities in developing access and transport for young learners;
- (b) a proper recognition of the difference in urban and rural transport services and support for additional services to help fill these gaps locally;

- (c) nationally recognised standards for provision of transport in respect of time, cost, safety and comfort;
- (d) simple and transparent policy and funding arrangements between central and local government;
- (e) national benchmarking of levels of access and transport services and support provided by different authorities for young learners; and
- (f) effective “rural-proofing” for all policies that provide for learning for young people.

We hope that our submission will be useful to the Committee and stand ready to make our case, if the Committee will hear us.

INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL TRAVEL

THE EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT 2006

SUMMARY

1. There is a lack of equity in access to learning opportunities for young people in rural areas.
 2. Central government has not provided the necessary framework of policy, requirements, monitoring or national standards needed to support an effective local response to the transport needs of young learners.
 3. Funding to support local authorities in providing transport services and support for young people is inadequate, fragmented and lost within too many other funding lines.
 4. Education policy is based on urban not rural models and is not “rural proofed” before being imposed on all authorities.
 5. The 2006 Education and Inspections Act is too vague and not specific about what is to be achieved in terms of the nature of transport services and support, or the impact on students and the environment.
 6. The Act contained a flawed pathfinder agenda which was badly presented, managed and eventually pulled by the DCSF.
 7. The Act uses odd definitions for sustainable travel and does not properly address preferred modes of travel.
 8. The Act fails to provide a proper rural dimension.
 9. Whilst the desire to improve equality of opportunity in rural areas is excellent, the arrangements to secure them are unlikely to be effective.
 10. There is a lack of proper recognition of the needs of 16–19 year old learners living in rural areas in national policies; the externalities have a serious impact on transport services, support and costs, which in turn impacts on participation and numbers not in employment, education and training.
 11. There is insufficient recognition of the differential funding costs in rural compared to urban provision. Despite some recent acknowledgement of the issues and some palliatives, the response from central government to the needs of rural learners has been inadequate. As a result, transport services are declining and charges to students increasing beyond what is affordable.
 12. Our work on access to the new 14–19 learning opportunities in rural areas and serious recommendations to government have not met with an adequate strategic response. If the 14–19 programme is successful in the medium term, access and transport will restrict access and opportunities to rural learners.
 13. There is a lack of appreciation at the centre of how the education transport infrastructure contributes to the wider rural access and transport infrastructure and environmental policies.
- Response

DUTIES ON AUTHORITIES FOR ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

PART 6

A new duty on local education authorities to promote sustainable modes of travel.

Issues:

(g) this duty relies on such travel arrangements as the LA considers necessary. This falls short of a defined standard. In practice, it is discretionary and may be squeezed out by other financial imperatives locally. Promotion of sustainable schemes is not an absolute requirement;

(h) the definition of sustainable is unusual, ie the well being of young people and the environment. This does not specifically refer to cost effective investment in the infrastructure that will serve future cohorts of young people cost effectively. There is no reference to limited resources, rising costs of transport and the rural infrastructure. There are:

- (i) no measures or requirements for walking, minimising/optimising car use, cycling, developing the rural transport infrastructure; and
 - (ii) no measures, standards, inspection or review of progress required;
- (i) school travel schemes were intended to be supported by pathfinder projects which were withdrawn; there are none to our knowledge; and
- (j) there is no mention in the Act of rural areas and the specific needs and arrangements to be made, this is yet another urban initiative that has been imposed across the piece.

ELIGIBILITY

An “eligible child” is a child including:

children of compulsory school age:

- (a) with special educational needs, a disability or mobility problems;
- (b) who cannot reasonably be expected to walk because of the nature of the routes;
- (c) who live outside walking distance and for whom no suitable alternative arrangements are made; and
- (d) children aged 8 or over who are entitled to free school meals etc.

Protected children face no charges

- (2) This section was introduced to:
 - (a) provide more choice to students irrespective of their level of disadvantage, and
 - (b) reduce the use of cars on the school run.
- (3) It is still too early to assess the impact of these measures. Currently we can report:
 - (a) little impact on travel patterns of “better off” students;
 - (b) the 3 mile rule was created in 1923 to relax the requirement to attend school if you lived over 3 miles away in 1923. These days, parents and students often do not consider 3 miles a reasonable distance for students to walk to school. There is increased reliance on cars, especially in rural areas. Previously many authorities would use their discretion and funding to reduce the national limits; eg from 3 to 2 miles. This has become too expensive for authorities to continue in the face of unhelpful externalities and funding constraints. Where provision is provided by the authorities, this tends to be through bus and rail services. This helps to secure better coverage and frequency of services and more sustainable and environmentally friendly services with wider benefits in terms of community access to a range of services. Where transport is rationed and responsibility falls on individuals and families, this results in greater reliance on cars, with harmful environmental and less sustainable impact on the local transport infrastructure;
 - (c) efforts to increase the amount of choice for many children, particularly the “worse off”, by offering them support for transport to a wider range of schools within their locality has little impact in rural areas where there is often only one local school within the 2–6 miles distance limit. This may not increase the choice of the poorer pupils who rely on transport provided by the authorities. “Better off” families will continue to drive their children to schools of their choice over far greater distances. This will not result in a measurable improvement in choice or equality. Further, impact on the environment, transport infrastructure and sustainability will not be improved in the rural areas;
 - (d) if the proposed increase in choice does have an impact in the medium term, it would have to be achieved by longer journeys and more travelling with adverse effects on the environment, the sustainability of local schools and community cohesion. More children travelling longer distances to school could also have significant consequences for children’s social well being, education and health.

TESTING NEW ARRANGEMENTS—PATHFINDERS

(4) The initial offer of funding to develop and test new travel schemes in line with the legislation was welcomed by the authorities. Some £60m was to be made available nationally to the 150 authorities and their partners. This was an appropriate level of funding for a scheme running over several years in different authority area. Colleagues set out to devise innovative responses to the: choice, equity, environment and sustainability agenda for home to school travel. This became even more attractive when ministers and officials encouraged authorities to include 14–19 transport arrangements for students.

(5) This quickly turned into a great disappointment. The DCSF moved the goal posts throughout the bidding and preparation period and then appeared to “strangle their own initiative first by reducing funding from £60m to £12m, and then by issuing a “badly flawed” prospectus that failed to accurately define the

objectives and outcomes sought from the initiative. DCSF introduced selection criteria and processes after bids had been made by those authorities, which despite the poor management of the initiative, were still determined to make a genuine effort to advance the interests of local young people. These criteria and selection processes frustrated the achievement of policy goals and wasted authorities' time and caused them to incur nugatory expenses.

(6) Two different short listing exercises reduced the 24 bids submitted to 5 and then none. The DCSF decided to withdraw the initiative and refused to make any reparation to those authorities that had pursued the initiative in good faith. It was claimed that authorities had not substantially met the ill defined objectives in the prospectus.

(7) One could speculate on the real reasons for the withdrawal of the pathfinders; the reluctance of local politicians to get involved in charging more young people for their transport was disappointing to the department. If this was a policy goal, then it would be better implemented as a national requirement, so that authorities, parents and students are aware of the national framework. To safeguard those at greatest disadvantage and charge the rest would have increased the polarisation of access and choice between the "haves and have nots". As mentioned earlier, charging more for services results in greater use of cars and less development of a sustainable and environmentally friendly transport infrastructure.

(8) Following the withdrawal of the pathfinders, students in the rural areas are facing greater uncertainty and disadvantage as new initiatives, eg 14–19 and keeping young people in learning until they are 18, are driven forward. This brings us back to our own agenda as set out in our covering letter. We have identified the arrangements that are necessary to improve access and choice through an equitable, sustainable and environmentally friendly scheme of transport support and services. We are continually reminding the DCSF, DfT, LSC and others of both young people's needs and our considered recommendations on how they can best be achieved. Our report, "Rural Transport—Long Distance Learners" July 2007 sets out the case for intervention based on: case studies, surveys of institutions and students. Whilst this has galvanised the DCSF into recognition of the seriousness of the issues and further research, it has so far only produced some palliative action. It has not yet faced up to the inevitable consequences arising from its own education and training policies for young people in rural areas. We have set out what is required to address these needs effectively in our agenda contained in our covering letter.

EXTENDED SCOPE OF INQUIRY

Travel Options for students of 16–19, including those studying at sixth form and FE colleges

(9) The Group's research, "Rural Transport—Long Distance Learners," shows a lack of strategic national policies and funding. The current situation is one of continuous decline in transport services and support for young learners in rural areas. Urban policies are being imposed on rural situations without proper consideration of the consequences for access and equality. Particular issues include:

- (a) young people living in rural areas do have long, difficult and uncomfortable journeys to access learning;
- (b) some of the rural areas have the highest rates of NEETs;
- (c) externalities are working against the provision of consistent and sustainable transport services and support in rural authorities;
- (d) the costs of providing effective, flexible and sustainable transport is rising significantly;
- (e) funding from central government sources is reducing and accompanied by unhelpful restrictions on their use which is driving down transport services and support provided for young learners in rural areas. Guidance for Educational Maintenance Allowances, Learner Support Funds and Transport Partnership funds has become increasingly unhelpful and bureaucratic, alongside a mantra that transport needs are best addressed locally. DCSF cites many different sources of funding that could support transport in theory; in practice they amount to a smokescreen of already overstretched or irrelevant funding lines;
- (f) numbers and participation rates have continued to increase the cohort of eligible young people needing transport support;
- (g) only 2–3 authorities are able to continue to offer free transport to eligible young people; most have reduced services and/or increased charges to students significantly. Access and equity are being eroded. There are many new forms of rationing based on combinations of charging and eligibility rules;
- (h) we have now reached a point where the elasticity of participation (demand for learning) falls in an inverse relationship to charges of over £350 pa. See Martin Camillin Associates Ltd research for 30+ authorities;
- (i) the above has a serious knock-on effect for the rest of the rural community and the transport infrastructure.

TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW DIPLOMA FOR 14–19 AND INCREASED TARGETS FOR PARTICIPATION

(10) The Group and its members have undertaken a large amount of work into the implications arising from this important new agenda. The number of students and diploma coverage at different levels at Gateway 2 is currently small. In practice, the limited take up of the programme can be met from local initiatives and cross subsidies in the short term. However, there will be real difficulties if young people take up diplomas as intended between now and the implementation of the entitlement in 2013. There is both confusion about who is leading on assessing and providing access transport support in many of our authorities.

(11) One of our member authorities has recently had a thorough appraisal of access and transport need for 14–19 by consultants with practical knowledge of both education and transport. This shows serious failures in the interface between central government, local authority transport units and, local consortia of schools, colleges and others. There are substantial challenges that must be addressed by all authorities if there is to be reasonable access to the entitlement in rural areas. These include the following needs:

- (a) for consortia to engage with transport coordinators in local authorities. This is essential for any serious commissioning, procurement and management of contracted transport services. People do not understand the efficiencies of different forms of transport and the lead times necessary for tendering and contracting;
- (b) for clarification of roles and responsibilities generally;
- (c) for involvement of transport officers in decisions about location of provision, timetabling and the time of the school day, scheduling of diploma courses, access and transport planning. This is subject to learning providers having better managed support in deciding which diplomas and levels to offer in the first place;
- (d) to refocus existing home to school and college policies to provide for additional and different journeys needed for foundation, higher and advanced diplomas;
- (e) for planning, service level agreements and project plans to manage the work and relationships between different parties;
- (f) better strategic leadership and meetings to manage access and transport developments. The existing arbitrary age divisions, policy and funding are not efficient. The LSC's role in 16–19 transport and their guidance and funding need an objective review;
- (g) for a proper statement of funding for access and transport needs from central government with recognition of rural needs;
- (h) schools should not be left without coordination and support at county level in procurement, maintenance and compliance checks on vehicles and driver recruitment and training;
- (i) the alphabet soup for central government funding for transport for 14–19 needs immediate review; etc.

(12) Financial modelling suggests that, unless these issues are properly addressed there could be substantial new costs for authorities and others.

The provision of concessionary travel for young people generally

(13) This has long been a priority for our Group. We are seeking equity of access and opportunity for young learners, and we will only achieve this when those in rural areas are able to choose and travel at reasonable cost, comfort and convenience compared to their urban peers. As our study shows, the major differences between urban and rural travel are the:

- (a) costs and affordability of charges/fares;
- (b) availability and frequency of services; and
- (c) distance, comfort and reliability of services.

(14) It is inevitable that the distance from home to courses for those in rural locations will on average be longer. We accept too, that it will sometimes not be a viable and cost effective option to make provision for learning in areas of sparsity and limited demand, although there is some room for manoeuvre here. There are opportunities at the margin for some students and courses to take the learning to them, use ICT, video, peripatetic teachers etc. Ultimately though, many in rural areas will need to travel longer distances than their urban peers to access their learning. This is where the market for public transport breaks down, and intervention is necessary.

(15) The system relies heavily on contracted and subsidised transport services to provide access. In addition, authorities, schools and colleges are subsidising fares. However, these “make do and mend” systems are declining and being priced out of the range of costs at which students, their families colleges and local authorities find them affordable and attractive. The current cocktail of funding from central and local government, schools, colleges, students and their families is also neither fit for purpose, nor cost effective to administer. The national arrangements lack any meaningful standards or framework for local authorities to work within to provide equal opportunities or access. As the externalities compound to exert a detrimental effect on subsidised transport services and support for young learners, government is creating

new and attractive learning opportunities that demand a much improved framework of services and support. Our contention is that if access to courses is to be provided effectively in rural areas, this needs a serious intervention at the centre, to allow local authorities to provide the equity and standards needed in services and support locally.

(16) Concessionary fares alone would not provide a solution. Issuing free or subsidised passes to young people in rural locations will be ineffective if there are no buses or trains or they arrive at the wrong times for learning needs. Our case is about having both concessionary fares and well managed contracted/subsidised transport services, which make public transport and other local provision available to meet the necessary travel needs of young people. We need both effective national standards and benchmarking to ensure that this is happening in practice. There are major benefits which would flow from this approach to the wider rural communities. We are aware that the Social Exclusion team found that transport was fundamental to access to a range of services and the well being of local people and economies. Given current energy and environmental considerations this must be a good investment in a sustainable future.

September 2008

Memorandum from The National Youth Agency (ST 26)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

Summary

- Our response concentrates on the third objective in the call for evidence: the provision of concessionary travel more generally (than to formal education opportunities).
- Cost of transportation is a significant barrier to young people accessing the youth offer outlined in *Aiming High for Young People: a ten-year strategy for positive activities*.
- Young people themselves frequently cite the cost of travel as a big concern and a driver of exclusion.
- The NYA welcomes the enquiry into concessionary travel for young people that is wider in scope than that related to formal education.
- Our response cites evidence from our own and others' research into the benefits of concessionary travel for young people.

Who we are

1. The National Youth Agency supports those involved in young people's personal and social development and works to enable all young people to fulfil their potential within a just society.

2. We achieve this by:

- Supporting those working with young people in a variety of settings
- Influencing and shaping youth policy and improving youth services
- Promoting young people's participation, influence and place in society
- improving and extending youth services and youth work;
- enhancing and demonstrating youth participation in society; and
- promoting effective youth policy and provision.

3. We provide resources to improve work with young people and its management; create and demonstrate innovation in services and methods; support the leadership of organisations to manage change; influence public perception and policy; and secure standards of education and training for youth work.

4. We are currently working with the Department of Children, Schools and Families to develop guidance for local authorities on the provision of transport to allow young people to access positive activities.

Evidence of interest to the enquiry

6. Our response concentrates on the third objective in the call for evidence: the provision of concessionary travel more generally (than to formal education opportunities).

5. In July 2007, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published *Aiming High for Young People: a ten-year strategy for positive activities*. The strategy highlighted that:

“Participation in constructive leisure-time activities, particularly those that are sustained through the teenage years, can have a significant impact on young people's resilience and outcomes in later life”.¹

Aiming High for Young People built on the earlier publication of the Green Paper *Youth Matters*ⁱⁱ (2005) which promoted the benefits of young people obtaining access to two hours per week of sport, two hours per week of other cultural and recreational activities (in clubs, youth groups, and classes) and opportunities to contribute to the community through volunteering or similar activities. These policies were given legislative backing by the Education and Inspections Actⁱⁱⁱ (2006) which introduced a new duty on local authorities to secure access for young people aged 13 to 19 in their area to sufficient educational and recreational leisure-time activities “which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities”. Increasing young people’s participation in positive activities has been selected by 75 authorities as one of the performance indicators in their Local Area Agreements in 2008–09.

6. The implementation plan for *Aiming High for Young People*^{iv}, published in March 2008, set out the key barriers to young people’s participation in positive activities which local authorities would need to address. These included affordable, safe and accessible transport.

7. Statutory guidance on positive activities states that transport planners will wish to take into account the children’s trust’s plans for the local youth offer.

8. The barriers faced by young people using public transport are numerous and well-documented, particularly around the consequences they have on young people’s ability to access education and leisure activities. Most recently, reports from The National Youth Agency^v highlight the concerns young people have about the lack of safe, affordable and accessible transport provision.

The NYA report reviewed the published evidence on young people’s experience of public transport, and grouped the barriers faced into the following categories:

- Cost.
- Availability.
- Accessibility.
- Safety.

It is cost that is the focus of this written evidence.

9. According to a report from the then Social Exclusion Unit, nearly half of 16–18 year olds say transport costs are hard to meet (SEU^{vi}, 2003), and transport costs were the biggest expenditure associated with participation in post 16 education.

10. Cost is also noted in the statutory guidance on securing access to positive activities:

“There are also a number of direct actions that authorities can take to address transport issues, including the authority providing, commissioning or subsidising young people’s transport. It is worth noting that in the first six months (up to March 2006) since the Mayor’s introduction of free travel on buses/trams by Transport for London for under 16s across London, parents reported that 59% of 14 and 15 year olds used the bus/tram more and that 83% of young people using buses and trams more did so to access leisure activities.⁴⁰”

11. Quantitative and qualitative evidence indicates how young people struggle with the cost of bus travel. Nearly half of 16–18 year olds say transport costs are hard to meet (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003). Although rather dated, research in 1999 suggested transport costs were the biggest expenditure associated with participation in post 16 education—the average annual education related transport cost was £319, rising to £371 for 16–18 year olds (ibid).

12. Qualitative research suggests cost is an issue particularly experienced within rural areas, where services may be more expensive as they are less used, and also reflecting longer distances travelled to access facilities (Jones et al, 2000, Carnegie UK Trust, 2006).

13. In addition to the actual cost of travel, there is limited qualitative evidence which suggests that young people feel that the cost of bus travel is overpriced and does not represent value for money, given the quality of the service (see section 5.6 below) (UK Youth Parliament, 2006).

14. Concessions are often a priority for young people. In focus group interviews, young people report problems with the steep rise in bus fares due to the cessation of child concessions (DfT, 2006a). Young people also identify that there is no comprehensive and consistent policy on concessions, which vary across local operators and across locations (DfT, 2006a). Qualitative evidence suggests growing support across the country for reduced or free bus travel for young people (DEFRA et al, 2003, Headsup, 2006), or a standardisation of policies regarding concessionary fares (NERYA, 2005). One local study showed overwhelming support for a loyalty and/or discount card (up to 89% of young people in favour) (MYP, 2003).

15. Several large scale research projects indicate that a significant proportion of young people would be encouraged to use buses (or use buses more) if there were cheaper fares. For example, one third of young people stated that cheaper fares would encourage them to use buses more (DfT, 1999) and 36% of young people in the South East thought that cheaper fares was the best way to improve public transport (Ipsos MORI, 2006).

⁴⁰ Transport for London data supplied by GLA (unpublished).

16. Early findings from Transport for London suggest that the introduction of free bus travel for under 16s in London has had a number of benefits. Two thirds (66%) of young people under 16 have opted to register for an under 16s oystercard, giving free bus and tram travel, over three quarters (78%) of which stated financial motivations for applying (Synovate, 2006). The initiative has encouraged increased bus use amongst young people—59% of young Londoners report using buses more since the introduction of free travel (Synovate, 2006).

17. Local authorities will often address young people's transport in a number of local strategies and plans. One of the recommendations emerging from The NYA report *Accessing Positive Activities* was that a single over-arching strategy for young people's transport would support better coordination across these.

“Local authorities should develop a single strategy for young people's transport. A strategy is needed which draws upon young people's transport priorities and needs, and identifies how effective solutions to these needs draw upon and have an important role to contribute meaningfully to a wide variety of local authority strategic planning, priorities and requirements, including Children and Young People's Plans, Extended Schools, Safer Routes to School, Local Transport Plans, Public Service Agreements and Best Value.”

18. The NYA also believes it is important that the views of stakeholders, including young people, are built into negotiations between local authorities and transport operators at a local level. We believe it should be a requirement of the local authority that young users are consulted regularly and this should be included in legislation. There are numerous examples of young people's effective involvement in decision making in local authorities and the Government's own 10-year strategy for positive activities makes this a priority.

19. We are currently at mid-point in the development of good practice guidance for local authorities meeting the transport needs of young people accessing positive activities. There are a number of case studies on The NYA website of innovative solution to the problem, and the guidance will be available by the end of 2008 (subject to DCSF approval). See www.nya.org.uk/transport for more information.

September 2008

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- ii. *Youth Matters*, Department for Education and Skills, July 2005 <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/youth/docs/youthmatters.pdf>
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- iv. *Aiming High For Young People: a ten year strategy for positive activities: Implementation Plan*. Department for Children, Schools and Families, March 2008 <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/youthmatters/aiminghigh/>
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Memorandum from the National Children's Bureau (ST 27)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

1.0 Summary

1.1 This submission focuses on concessionary travel for young people. We very much the Committee's decision to extend its inquiry into school travel to look at this issue. The National Children's Bureau (NCB) urges the Committee to recommend that government:

- fulfil its commitment to work across the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Transport to “improve guidance, support and challenge to children's trusts and transport planners to encourage joined up planning and commissioning of transport for young people”. This should include guidance on how to implement sustainable concessionary fare schemes where appropriate, and should set out a consistent approach to age-related fare increases.

- undertake some economic modelling to identify the impact and potential benefits—for the whole community—of transport schemes for children and young people.
- investigate the perceived legislative gap in relation to local authorities’ powers to offer concessionary fares, and clarify the legal position to all local authorities.

1.2 We also call on the Committee to carry out another inquiry to gather evidence and make recommendations in relation to transport provision for children and young people more broadly.

2.0 *About NCB and its work on transport*

2.1 NCB promotes the voices, interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives.

2.2 As an umbrella body for the children’s sector in England and Northern Ireland, we provide essential information on policy, research and best practice for our members and other partners.

2.3 NCB aims to:

- challenge disadvantage in childhood
- work with children and young people to ensure they are involved in all matters that affect their lives
- promote multidisciplinary cross-agency partnerships and good practice
- influence government policy through policy development and advocacy
- undertake high quality research and work from an evidence-based perspective
- disseminate information to all those working with children and young people, and to children and young people themselves.

2.4 NCB has adopted and works within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

2.5 Children and young people and transport, traffic and travel has been one of NCB’s six public policy priorities of 2007/8. It is also a priority issue for YoungNCB, our national membership network for children and young people who want to speak out and take action on issues that affect them. Travelling is an integral part of daily life for children, young people and their families, allowing them to access learning, work, play and childcare facilities, health, shops, and social and cultural activities. At the same time, children and young people are less able to travel independently, relying, for example, on their parents to drive them around. They are therefore particularly dependent on local transport provision, as pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.

2.6 NCB wants to see greater investment in and policy development to support sustainable transport that benefits children and young people’s needs and wishes. We have been calling for:

- Greater access to, and affordability of, public transport for young people;
- Increased participation of children and young people in local transport and planning decisions;
- Streets, public spaces and means of travel that are more child-friendly and physically and socially safe;
- Greater investment in streets in which children can cycle and walk without fear of traffic

2.7 This response focuses on the issue of concessionary fares for young people. However, our response also sets out a call to the Committee to carry out a broader inquiry into the full range of transport and travel issues affecting children and young people.

3.0 *Concessionary fares for young people*

3.1 NCB very much welcomes the Committee’s decision to extend the scope of the inquiry into school travel to cover concessionary fares for young people. Young people with whom NCB have conducted work, including the YoungNCB network, have identified the costs of transport as a key barrier to accessing activities, facilities and services.

3.2 There is significant evidence to demonstrate that the costs of public transport can be prohibitive for young people:

- Over 60% of respondents to a YoungNCB survey of children and young people up to the age of 17 said that train and bus fares are too high. Furthermore, almost 70 per cent said that the cost of travel “often” or “sometimes” affects how frequently they use public transport or where they go.⁴¹
- In a UK Youth Parliament survey of over 4,000 young people, almost 50 per cent said that public transport was too expensive, and 95 per cent agreed that all areas should have a discount card offering free or cheaper travel.⁴²

⁴¹ YoungNCB transport survey conducted in 2007, unpublished

⁴² UK Youth Parliament (2008) *Fares Fair: transport report from the UK Youth Parliament*

- In research conducted by the National Youth Agency (NYA) and Brunel University, cost was cited as the main barrier preventing young people from using buses in three out of the four case study areas investigated.⁴³
- Child and youth concessions on local bus services vary greatly geographically and across operators, and young people complain about the sharp increase in bus fares at ages 14, 15 or 16 when child concessions no longer apply.⁴⁴
- The Social Exclusion Unit’s report on transport found that almost half of 16–18 year olds experienced difficulties in meeting educational transport costs.⁴⁵
- Some young people have reported being overcharged, for example, bus drivers might not accept their concession card or travel pass⁴⁶, or taxi drivers charge more for young people “just because they can get away with it”.⁴⁷

3.3 The costs of transport, combined with young people’s continued financial dependence, can therefore act as a barrier to their accessing activities and services independently. This is particularly problematic for those aged 16–17, who will be becoming more independent. This age group often has to pay adult prices, despite the fact that they may not be in full-time work and, if they are working, they are entitled to a lower minimum wage than over-18s. This issue will be particularly significant if the government fulfils its intention to require all young people to take part in some sort of education or training up to the age of 17 (from 2013) and 18 (from 2015).

3.4 Research suggests that transport concessions can have an impact on young people’s use of transport, and beyond. For example, there is evidence of increased public transport use in London where free travel on all buses and trams is available to under-16s. A third of parents of children aged 11–15 claim their child uses the bus or tram more since the concession was introduced. 59 per cent of 14 and 15 year olds said they use the bus or tram more, and that they use public transport more now to visit friends and family, go shopping and play sport. 40 per cent of the same age group said they used cars a lot less frequently since the free oyster cards were introduced. At the same time, however, the research does indicate that young people could be choosing public transport over walking and cycling; 73 per cent of 14–15 year-olds said they sometimes took the bus or tram instead of walking and 10 per cent had at some point taken the bus rather than cycling. This is obviously a concern, which needs to be addressed when establishing a concessionary transport scheme, to avoid any indirect negative impact on the use of active travel modes where appropriate.⁴⁸

3.5 Research conducted by NYA and Brunel University⁴⁹ identified a broader range of perceived benefits of the four bus travel schemes investigated (two of which related to fare concessions). Some of these benefits are relevant to the wider community, and not just the schemes’ target groups. Benefits for young people included: more frequent or new bus use among young people; enabling young people to travel safely and access a variety of activities; changing their future expectations about travel; and increasing their disposable income. However, those questioned as part of the research also referred to the positive impact of increased public transport use on the environment and the economy.

3.6 Despite these findings, further research is needed to provide us with a more detailed understanding of the economic and social benefits—for the whole community—of travel schemes for young people, including concessionary travel.

3.7 Some individual local authorities have highlighted to NCB perceived legal barriers to offering concessionary fares to all children and young people. The Transport Act 1985 empowers local authorities to establish concessionary fare schemes for: all under-16s; and only those 16 and 17 year-olds in full-time education or with a disability. This has led to the perception among some local authorities that 16 and 17 year-olds not in full-time education or without a disability cannot be included in local concession schemes. This legislative gap may need to be addressed, in order to successfully deliver the ten-year strategy for positive activities and the duty on young people to participate in education and training (including part-time participation) up to the age of 18. If it is a case of local authorities misunderstanding their statutory powers, a clear communication to all authorities would be beneficial.

3.8 NCB urges the Committee to recommend that government:

- fulfil its commitment to work across the Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Transport to “improve guidance, support and challenge to children’s trusts and transport planners to encourage joined up planning and commissioning of transport for young people”. This should include guidance on how to implement sustainable concessionary fare schemes where appropriate, and should set out a consistent approach to age-related fare increases.

⁴³ Barker J (2007) *Accessing Positive Activities: Innovative solutions for young people’s bus travel*. National Youth Agency/ Brunel University

⁴⁴ Department for Transport (2006) *Young People and Transport: Understanding their needs and requirements*; and Barker J (2007) op. cit.

⁴⁵ Social Exclusion Unit (2003) *Making the connections: final report on transport and social exclusion*

⁴⁶ Department for Transport (2006) op. cit.

⁴⁷ Social Exclusion Unit (2003) op. cit.

⁴⁸ Transport for London (2006) *Under-16s Travel Concession Report: September 2005—March 2006*

⁴⁹ Barker J (2007) op. cit.

- undertake some economic modelling to identify the impact and potential benefits—for the whole community—of transport schemes for children and young people, including concessionary fares.
- investigate the perceived legislative gap in relation to local authorities' powers to offer concessionary fares, and clarify the legal position to all local authorities.

4.0 *A broader investigation into transport provision for children and young people*

4.1 While we welcome the extension of this inquiry to include transport concessions for children and young people, we would also urge the Committee to consider initiating a broad-reaching inquiry into the range of concerns relating to children and young people's experiences of and access to public transport. This includes the barriers faced due the costs of bus, train and tram travel, but also: accessibility; availability; and safety. We would not endorse encouraging young people to increase their use of public transport to the detriment of cycling and walking where that form of travel is appropriate. However, we would welcome any contribution that the Committee can make to exploring how we can ensure that young people can use public transport when they want and need to, as opposed to being dependent upon travelling with parents by car and all the implications this can have—for the young person's ability to get about independently, as well as the potential wider environmental and economic benefits.

4.2 The provision of safe transport services that meet the needs of young people is central to the successful delivery of a range of government priorities for this age group, including raising the age of their participation in education and training; increasing young people's involvement in positive activities, including volunteering; reducing levels of childhood obesity; and improving children and young people's safety. Policy initiatives, beyond those directed only at children and young people, depend upon access to public transport, including: giving the public a greater choice of GP practice and other primary care services; building new homes; and reducing the UK's carbon emissions and levels of fuel consumption. Children, young people and families have an interest in all these areas.

4.3 A broader inquiry on children and young people and public transport could address the following set of interacting themes:

- Safety: young people's feelings of, and actual, safety when traveling on public transport, including crime/antisocial behaviour;
- Accessibility/availability: including disabled children and young people's experiences using public transport; availability of routes for all young people, but in particular those living in rural communities; and availability of travel information presented in an accessible format;
- Costs: in the context of the full range of potential barriers facing children and young people, and if the Committee considers that further investigation is required following the school travel inquiry;
- How children and young people make transport choices: including the impact of the factors set out above, and the relationship between the parent's and child's use of private and public transport;
- Social exclusion: the relationship between social exclusion and isolation and use of/access to transport provision;
- Involving young people in transport decision-making and planning at the local level, working in partnership with local authority transport departments, private transport providers and other members of the community;
- The benefits and disadvantages of increasing young people's use of public transport: in commercial terms, for the family and for the wider community.
- Central and local government structures: including joined-up and coordinated approaches to the development of child- and transport-related policy, guidance and plans.

September 2008

Memorandum from Cycling England (ST 28)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

Cycling England is the national body which co-ordinates the development of cycling across England. We aim to create the conditions which will result in more people cycling, more safely, more often. Cycling England has a budget of £140 million over the next three years supporting two flagship programmes—a network of 17 Cycling Towns and one large Cycling City investing European levels of funding to increase cycling levels, and the expansion of Bikeability, cycling proficiency for the 21st century, to 500,000 10 year-olds by 2012.

Summary

- The specialised diplomas launched in September will give thousands more young people the chance to remain in education and training at the age of 16. The Department for Children, Schools & Families (DCSF) has announced £23 million to help rural areas put in place plans to ensure all young people can benefit from the opportunities offered by the diplomas.
- Recent DCSF research has shown that there should be no significant transport issues in delivering the first five diplomas from September. However, the DCSF has recognised that more work needs to be done to ensure that local authorities and 14–19 partnerships are ready to meet the demand as it builds in future years. The Department has advised that all 14–19 partnerships should develop more coordinated plans for travel between learning centres, using contracted bus services and available public transport to make efficiency savings.
- Cycling could play a significant role in helping 14–19 partnerships develop their travel plans and ensure access to the diplomas for young people in both urban and rural communities. The partnerships should consider ways to encourage teenagers to cycle to school or college, including offering cycle training and improving cycling infrastructure such as cycle parking.
- The following document outlines how Cycling England has been working to encourage more people to cycle more safely more often, with particular focus on primary school children, and suggests how this might be applied to students aged 16–19, especially those benefiting from the new diplomas.

Encouraging children to cycle to school

1. Getting more children to cycle to school is a major focus for Cycling England. Bikeability, our cycle training programme, is our flagship initiative in this area, complemented by a number of supporting projects such as investment in building safe routes to schools, cycle parking and the development of cycling-based classroom resources. Currently, Cycling England works predominately with primary schools, equipping today's nine and 10 year-olds with the skills and confidence to cycle to school. However, in order to meet the immediate needs of today's teenagers studying at secondary schools and colleges, especially those offering the new diplomas, we would recommend expanding the Bikeability scheme to offer Bikeability training to teenagers via 14–19 partnerships.

2. Cycling to school incorporates physical activity into young people's daily routine and has well-documented benefits, from reducing congestion to improving fitness levels. However, despite the average journey to secondary school being under three miles, the school run is increasingly driven, rather than walked or cycled.

- The number of children travelling to school by car has doubled in the last 20 years.
- 43% of all primary school children are taken to school by car—creating over 500 million trips per year.
- Before 9.00 am, one in five cars on the road are on the school run.⁵⁰
- A 2007 study by Cycling England demonstrated that cycling levels among young people in general had **fallen by 50% in the space of a generation**, with 91% of today's children never having cycled to school.⁵¹
- A subsequent Cycling England study to mark Bike to School Week 2008 showed that while parents most commonly admitted that they had been permitted to cycle on roads at 10, they are now clamping down on their own children's freedoms due to safety fears, waiting on average until they reach the age of 12 before letting them cycle on the roads.

Bikeability

3. In order to address this generational decline, Cycling England introduced Bikeability. Bikeability is cycling proficiency for the 21st century, updated to include professional on-road training in addition to the initial playground basic handling skills. Its three levels are designed to improve children's road sense and cycling competence. The Bikeability course is specially designed to equip children with the skills to cycle in today's road conditions, with three levels:

- Level one offers basic bike handling skills in a controlled environment away from roads.
- Level two teaches children to cycle planned routes on minor roads, offering real cycling experience.
- Level three, normally undertaken in secondary school, ensures cyclists are able to manage all traffic conditions, including busy roads and advanced road features.

⁵⁰ These figures are taken from Cycling England's Bike to the Future II paper, August 2007.

⁵¹ Setting The Wheels In Motion: how to encourage children back on their bikes, Cycling England, March 2007.

With the on-road elements of Bikeability levels two and three, children no longer have to wait until they drive to be coached in navigating past other vehicles: they can be tutored in traffic sense at nine, 10 and 11—a good thing for all road-users. It also allows children and teenagers to experience independent travel for the first time, both to school/college and to leisure facilities.

4. Having launched less than two years ago, Bikeability is now well and truly established. Half of all local authorities are now offering the training and earlier this year, the Government expanded Cycling England's funding allocation to allow 500,000 10 year-olds to access Bikeability training by 2012. Initial monitoring has shown that 80% of Bikeability instructors witnessed an increase in the number of children cycling to school following the training, and two-thirds of children themselves reported they were cycling more. When Cycling England made grants available for local authorities to fund cycle training schemes at the end of 2007, we were flooded with applications—demonstrating the continuing enthusiasm for Bikeability across the country.

5. Cycling England has been working closely with the Youth Sport Trust to embed Bikeability within School Sports Partnerships, groups of schools working together to develop PE and sport opportunities for young people. Schools are where supply and demand for Bikeability meet, and School Sports Partnerships provide an effective channel for promoting and delivering Bikeability directly to schools across the country. Over the last year, Cycling England has prioritised working with individual School Sports Partnerships in areas where Bikeability was not yet being delivered, providing technical assistance to Partnership Development Managers to help them get their Bikeability schemes off the ground. As a result of this work, 40 School Sports Partnerships are already delivering Bikeability, with more due to sign up in autumn 2008.

6. However, still more could be done. Extending Bikeability training to older children and teenagers would increase participation rates still further, as well as helping 14–19 Partnerships to meet their transport and travel objectives.

7. Bikeability is complemented and co-ordinated by a number of supporting projects such as investment in building safe routes to schools and cycle parking, as well as funding for innovative schools projects such as “Bike It”.

Bike It

8. Alongside the cycle industry, local authorities, and Transport for London, Cycling England continues to support “Bike It”, a nationwide scheme which aims to get more children cycling through the school gates, using in-school “champions” to drum up support and create excitement about cycling. Managed by Sustrans, the project has continued to go from strength to strength in the past year: in line with previous years, the scheme has seen a trebling of cycling levels at the schools in which it operates. Bike It started four years ago with just four officers working in 10 schools each. This year, further funding from Cycling England, the cycle industry, the Big Lottery Fund's Well-Being programme, the Welsh Assembly Government and local authorities enabled Bike It to expand their team to 29 staff, each supported by a regional supervisor/trainer and the national manager. Bike It now works with 300 schools in 44 local authorities and estimates that the programme is giving a positive cycling experience to 60,000 children. Cycling England has recommended that Bike It be extended to every primary and secondary school in England, ensuring that young people of all ages are encouraged to travel independently to their place of study by bike.

Safe Routes to School

9. One of the key roles of the Bike It cycling champions is working with parents, teachers and School Travel Plan advisors to identify safe routes to school. However, while champions can help signpost safe routes which already exist, an integrated infrastructure investment programme is needed to provide new links to schools where they are missing, and to produce effective street signage. Cycling England continues to work with Sustrans, the sustainable transport charity, on the Safe Routes to School programme, which seeks to connect schools and their communities to the National Cycle Network. Thirty-six new links were built in 2007–08 adding to the 75 links created last year, and connecting hundreds of schools to their communities. Extra funding allocated to Cycling England by the Government earlier this year will allow another 250 Safe Links to School to be created, connecting around 500 more schools to the National Cycle Network. Many schools with links have already doubled the number of pupils cycling to school, with evidence suggesting children are also using the paths for other kinds of journeys including commuting, shopping and other leisure trips. Our experience from the Bike It scheme, as well as from our Cycling Towns programme, has shown that travel planning advice and maps are crucial to encouraging more people to cycle. We recommend that 14–19 partnerships incorporate cycle travel planning advice into their travel plans for secondary school and college students.

Improving cycling infrastructure

10. Improving cycling infrastructure is undeniably one of the most effective ways of changing behaviour, and planning in cycling infrastructure is more cost-effective than retro-fitting it later on. Our Cycling Demonstration Towns, set up in 2005 to promote cycling through a range of hard and soft measures, have already fast-tracked this approach. For example, in Exeter, the Council has taken advantage of the development of local secondary schools, acting to integrate four new schools with the cycle network by off-road cycle and pedestrian paths from day one. Schools are also well provided with parking facilities, with enough cycle racks in place for one in 10 pupils to ride to school every day. Working with Sustrans, Cycling England provides bike storage grants to schools all over the country as part of the Safe Routes to Schools scheme. We recommend that 14–19 Partnerships audit the provision of cycle parking in secondary schools and colleges in their areas as part of their plans to meet demand for secondary school travel as it develops in future years.

Cycling Towns

11. Due to increased Government funding, our Cycling Towns programme has been extended: we now have 17 Cycling Towns around the country and our first ever Cycling City in Bristol (with South Gloucestershire). With the expansion of the Cycling Towns programme, over 2.5 million adults and children will now benefit from levels of investment equivalent to the best European cycling cities, and each Town has committed to delivering Bikeability in every school. There is an opportunity to encourage 14–19 partnerships in each of the 17 Towns and in Bristol to include cycling as part of their package of measures to improve transport provision for teenagers.

Conclusion

12. Cycling England would value the opportunity to make contact with the network of 14–19 Partnerships to explore the possibility of incorporating cycling into travel planning for pupils aged 16 and over, and, in particular, broadening the provision of Bikeability training up to level 3 to secondary school and college students.

September 2008

Memorandum from the Association of Colleges (ST 29)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

Colleges

The 364 further education and sixth form colleges in England are the leading institutions in the education and training of young people aged 14 to 19 as the following figures illustrate:

- 727,000 16–18 year olds study in colleges (compared to 447,000 in school sixth forms);
- 50% of all 16–19 year olds in education or training are studying in colleges;
- 120,000 14 to 16 year olds choose to study vocational courses in colleges;
- colleges deliver one-third of A-levels; and
- 63% of 16–18 year olds in receipt of an Education Maintenance Allowance study in colleges.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) is the representative body for colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (the latter two via a relationship with our sister organisations Ffowrm and the Association of Northern Ireland Colleges).

Summary

AoC welcomes the interest that the Transport Select Committee is taking in education travel for 14 to 19 year olds. Affordable and accessible transport is vital for this age group to ensure that they make the right education and training choices. The government's ambitious targets for the education and training of young people depend, in part, on suitable transport.

AoC does not believe that all local authorities are ensuring affordable transport is available to all 16–18 year olds in education and training despite their statutory duty to do so under the Education Acts 1996 and 2002.

No organisation has responsibility for ensuring that local authority transport plans fulfil the duties set out in the above legislation.

The responsibilities for providing transport need to be clarified particularly as demand increases with the introduction of the Diploma and it becoming compulsory for all young people to remain in education and training until the age of 18.

New Learning and Skills Council funding rules mean that colleges are no longer allowed to subsidise transport provision for their students.

Young people in education and training

1. There are 1.9 million young people aged 16 to 18 in England. 76% of them participate in education or training. Currently further education and sixth form colleges account for the largest share of young people in education—727, 000 compared to 447,000 in all types of school.

2. Education choices widen for young people from the age of 14. Although most 14 and 15 year olds take GCSEs, an increasing number take vocational courses. Between 2008 and 2013, the Diploma will become available in every part of the country. Schools and colleges will co-operate to deliver the Diploma which will increase the travel by young people between sites.

3. By the age of 16, young people have a wider choice of courses, including the Diploma, A-levels, and Apprenticeships. The Government has encouraged colleges, schools and training providers to specialise and to offer more options. Young people sometimes need to travel further to access the right course.

4. Choice in education can be expensive but skill shortages come with higher long-term costs for the nation's economy as most of today's 16 year olds will be in the workforce in 2060 and will require the necessary skills.

Young people and transport

5. By the time that young people reach 16, they already make complicated demands on the transport system. They travel for leisure, for work and for education. Research shows that young people are often frustrated by the limitations of public transport and that there is a high demand to learn to drive. Poor public transport access in rural areas provides particular impetus to driving. More than 180,000⁵² teenagers obtain a driving licence while still 17.

6. The journey to college or school from home is worthy of attention for the following reasons:

- an estimated 10 million journeys to education are made each week by 16 to 18 year olds (assuming 8 journeys a week by 1.2 million young people;
- the journeys take place during the day, often at peak times, in a way that adds to congestion if undertaken by car;
- young people's limited funds and limited access to cars makes public transport a reasonable choice; and
- habits developed as young adults often stay with people for the rest of their lives.

Existing legislation and provision

7. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility for home-to-education transport of 16 to 18 year olds. Under the 1996 Education Act (as amended by the 2002 Education Act), the local authority should have regard for the "need to secure that persons in that area have reasonable opportunities to choose between different establishments at which education or training is provided". The local authority is required to take into account cost, distance travelled from home to school/colleges and the needs of those who could not easily attend a particular institution if no arrangements were made.

8. The 2002 Education Act strengthened the duties of local authorities by requiring them to publish transport plans. In 2006, the responsibility for managing these plans passed from the Department for Education and Skills to the Learning and Skills Council.

9. In a recent Parliamentary Answer Mark Haysom, Chief Executive of the Learning and Skills Council, indicated that only two local authorities did not provide them with a transport policy statement as required under the legislation.

Mr Haysom also said the following in his answer:

"The LSC also has certain powers and duties in relation to the Secretary of State's powers under the Education Act 1996 to ensure that local authorities carry out their statutory duties in relation to transport for post-16 learners. In summary the LSC has the responsibility of trying to resolve complaints and challenges in relation to the exercise by local authorities of their duties in relation

⁵² Seventh Report of the House of Commons Transport Committee 2006–07 session: "Novice Drivers".

to transport for learners of sixth form age. However the power to give directions to local authorities in the event they are failing to comply with their duties in relation to transport statements rests with the Secretary of State.

It should be noted that the LSC does not have any power or duty to formally approve the local authority's transport statement and giving formal approval would potentially conflict with the LSC's duties to consider complaints and challenges to local authority's exercise of their responsibilities. Furthermore although there is a requirement for local authorities to consult the LSC in preparing their statements there is no statutory requirement that the statements must be approved by the LSC. This consultation is carried out through the local transport partnership of which LSC Area Teams are a member. The partnership considers whether statement is comprehensive and responds to local transport issues but the LSC does not assess the local authority transport policy statement to determine compliance with its legal obligations".

[16 July 2008 : Column 501W]

10. This answer highlights that no organisation is responsible for assessing whether individual local authority transport policy statements are fulfilling the legal requirements as set out in the Education Acts of 1996 and 2002.

Funding

11. Colleges receive £30 million in learner support funding from the Learning and Skills Council for young people. In 2008–09 new guidance was issued⁵³ which stated that colleges could only use discretionary funding to subsidise travel arrangements where there is a case of hardship and cannot be used to subsidise the local authority's statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 (as amended).

12. We understand that the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) does not want to fund shortfalls on the transport side, we also do not think that colleges should be prevented from stepping in to assist students.

13. Education institutions have to provide increasing subsidies to fill the gaps in existing public or local authority supported provision. An AoC survey of Colleges conducted in 2008 showed that 87% of colleges are subsidising transport at an average cost per college of £305,000.

14. The 2006 Education and Inspections Act extended local authority powers to provide transport for school-age children in the interests of encouraging choice and sustainability.

15. However, AoC believes that the present legislation is insufficient for the following reasons:

- Some local authorities may disregard the issue of choice and suitability by simply assuming that the closest place of study is the right one, regardless of course.
- Local authority transport plans need to be made after proper consultation with colleges and other appropriate stakeholders. An AoC survey of colleges, conducted earlier this year, found that this did not happen in 40% of cases.
- AoC's survey also revealed that over 40% of students travelled in to college using public transport in just 52% of colleges. Expensive fares, inflexible ticketing arrangements, infrequent services and lack of coordinated ticketing between operators and incentives for bus companies to run routes were cited as barriers to using public transport.

16. We believe that the following proposals would help with the provision of affordable transport:

- a revised duty for each local authority relating to home-to-education transport for 16 to 18 year olds. The duty should continue relate to cost, distance travelled, travel time and the needs of those who would be unable to access provision but make clear that the transport should be affordable;
- an entitlement for 16 to 18 year olds to affordable transport to suitable education provision (with at least two choices) unless this results in disproportionate expenditure;
- a power for local authorities to intervene in the provision of public transport to fulfil its duty;
- agreed responsibilities for planning and funding home to school/college/training transport;
- review and rationalise the existing funding levels and streams that flow from central Government, to the authorities, providers and students; and
- research into whether a national concessionary pass scheme would improve student access to school or college.

⁵³ Learner Support Programme Discretionary Funding Guidance and Requirements 2008–09
<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-fundingguidancerequirements200809-may08.pdf>

The Education and Skills Bill

17. The main proposal in the legislation is that by 2015 all 16–18 year olds will be participating in education and training. These plans make it even more important that the present set of rules are updated,

18. Every 16–18 year old will have to spend a minimum of one day per week in training, probably at a college. This will obviously result in an increasing need for affordable and accessible transport for young people, particularly in rural areas.

19. Clause 68 of this legislation deals with the issue of transport. It amends the Education Act 1996 to ensure local authorities take into account travelling time as well as distance but disappointingly does not strengthen the obligation on local authorities to ensure that affordable transport is available. AoC believes that local authorities must ensure all young people have access to affordable transport and as detailed elsewhere we think the law needs to be amended.

20. However, as the legislation will not be fully implemented until 2015 there is plenty of time for the Government, local authorities, colleges and schools to work together on ensuring that transport is not a barrier to full participation.

The Diploma

21. More than 100 colleges will offer one or more diploma qualifications in 2008. Over the next two years, another 200 colleges will start offering the qualification. Colleges offer the diploma on a collaborative basis with schools, creating new demands on travel arrangements.

22. Local authority travel plans need to provide sufficient flexibility to enable students to meet travel requirements for Diplomas. AoC's 2008 survey found that only 16% of colleges felt that their local authorities sufficiently provided for this and only 12% of colleges said that their local authority(ies) were revising their travel plans to accommodate for the Diploma:

- provision of transport to support the Diploma is expected to replicate transport arrangements already in place for programmes which allow 14–16 year olds to spend time in a college. These are usually funded by Colleges;
- however we do have concerns that if Diploma numbers expand it will become more difficult for colleges to continue to fund student travel; and
- AoC welcomes the recent report published by York Consulting on behalf of DCSF on delivery of the Diploma in rural areas and particularly the commitment to fund the post of Travel and Access Coordinator in the 40 most rural areas and provide £1 million of funding to the 20 most rural areas to develop innovative solutions. It must be noted however that transport for 16–18 year olds does not only affect rural areas.

September 2008

Memorandum from Passenger Focus (ST 30)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

Introduction

1. Passenger Focus⁵⁴ welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Transport Committee's inquiry into this area. Our submission concentrates on the contribution that rail can play in school travel.

School travel

2. Clearly not everyone has the opportunity to use rail to get to/from school or college. The geographical coverage of rail and the distance between home, station and school all limit the extent to which rail can be a viable part of school travel plans. For many people walking, cycling and bus travel will remain a far more practicable solution.

⁵⁴ Passenger Focus is the operating name of the Rail Passengers Council.

3. However, there are some schools/routes where rail can offer a realistic alternative and it is important that these are identified and developed accordingly. We would like to highlight two main areas in this submission:

3.1 Planning and co-ordinating services

3.1.1 It is important for transport operators to ensure that services are timed to meet the needs of users, and that timings reflect school and college teaching hours. At these times, a sensible pattern of calling points needs to apply, with relevant connections maintained—especially in areas where the service frequency is slender.

3.1.2 This requires liaison between train companies and local authorities and/or schools. By its nature this is something that requires local knowledge rather than central control but, if required, there is scope for particular connections/timings to be specified in franchise contracts.

3.2 Concessionary fares

3.2.1 Rail passengers between the ages of 5 and 15 are eligible for child-fares—currently set at half the adult fare. However, on turning 16 a full adult fare is payable irrespective of whether the person is still at school.

3.2.2 Passenger Focus has long had concerns at this and took the opportunity to raise it in our response to the Transport Committee's 2007 inquiry *Ticketing on Public Transport*.⁵⁵ We believe that all full-time pupils and students in the 16 to 19 age band should have affordable access between their homes and places of education, regardless of the length of journey, family income, or the number of local authority boundaries crossed to make that journey.

3.2.3 This view is shared by other organisations. The UK Youth Parliament reflects dissatisfaction amongst pupils themselves: “*As a young person in the UK, transport is a prevalent issue . . . There is no consistency with transport costs from one to the next with some areas making it far too expensive for a young person to get around at all*”.⁵⁶

3.2.4 The Association of Colleges⁵⁷ is also concerned; it has launched the Ticket to Progress campaign to achieve what it terms “affordable travel” for 16- to 19-year-old students, regardless of family income and other personal circumstances.

3.2.5 It has hitherto been a matter for the local authority to choose those areas where it will offer subsidy. We acknowledge that local authorities are democratic institutions which have to balance the differing claims on their budgets but this has led to considerable inconsistency throughout the country. For example:

- *Cornwall County Council* provides subsidised transport for pupils aged 16–19 who live more than three miles from the “appropriate post-16 institution”.⁵⁸
- In *London* 16–19 year olds in qualifying full-time education or training receive free travel on buses and trams. They can also get half adult-rate pay as you go on Tube, DLR, London Overground and some National Rail services and can buy half adult-rate Travelcard season tickets.⁵⁹
- *Surrey* residents aged 16–19 attending full time education in Surrey can apply for a bus or train student fare card. The cost of the Rail Fare Card is £10.00 and entitles the holder to buy season tickets at half the full adult rate for their home to school/college train journey. Season tickets are available for periods of seven days (minimum), one month and between one month and one year: single and return tickets are only available after 16.00hrs and at weekends.⁶⁰
- The *Wiltshire* Post-16 Transport Scheme allows 16- to 18-year-olds (and some over 19), whose journey exceeds three miles, to pay £360 per year (either as lump sum or instalments) for one return journey daily—usually by bus, but some are valid by train.⁶¹
- *Vale of Glamorgan* grants all 16–19-year-olds in full-time education free travel for journeys over three miles between home and the nearest appropriate or allocated place of education.⁶²

3.2.6 The decision to extend the school leaving age could magnify the scale of the problem and highlight the patchwork approach across the country. In areas where there are no concessions on rail fares charging the full adult price has the potential to deter rail use, something that runs counter to the emerging sustainability agenda.

⁵⁵ Passenger Focus: *Memorandum to the Transport Committee—Ticketing on Public Transport*, February 2007: para. 5.2.

⁵⁶ UK Youth Parliament: www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/faresfair

⁵⁷ The Association of Colleges promotes the interests of further education colleges in England and Wales.

⁵⁸ <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/word/p/1/INFORMATION—FOR—PARENTS—2008-9final-unhighlighted.doc>

⁵⁹ <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/assets/downloads/travel-discounts-for-children-teenagers-and-students.pdf>

⁶⁰ <http://www.sstp.org.uk/support.asp#sfc>

⁶¹ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/transport-to-sixth-form-and-college-faqs.htm#101>

⁶² <http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Transport%20Policy%20Statements%20for%20Learners%20Aged%2016%20-%202019%202007%E2%80%A6.pdf>

3.2.7 Passenger Focus is not recommending that all 16 to 19-year-olds should have free travel; however, we do feel that full-time students or pupils in that age group should not have to pay more than the equivalent child fare for rail journeys between home and their place of education, including when local authority boundaries may be crossed. However, simply offering concessions on rail fares alone could create further imbalance—eg not everyone has the opportunity to use rail to get to school. Hence to ensure fairness it would be important that rail and bus concessions were harmonised.

September 2008

Memorandum from Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority (ST 31)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

Introduction

1. The GMPTA is responsible for setting local transport policy and for deciding how funds are spent on supporting and improving Greater Manchester's public transport system. The GMPTE is responsible for implementing the policies and decisions of the GMPTA.

2. The Authority and Executive are pleased that the Committee has extended the scope of its investigation into school travel to cover travel for older children, and the impact of legal changes to the minimum school leaving age. This is an area with the Authority has previously expressed an interest and which we believe requires action from the Government.

3. The GMPTA currently funds a concessionary fare scheme for young people, which allows young people aged under 16 to travel at the reduced concessionary rate of 70 pence, and for young people under the age of 18 in full time education to travel at the concessionary fare on journeys to and from their place of education.

Executive Summary

- Transport is a factor limiting low-income parents from accessing the best school for their child.
- The Authority calls on the Committee to recommend the introduction of a national concessionary fare scheme for young people, based on that for elderly and disabled groups, as well as a national Yellow School Bus network, which would strengthen parental choice and support the take-up on higher and further education.
- The school run negatively impacts on the growth of the UK economy by increasing congestion, particularly in centres of economic activity. There is therefore an economic case for the introduction of long term funding of both concessionary travel schemes aimed at young people, and behaviour change programmes intended to change the way people think of and access transport.
- The provisions of the 1985 Transport Act, permitting authorities to make travel concession schemes for those aged under 18 in full time education will prove insufficient in the context of the Education and Skills Bill 2007.
- The introduction of the Diploma for 14–19 year olds will increase the number and complexity of school journeys, with serious implications for both passenger transport authorities and transport operators.

The provision of concessionary travel for young people

4. It is worth firstly re-stating the role of school transport in ensuring access to high quality education.

5. Recent Government policy has been predicated on the proposition that parental choice would lead to an increase in school quality; the need to attract new pupils and the threat that parents could remove existing pupils from their school would result in higher quality and more responsive school services. However, years of school place rationalisation have resulted in a 50% reduction in the number of spare secondary school places between 1994 and 2003. This has left many schools over-subscribed, and has led to the introduction of over-subscription criteria to select intake, often using proximity to the school as one of the criteria. As a result, property prices have increased within the catchments areas of the best schools, with better-off parents vying for these limited properties, and has led to a situation where less than 3% of pupils at the 200 top performing state secondary schools are entitled to free school meals, compared to a national average of 15%. The fact that moving house to be within these catchments areas is not possible for low-income limits real choice and continues to restrict the options open to less well off parents.

6. Widening parental choice in education increases the likelihood that they will choose schools that are further away or inconveniently located for public transport. Low-income parents may be unable to arrange transport for their child or to afford public transport fares even if the school is relatively near, meaning that regardless of the supposed choice of school, transport will continue to limit school choice, especially for the less well off. Whilst, according to a 2001 study for the DfES 85% of parents are able to send their child to their “favourite school”, the factors parents consider when choosing their “favourite” are closely linked to socio-economic class. Those living in social rented housing, for instance, are one and a half times more likely than owner-occupiers to choose a school based on travel convenience. Conversely, a school’s academic record is the main determinant for 48% of owner-occupiers, compared with only 32% of social renters.

7. The Authority believes that the Committee should recommend the introduction of a national concessionary travel scheme for young people, providing for a zero- or very low-cost fare which would radically improve access to education for those from low-income families and would prove a far more effective tool for increasing parental choice in education. The Authority has previously called for such a scheme, with a maximum 50 pence fare and the long term aspiration that this be completely free, and the creation of a national Yellow School Bus network. This would extend parental choice by de-coupling the link between location of school and ability to pay for public transport.

8. Greater Manchester currently has 36 of these specially designed buses, serving 22 schools in nine districts. Since the scheme was introduced in January 2003 with only three buses, it has proved very popular with parents, children and teachers. The buses are all fitted with three-point seatbelts, and children enjoy allocated seating, in addition, each bus had a dedicated driver assigned to it and children are required to abide by an acceptable behaviour contract.

9. It is estimated that this fleet of vehicles has reduced the number of car miles driven on Greater Manchester’s road by 265,000 per annum, contributing significantly to the achievement of Greater Manchester’s second Local Transport Plan modal shift and congestion reduction targets. This is precisely the type of initiative which parents want to see in place in order for them to consider abandoning the school run.

10. It is also worth noting the other significant benefit which Greater Manchester’s yellow bus scheme has brought about; a reduction in the number of reported anti-social behaviour incidents have reduced from 185 to 45 (a reduction of over 75%) between the last complete school year prior to introduction of each individual Yellow School Bus service and the 2006–07 school year. The sort of incidents reduced ranged from arson and vandalism to generally abusive behaviour and swearing.

11. Work carried out by the Sutton Trust in 2005 put the cost of a national yellow bus scheme at £184 million per annum, reduced to £124 million if existing subsidies were kept in place and just £83 million if parents were asked to pay 50 pence per journey. An assessment of the benefits this scheme could bring was estimated at £350 million a year in terms of lower vehicle costs and time savings, with another £100 million each year from environmental, safety and time improvements; all in all a very healthy cost ratio of almost 2.5:1.

12. The Yellow School Bus Commission, which produced its final report in September recommended a national Yellow School Bus network for all primary school children living more than one mile away from their school, and called for a phased and coordinated extension of the services over the next five years. The Commission put the cost of this at £154 million per annum at steady state. The Authority supports much of the recommendations of the YSB Commission and believes that its recommendations should be considered carefully.

13. It is also important that the Government’s Travel to School Initiative is taken account of. The introduction and implementation of School Travel Plans (STPs) have been shown to have a beneficial effect in attaining core government objectives on health, including the reduction of child obesity levels, congestion, and improving environmental standards.

14. Travel plan measures in schools and Further Education (FE) establishments help shape attitudes for the future, bring about behaviour change and instil positive travel habits in pupils, parents and school staff. At present this initiative is funded only up until April 2010, but it is vital the programme continues beyond this to support schools and FE establishments in encouraging sustainable travel, especially in our major cities and other centres of economic activity.

15. The Eddington Transport Study correctly identified congestion as a factor limiting the growth of the UK economy, and that measures to reduce congestion should be a priority for investment. The Authority therefore believes that there is an economic as well as social reasons to invest in concessionary travel and behaviour change programme.

Travel Options for those aged 16 to 19

The Education and Skills Bill 2007 places a duty on young people to participate in education or training until the age of 18. The eligible forms of education or training will be:

- appropriate full-time education or training;
- a contract of apprenticeship; or
- part-time education or training towards an accredited qualification as part of full-time occupation or alongside occupation of more than 20 hours a week.

16. This duty will apply to 17 year olds in 2012 and 18 year olds in 2013. The 1985 Transport Act enables local authorities to make travel concession schemes for, amongst others, those under 18 and in full time education; where authorities have used this provision to put a scheme in place there will inevitably be pressure to extend it to those continuing their education or training as a result of the Bill. The Government needs to consider this and to i) make primary legislation to allow travel concession authorities to make schemes for under-18s participating in apprenticeship or accredited part-time education and ii) where appropriate, make available sufficient funding for such a scheme to be viable.

17. Furthermore, it is the Government's aim, first outlined in the Leicht Review that 40% of the population should be educated to degree level by 2020 in order for the UK economy to have the world-class skill base necessary to compete internationally.

18. Clearly the Government attaches great importance to education, and its support for continuing further education is to be welcomed. But for young people to enjoy the benefits that education brings, they need to be able to access it in the first place, and this is not necessarily an easy task. Bus fares in PTE areas have increased by 97% since deregulation, compared with only 6% in London. Whereas most school children tend to travel short distances to school, or receive concessionary fares, young people entering further education usually do not receive travel discounts and often have to travel longer distances. Research carried out by the South Bank University in 1999 shows that around 20% of students have considered dropping out of further education because of financial difficulties, and that transport is the single biggest cost associated with post-16 education. The average annual education related transport expenditure was £371 for 16–18 year olds and this figure is likely to mask major inequalities nationally; research for the Commission for Rural Communities has suggested that whilst journeys in less urban areas tend to be longer, and services less frequent, concessionary fares schemes are less generous, available to fewer people, or have more conditions attached to them, reducing take-up.

The transport implications of the new Diploma for 14–19 year olds and the Government's target of increasing the proportion of 17 year olds in full-time education

19. Diplomas for 14–19 year olds will have a very significant impact on Passenger Transport Executives and their ability to provide travel concessions to young people.

20. The delivery of these diplomas will require complex journeys throughout the school day, with young people starting and ending the day at different schools, and making a range of journeys throughout the day. The new system will present severe difficulties for passenger transport authorities and bus operators, as it will be extremely difficult to plan how resources are to be allocated. Schools and colleges may experience major variations on a day-to-day basis of the number of pupils requiring public transport, and the pupils may be required to make complex journeys for which little provision has been made. The scheme will also place a strain on Yellow School Bus schemes, such as that run by the GMPTE, as these are predicated on children being allocated to specific vehicles from specific schools on a regular basis.

21. This is an area that the GMPTA believes the both the Government and Local Education Authorities need to re-examine closely, as we are not at all convinced that all of the issues are understood, and that steps to overcome them have been put in place. The Authority believes that the Department's for Transport and Children, Schools and Families should produce and consult on guidance setting out on how it anticipates school travel services will be provided.

September 2008

Memorandum from Ryedale Sixth Form Partnership in North Yorkshire (ST 32)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

- Widening participation and promoting retention through the broadening of the post 16 curriculum has significant implications for schools and colleges in rural areas.
- Some rural students are disadvantaged because of the distance they live from providers.
- Some are further disadvantaged by the cost of weekly lodging.

- Most will be disadvantaged as their “nearest providers” (usually their KS4 school) cannot provide the required access to all of the new diplomas. The Government suggests that partnership working is the only way to deliver the new curriculum. This adds distance and cost for the learner.
- Creative and integrated transport planning is possible and is currently in use but inclement weather and upland locations deem this option very difficult for learners in winter, especially when transport involves cycling or moped hire.
- Small schools of the type usually servicing rural areas cannot bear the cost of supporting the learner.
- Rural Local Authorities, despite recent improvements in finance, cannot support all learners on current funding levels.
- Grants to small rural sixth forms have been reduced and removed as the funding arrangements have changed.
- In short, the rural learner is seriously disadvantaged through a lack of “real” choice, costs and travel time.
- Rural Local Authorities should be further supported in their attempts to meet the demands of the new curriculum for their learners.
- Likewise rural schools should be supported as they attempt to use integrated transport and environmentally friendly solutions to get learners to school.

1.1 The Ryedale Sixth Form Partnership was established about 18 months ago. It comprises of four schools and an number of external providers including The Academy (Hair and Beauty) and Derwent Training Association (Engineering).

2.1 All four schools are Specialist Schools offering different specialisms. All four have enthusiastically grasped new educational initiatives despite rurality and financial demands. All are very successful with high CVA scores.

2.2 Lady Lumley’s School, Pickering, is an 11–18 mixed rural comprehensive on the north side of the Vale of Pickering with a catchment area that includes remote and isolated communities on the North Yorkshire Moors. Historically this school has provided a high quality education for its students and has always been high in the league tables for post 16 education. It has just invested significantly in the launch of the International Baccalaureate and in the development of the new Creative & Media Diploma (with Ryedale School). Lady Lumley’s is a Specialist Sports College and through its High Performing status is likely to apply to develop a second specialism in Modern Foreign Languages.

2.3 Malton School is a similar mixed rural comprehensive that serves the southern part of the Vale of Pickering and the Yorkshire Wolds for sixth form education. This school is the best non selective sixth form provider in North Yorkshire and consistently at the top part of the national league tables on “average points scores” for “A” levels. It is also best in North Yorkshire and in the second percentile nationally (Key Stage 2–3 CVA). Malton School is a Specialist Science College.

2.4 Norton College is a specialist school that changed its Technology specialism and was redesignated as an Humanities specialist school. In 2006 it achieved a second specialism in Applied Learning. Consequent to this, as a high performing school with Applied Learning, it used the sixth form presumption arrangements to launch a sixth form. This opened in September with a £5.4 million build and has attracted 134 new learners. The college is currently applying for Training School Status.

2.5 Ryedale School is a Leading Edge Lead School with a successful record of improving performance in neighbouring schools. It is an 11–16 mixed comprehensive with a success rate of 86% five A–C passes at GCSE (79% 5 A–C passes with Maths and English). It is a Specialist School in the field of Performing Arts and two of its teachers have been involved in developing the new Creative and Media Diploma. They are teaching this at Key Stage 4 and now teach Music Technology to post 16 students from two other schools in the partnership.

2.6 The Ryedale Sixth Form Partnership is the first to be established in North Yorkshire. The Schools are cooperatively and collaboratively working to provide learners with the broadest range of appropriate courses at all levels.

3.1 The partnership area covers over 600 square miles and is 35 miles from North West to South East with isolated communities being evident in the high moorland areas of the North Yorkshire Moors, the high Yorkshire Wolds and in the Vale of Pickering.

3.2 There is no single major transport artery that links this partnership. There are many single track roads and no significant stretches of dual carriageway.

3.3 Public transport is very limited. The railway line between York and Scarborough cannot be used to transport students within the partnership. Local bus routes are unhelpful. Small providers, for example the Post Bus, are helpful. So far, solutions to travel issues for “home to school” and movement during the school day from “home to host school” have been provided by a very helpful County Council. One school provides its own minibus to transport students from “home to school” at its own cost.

4.1 The main problem facing the launch of the partnership working has been the programming of transport for student movements.

4.2 North Yorkshire County Council assumed responsibility for “home to school” transport though the policy still identifies “school catchment” areas whereas the partnership schools would prefer an open catchment area where students in the whole catchment area could benefit from courses at all schools. Advanced level students are disadvantaged as there are two main providers. They can only be transported to the nearest, whereas an IB student, BTEC student or a Special Diploma student is transported from anywhere within the partnership catchment as there is only one provider.

4.3 Transport within the school day for students moving from their “home” school to a “host” school for teaching has also been assumed by the County Council.

4.4 The partnership schools could not afford the costs of their proposals so negotiations opened with the County Council. Expertise in transport planning has meant that over 50 learners now move to their lessons at a cost significantly lower than the original estimates. This has been achieved through the use of integrated transport mechanisms.

4.5 The partnership schools have reached an agreement to use twilight teaching if necessary, but it must be noted that this would only increase “after school travel costs”. So far solutions have been reached by using existing after school transport.

4.6 The County Council has been very helpful in transport planning and funding and there is a good working relationship between the partnership Director and Officers of the County Council. However, it must be borne in mind that next year double the number of students will be involved in movements and more Area Learning Partnerships will come on stream in North Yorkshire with a consequent rising demand for transport support and planning.

5.1 Collaborative work is well established in the Partnership at KS4 and KS5.

5.2 There is Joint Governance in place and an EIP group to plan for developments. IT solutions are being pursued through a common learning platform and video conference facilities in all four schools.

5.3 Collaborative success in delivering KS4 diplomas will support the advanced Creative & Media Diploma to start in 2009.

5.4 Collaboration extends to the disadvantaged learner through links with ROOSE (Ryedale Out of School Education) and Behavioural Panel. This is in effect offering all learners an opportunity to broaden their education.

6.1 Widening participation, improving retention, broadening opportunities and improving training and skills are worthy ambitions but to achieve them sensible financial and management arrangements are paramount.

6.2 Rural areas do need extra support and the Ryedale Sixth Form Partnership is willing to act as a Pilot area.

7.0 I urge your committee to consider further financial support to achieve the goals of the Government.

September 2008

Memorandum from NECTAR (Peter J Walker) (ST 33)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

As co-ordinator of NECTAR, I sent in a submission dated April 21st to the House of Commons Transport Committee, though in essence the remarks there were offered in a personal capacity, rather than on behalf of NECTAR as a whole.

For this extension of the inquiry’s scope, all members of NECTAR were invited to submit their views, and this answer to the additional questions is submitted now on behalf of them as well as from my own point of view.

SUMMARY OF OUR RESPONSES:

- (I) THE COMPARATIVELY FREE CHOICE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION LEADS TO EXCESSIVE NEED TO TRAVEL
- (II) DIPLOMAS HAVE NOT EXISTED FOR LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THEIR FULL TRAVEL IMPLICATIONS
- (III) CONCESSIONS TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE COULD REDUCE ROAD AND CAR USE SIGNIFICANTLY AS LONG AS THEIR SCALE WAS SUFFICIENTLY GENEROUS.

BACKGROUND STATEMENT:

NECTAR is an open, voluntary, umbrella body, established to provide a forum in which the many organisations with an interest in transport, in all its forms, can develop a co-ordinated view on contemporary transport issues. NECTAR provides opportunity for the exchange of news, studies, and information. The ensuing evidence is a result of this type of exchange, and is based mainly on the situations met within the North-East region.

DETAILED EVIDENCE, ARRANGED BY INQUIRY CATEGORY:

Travel options for students aged 16–19

Estimating the future nature of journeys made by students in this age-range is made extremely difficult by two main facts:

- (a) In this country, young people can pass their driving test at the age of 17, and hence (in comparatively-privileged cases) drive themselves to and from their place of study.

[It is worth mentioning here that, in France, for instance, the minimum driving age, 18, reduces significantly the number of self-driven students to and from all types of secondary educational establishment. Sadly, perhaps, no government in the UK is likely to raise the minimum driving age to 18 or even 19—but, equally, there is little doubt that such a utopian change, alone, would reduce road traffic associated with the wider take-up of post-16 educational opportunity very significantly nation-wide.]

- (b) Provision and location of further education institutions varies across the nation—and in most cases there are no zoning limits to go against an almost totally free choice of such institution on the part of 16–19 year olds.

Hitherto, some limit has been achieved by local authorities who will provide free or reduced-rate transport to those in the 16–19 bracket as long as their chosen institution lies within the authority boundaries. Now, with the announcement by, for instance, Northumberland's new unitary authority that such travel will be universally free of charge, the spectre of long-distance educational commuting arises—though at least it will, virtually by definition, take place on public transport or contract bus-services.

There is now also the likelihood, however, that local authorities' restored control over Sixth-form Colleges and other 16–19 institutions in their areas, may lead to a more restrictive line on financing the travel costs of those living far away from their chosen place of study.

Transport and travel implications of the new Diploma for 14–19 year olds

All who have looked into this in their various local authority areas are unanimous in the view that it is much too early to say what difference the introduction of these diploma courses will make. Those that have begun this September are essentially pilot schemes: even the AQA exam board is only now advertising for senior personnel to administer the first round of diploma exams; and even where local authorities are confident that they have worked out how different schools will share the task of providing courses for each variety of diploma envisaged, the full scale of pupil (and staff) exchanges between/among nearby schools is at best provisional and, at worst, dependent on more negotiations in the coming months, often against theoretically separate proposals to combine and/or reduce secondary school provision generally.

We are sure that Stockton-on-Tees borough, for instance, is in no way unique in already holding extensive public consultations with the aim of 'streamlining' their 11–16+ school networks (and, in effect, increasing pupils' need to travel, whether diploma manoeuvrings are involved or not). Northumberland schools have for some time been moving from a 3-tier system to 2 tiers, with all the attendant closure and modification proposals county-wide, and changed pupil and staff travel requirements stemming from these.

In short, it is as yet impossible usefully to say how far these new Diplomas will affect pupils' travel as an element in the national travel statistics. But it is clear that educational travel patterns will not remain as they are now.

 PROVISION OF CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE MORE GENERALLY

The main point to be made here is that, provided that the concessions are sufficiently generous financially, and the public transport on which they apply sufficiently frequent and convenient, extended provision of this sort could do a lot to reduce students' thirst for their own cars from the day they turn 17. We as a transport activists' round table support such ideas whole-heartedly. But if they are to be effective, they need a guarantee that the public transport operators will receive adequate recompense for carrying young people at reduced or no charge; and, in the continuing de-regulated public transport system, there would seem to exist a worrying risk that some areas of the country would provide fewer concessions to young people than others, or even none at all, without such financial under-writing.

That concludes our additional submission to the House of Commons Transport Committee. But, before signing off, may I say that it is very encouraging for us to see that this committee has recognised at such an early stage that current changes in the nature of the nation's education might have far-reaching effects on the scale and the type of demands placed on roads and on transport operators.

We are very heartened that the committee is trying, in effect, to meet "educational" transport problems before they grow to an insoluble level, rather than pretending that patterns of road use and bus/tram/train patronage will remain exactly the same throughout the United Kingdom regardless of any changes to our schools and colleges in the future. We are only sorry that we do not feel that many useful conclusions on this general subject can yet be reached.

September 2008

Memorandum from National Union of Students (ST 34)
SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE
Introduction

1. As the national body that represents all affiliated students' unions in both the higher and further education sectors, the National Union of Students (NUS) represents over seven million students across the UK.

2. NUS' involvement in the further education sector is both through our affiliated students' unions' local activity in their colleges, and as a national stakeholder, devising means to develop an effective strategic input into monitoring the effectiveness of national policy on further education, and simultaneously, supporting the learner voice in local colleges.

Summary

3. NUS welcomes the extension of scope of the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into school travel to examine travel options for students aged 16 to 19, including those studying at sixth-form colleges and further education colleges, the travel implications of the 14–19 diplomas, and the Government's target of increasing the proportion of 17 year olds in full-time education.

4. NUS believes that, in light of the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007, changes to patterns of participation in education, and the rising cost of travel, a thorough review of travel concessions for 16–19 year old learners is required to ensure that students are not restricted in their choices for education and training.

5. The timing of the inquiry is particularly timely for NUS as we are currently conducting research into the costs of further education, including transport, which is due to be published in November 2008.

Background

6. The legislation covering concessionary fares in England and Wales was amended by the Transport Act 2000. From June 2001, local authorities were obliged to provide pensioners and people with disabilities with half fare concessions on local bus travel. In April 2006, this was extended to free off-peak travel on buses inside the individual's local authority area. The Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007 provided that everyone aged 60 and over in England, and disabled people in England, would get free off peak travel on all local buses anywhere in England from April 2008. The previous statutory entitlement allows these groups to travel for free, but only on buses within their local authority area.

7. Local authorities have long had discretion to offer further concessions on bus and other public passenger transport services. This discretionary power to offer discounts to children and young people was preserved by the Concessionary Bus Travel Act 2007. However, NUS is concerned that the lack of sufficient funding to meet new, additional compulsory concessions will inevitably impact upon concessionary travel schemes for young people and students, as and where they exist.

8. NUS supported the aims of the Concessionary Bus Travel Bill, and its provisions for older people and people with disabilities. However, we were concerned and remain concerned that the statutory obligations for these extended discounts, coupled with a merely discretionary power to offer discounts to young people will inevitably lead local authorities to reconsider existing discounts of this type, and provide a disincentive for further concessions to be offered.

Rising Costs

9. The cost of public transport has risen considerably over the last 25 years, with 2005 bus and coach fares 42% higher in real terms than those in 1980. Meanwhile, the overall cost of motoring has remained at or below its 1980 level in real termsⁱ. Relative increases in the cost of bus travel have had a disproportionate effect upon young people, and students from the poorest households are most likely to suffer, since they have least access to a car and are more likely to rely on buses to meet their travel needsⁱⁱ.

Current Concessions

10. In its October 2006 report, a House of Commons Transport Select Committee report “Bus Services across the UK” branded the concessionary fares system in England “a mess”ⁱⁱⁱ. The Transport Select Committee also noted that concessions for those in full-time education might cut the numbers of 17–25 year olds who learn to drive and buy a car as soon as possible^{iv}. Witnesses informed the Select Committee that the introduction of concessionary fares had encouraged more pensioners to use the bus and had increased bus use by between 20 and 100% on some routes^v.

11. NUS believes that if young people are encouraged to use public transport at an early stage, positive habits will be developed and the incentive to buy or use a car will be reduced. Meanwhile, greater use of buses and other public transport will be a crucial way to tackle climate change. As the Select Committee noted, “A good experience using buses when young could also influence travel choices later in life”^{vi}. NUS endorses this recommendation and further believes that future policy on travel options must have regard to the long-term impact engraining this behaviour among young people would have on access to education and employment, as well as on attempts to tackle climate change.

12. The current system of discretionary travel discounts leads to a situation whereby some 16–19 learners are offered discounts. However, NUS is concerned that the current system encourages inconsistency in the provision of discounts, which are inevitably based upon political and bureaucratic specificities within local areas. This also presents difficulties for those students who live and study across different local authority boundaries, and could impact upon their educational choices. NUS believes consistency in travel provision requires consistency across local authorities, which would require joined-up schemes; sub-regionally, regionally, or nationally.

Accessing Education and Training

13. Young people often find it difficult to access opportunities for education and training. Six per cent of all 16–24 year-olds turn down training or further education opportunities because of problems with transport^{vii}. This is particularly concerning given attempts both to increase the number of 17 year olds in education by raising the education and training leaving age, introducing 14–19 diplomas, and expanding apprenticeships. While NUS supports many of these measures, it is vital that transport costs and infrastructure are considered as part of changes in the patterns of participation in 16–19 education. If all young people are to be offered a variety of opportunities and educational routes, it is important that the variability of travel concessions is not a central consideration to their future decisions, or a barrier to fulfilling their aspirations and ambitions.

Living and Work Costs

14. An increase in financial pressures has led the number of students in paid employment to increase. Between 1996 and 2006 the number of full-time students of all age groups who supported themselves through paid employment grew by 54%^{viii}. This often requires students to travel long distances to work in order to keep their personal finances stable, and which is a cost added to distances travelled to access education and training. It is important that any assessment of travel requirements also acknowledges the fact that those who study locally may travel long distances in order to support themselves through work.

15. TUC research shows that the pressure of rising travel costs largely affects young people and those on low incomes^{ix}. Indeed, 25% of young people aged 16–25 had not applied for a particular job in the preceding 12 months because of the transport costs involved^x.

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 September 2008

Supplementary memorandum from National Union of Students (ST 34A)

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Transport Select Committee on behalf of the National Union of Students (NUS).

Further to my appearance at the Committee and following our discussions, I have enclosed further information about the impact of travel costs for students in the 16–19 category.

To this end, I have enclosed the NUS EMA Satisfaction Survey 2008 and the Learning and Skills Network/NUS Report⁶³—The true cost of college, 2008. The latter document has been published just today.

I would like to take this opportunity to identify the key aspects of these documents that will be of interest to the Committee.

1. EMA SATISFACTION SURVEY

This survey asked if their weekly education maintenance allowance (EMA) payment covered their essential learning costs; 45% of the respondents felt that it did not. However, this could be an underestimation as 60% of those aged under 19 in our survey undertook paid work, 42% of whom worked more than 10 hours a week.

2. LEARNING AND SKILLS NETWORK/NUS HIDDEN COSTS OF FE SURVEY 2008

This survey shows that almost 35% of learners under 19 had considered dropping out for financial reasons. Meanwhile, over 45% of respondents spent between £11 and £50 per week on transport.

I also mentioned evidence relating to transport problems. According to research conducted in 2003 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, entitled “Making the Connections”, 13% of people said they have not applied for a particular job in the preceding 12 months because of transport problems. However, this figure rose to 18% for people living in low-income areas, and 25% for young people aged 16–25.

NUS believes that new research must be conducted on the difficulties for young people in accessing education due to a lack of transport provision, particularly in light of the introduction of 14–19 diplomas, expansion of apprenticeships, and proposals to raise the education and leaving age.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Transport Select Committee.

Beth Walker

November 2008

⁶³ Not printed as these reports already in public domain.

Memorandum from the Association of School and College Leaders (ST 36)

SCHOOL TRAVEL—EXTENSION OF SCOPE

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represent 14,000 members of the leadership teams of maintained and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. This places the association in a unique position to respond from the viewpoint of the leaders of both secondary schools and colleges.

2. ASCL welcomed the school transport provisions of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requiring local authorities to assess students' travel and transport needs, extending entitlement to free transport and enabling local authorities to test innovative approaches to transport.

3. Transport to school and college is a complex matter; efficiency arguments favour a coordinated approach across an area rather than devolving all funds to institutional level. That is essentially the approach taken in the 2006 Act (and earlier acts) in locating the responsibility with the local authority (LA).

However, there remain a number of difficulties:

4. Travel to learn areas are not contiguous with local authority boundaries. The large size of some authorities is not a problem, as different plans can be adopted for different districts. But where authorities are small, and near boundaries, travel to learn areas may cross LA boundaries.

5. Local authorities do not always cooperate well with their neighbours, and in some cases there is a reluctance to set up systems that will encourage young people to travel outside their LA of residence for their education, even when this would be their preference, give them an education better suited to their needs, or allow them a shorter journey.

6. In metropolitan areas where public transport is good this may be less of a problem, as there may be little need for dedicated school or college transport. In rural areas, and in cases where young people need to travel to a market town or city despite poor or absent public transport, the lack of suitable provision can severely limit their choice of school or college.

7. In some cases there is a similar problem attached to organisational rather than geographical boundaries. Some leaders of incorporated colleges, foundation schools, voluntary schools and academies complain that the pattern of transport adopted by the local authority favours "its" schools.

8. Faith schools that are more sparsely distributed than other schools need a longer average journey for their pupils, and do not always feel well supported by the LA (especially as they are often aided schools—see paragraph 7). On the other hand there is a perception from others that parents whose adherence to the faith may be tenuous (or non-existent) have gained an unfair advantage once their child has been admitted to such a school.

9. Post 16, leaders of colleges often complain the LA systems are set up to take young people to LA owned schools with sixth forms but not to colleges that are seen as competing with them. Clearly, if there is a bus running to take younger pupils to school it will often also be able to carry sixth formers, whereas students attending a college located elsewhere may need separate transport. However, there are instances of refusal to carry students even where colleges are located close to schools or where public transport would allow the journey to be completed (see paragraph seven).

10. Raising the participation age to 17 and 18 and increasing the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds in full-time education both have implications for transport. There is a pareto effect here: those young people who are currently not in education or employment with training are by definition those most resistant, and will be those most difficult to persuade into regular attendance. If their journey is long and hard, or if they are forced to opt for provision that is nearby rather than provision that suits their needs and preferences, some of them will not attend.

11. The introduction of diplomas also places extra burdens on transport budgets. There is an explicit promise to extend the range of options available to young people to include 17 new diploma lines in addition to existing provision. This will usually require partnerships of a number of schools and colleges. For 14–16 year olds there will often be a need for transport between sites during the day, or transport to different sites on different days. Post-16 the pattern may be similar, or else young people may need to be able to attend full-time at a more distant college or school in order to have their choice of course.

12. I attach as an annex one college's experience of 16–19 travel issues, prepared by Derek Bodey, Principal of Saint Brendan's Sixth Form College in Bristol and Chair of the ASCL Learning and Skills Committee. As arranged, Derek will give oral evidence on 15 October 2008.

13. I hope that this is of value to your inquiry, ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

September 2008

A COLLEGE'S EXPERIENCE OF TRANSPORT

14. St Brendan's serves a wide catchment area, of 20 miles radius. It has worked hard to create a "sustainable student body" in terms of their journeys to college.

15. A recent survey showed the following approximate breakdown of transport choices:

- 10% walk
- 10% cycle
- 8% car use
- 3% car share
- 55% public transport
- 14% college coach

16. We are fortunate that the local bus company has chosen to offer "student tickets" which offer not only a flat fare within the region for journeys to college but also travel rights at other times. To access this, the student has to purchase a "student ID card" for a one off cost of £10. A weekly ticket offering seven days travel across four unitary authorities (with part of a fifth) in the Bristol/Bath area costs £15.80. Annual tickets offer better value for money and are available from the bus company by monthly direct debit.

17. To encourage use, we subsidise it so students actually pay £14.00. We believe that such a student ticket should be provided at significantly reduced cost to ensure that choice is genuinely available, as diplomas are introduced, to encourage delayed car ownership, and to develop positive attitudes to, and the habit of, using public transport.

18. This commercial decision by the bus company providing a large majority of the routes has assisted the growth of student choice; travel time being the only disincentive. However, we believe students would be best served if it covered the minority operators as well. Nonetheless, it provides a model that we would urge to be made compulsory in all areas.

19. The college provides coaches from those areas of its catchment where public transport access is limited or awkward. This is an expensive option for all parties. It costs students approximately twice the cost of the public service without the advantages of use. This is after the college has provided a subsidy of approximately 50%. Some of these coaches could be avoided if the student tickets applied to minority contractors.

20. We have students who would use rail travel if the ticketing system was integrated. Even though the operator of both services in the area is the same company, there is no through ticketing system that incorporates rail and bus. We believe that there should be a locally supplied, national student system that does this.

21. Students with special needs in particular can suffer significantly reduced choice. Saint Brendan's serves local authorities that will provide assisted travel to "out of authority" colleges for vocational options but not for A levels, even though the student has made the choice of provider and, often, a programme not available at a closer institution. Sometimes help is simply refused. This is an area where responsibilities are unclear in practice: they to be clarified for these learners to receive the same opportunities and choices as others.

22. Changed guidance to colleges on the use of learner support funds has left us bemused. We serve authorities that make no transport arrangements for students over 16, some of whom suffer from significant economic hardship and are supported from college learner support funds. This might be interpreted as subsidising the local authority. Colleges have been placed in an invidious position. It should be resolved by requiring authorities (in sensible clusters) to ensure that affordable, effective, integrated transport is available to all 16–18 year olds.

Memorandum from The Commission for Rural Communities (ST 37)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Commission for Rural Communities welcomes this opportunity to offer evidence on the wider issues surrounding concessionary fares for young people and travel to schools in rural areas.

This commentary is based on a study by the TAS Partnership Ltd carried out in 2005⁶⁴. The research aimed to establish the extent of current fare concessions for young people across England making a comparison of the current situation in rural and urban areas, and examining any differences. The study also attempted to identify the most appropriate type and scope of concessionary fares that should be implemented in rural areas.

⁶⁴ See also the Executive Summary report "Concessionary Fares for Young People in Rural Areas" (August 2005) available on the Commission for Rural Communities website : www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk

2. RESEARCH ON CONCESSIONARY FARES COVERAGE IN RURAL ENGLAND

Buses are an important mode of travel for people aged 16–18, as young people gain independence but have yet to acquire driving qualifications. Across Great Britain, 16 and 17 year olds used the bus for one journey in six, making on average 174 bus journeys each year⁶⁵, but this figure shows a rapid fall from the age 18.

Public transport and its cost ranked highly among problems identified by young people, as highlighted in a 2004 report by the UK Youth Parliament⁶⁶.

Variations in concessionary fares provision were analysed to determine whether there were differences in how they affect district council areas, which were defined as rural (124 districts), urban (121) or “mixed” (108) using Defra’s classification system. Our analysis showed that those living in rural areas, compared to urban districts, had:

- A higher percentage of districts where full fare was paid from 14 years of age (5% rural against 2% urban).
- A lower percentage of districts where concessions were available beyond 16 years of age (17% rural against 31% urban).
- More districts (39% rural against 8% urban) receiving only a 33% discount, while a higher proportion of urban districts (65%) saw 50% concessions given.
- Only one rural district with a flat fare scheme in operation, which generally offered better than 50% discount, against 26% of urban districts.
- 6% of rural districts with an inconsistent concession offered; ie varying between 33% and 50%.
- A lower percentage of districts (24% rural against 60% urban) that required any form of ID to prove entitlement to concessionary fares (especially for 16–18 year olds) linked to a lesser availability of concessions for this age group.
- More districts (40% rural against 25% urban) with time restrictions imposed on the availability of concessions, both in the morning peak and, to a lesser extent, late evening.

These results indicated that young people living in rural areas of England were more disadvantaged in their access to reduced bus fares by comparison to those in urban districts. This was in addition to the average fare payable for rural bus journeys being higher than for urban areas, due mainly to the greater average trip length of five miles, as against three miles for urban trips, and higher average fares per mile on many rural services. This can act as a barrier to young people wishing to attend, for example, education and training, and also hinder access to other services. Reliable, affordable transport is also essential for social activities, vital to the well being of any group of young people.

Current transport concessions in rural areas

The most common level of concession, applying to about 55% of all districts, was for a 50% discount on cash fares, although in some 28% of districts children received only 33% discount. In 7% of districts, different or mixed discount levels applied, while in 10% a flat fare was offered.

The situation relating to multi-journey or season tickets was complex—while many of these were offered at equivalent discounts, and some were more generous, there were many areas where no discounts were offered to young people against adult season ticket prices. Of schemes available on taxis or community transport at the time, only one taxi token scheme was identified (in Mid Bedfordshire), and one community minibus operation (in Leighton Buzzard).

In 75% of districts, concessions were available to children up to their 16th birthday, but there remained 13 districts where child discounts ceased at age 14. In the remainder, concessions were valid, at least to those in full-time education, until 18 years of age.

Most concessions for young people were provided commercially by the operators, but with no compensation from public funding. A 2001–02 survey⁶⁷ reported only 14 formal schemes funding concessions for those aged under 16, involving only 4% of rural districts. Nonetheless, we estimated that over £40 million was paid each year in reimbursement for concessionary fares schemes for young people—over 90% of which was attributable to the six metropolitan Passenger Transport Authority areas.

⁶⁵ from National Travel Surveys, 1992–2001 (source: Dept. for Transport)

⁶⁶ “Transport, Young People and Rural Areas” (Defra, 2004)

⁶⁷ Survey of local authorities and PTAs “Concessionary Fares UK 2003” (TAS, 2003)

Support for the concept of fare concessions

The research team consulted with 16 organizations having an interest in young people, transport and rural development and found general support for fare concessions and the need to adopt a standard, national approach. Whilst this was seen as helping to encourage greater and continuing use of buses by young people, with economic and environmental benefits, the consensus was that it would contribute more to social inclusion than to a shift in modes of transport, for example reduced car use. Attention was also drawn to the availability of services as an equally important issue, and it was suggested that concessionary fares should equally apply to community transport.

The most common view was that concessions should apply to all up to age 16, and also to those continuing in education up to 18. A totally different approach suggested by some consultees was that eligibility should be related to economic status rather than age, so that young people would start to pay adult fares once they entered paid employment.

However, there was doubt about how extended concessions might be achieved and funded. It was generally felt that a formal, publicly funded scheme was necessary and would achieve the widest impact and benefits. While contributions from users or from business and learning providers were suggested, there were fears that a wholly commercially based extension of concessions would result in higher fares (and therefore disbenefit) to other passengers. Support was greatest for a national, centrally funded scheme.

Recommendations on concessionary fares

The CRC concluded that:

- The potential benefits of young persons' concessions should be promoted to relevant local authorities, with the aim of encouraging the inclusion of local schemes.
- There is a strong case for the standardisation of concessionary fares for young people in England outside London, to encompass:
 - free travel for accompanied children under the age of five years;
 - travel at half the adult fare (or, where appropriate, a standard flat fare giving an equivalent or better concession) for:
 - a) all children from age 5 until 31 August following their 16th birthday, and
 - b) young people not in full-time employment from age 16 until 31 August following their 18th birthday, or following their 19th birthday if they are continuing on a further education course;
 - purchase of multi-journey or period tickets, except where they are purchased by a local authority or the Learning and Skills Council to meet a statutory requirement—viz. free home-to-school transport or LSC-funded travel to training;
 - consideration should also be given to extending the concession to all other young people up to age 18, in view of their exclusion from the national minimum wage.
 - Such standardisation needs to be pursued in view of the particular benefits to young rural residents. Local authorities should be encouraged to secure these benefits with necessary funding. However, for practicality and equity any standard should be applied equally across the whole country.
 - Such a national scheme should be devised in consultation with operators' and local government representatives, and funded and administered by central government. It is estimated this might cost about £120 million per year (in 2006). Consideration should be given to the effects on funding allocations for learner support through the LSC, from which it may be possible to recover some contribution towards the cost of the scheme.
 - Local authorities would be able to enhance the standard scheme both within and to or from their areas, but with the additional costs and administration being their responsibility. In particular, they should consider the need to support community transport or taxi-based solutions for young people who are remote from bus services.
 - The government should reinforce the existing legislation⁶⁸ and guidance to Local Education Authorities and local transport authorities (which are often the same), to ensure that they take a coherent corporate approach to the provision and funding of services and concessions for education and public transport, especially in rural areas. This should include review of the effectiveness of the post-16 education transport partnership model and the transportation effects of the Education Maintenance Allowance, in the light of experience.

These should draw on the substantial body of existing good practice, and other resources such as the TravelWise network.

⁶⁸ Section 88 of the Transport Act 1985 and Section 110 of the Transport Act 2000

Conclusions

There is clear evidence that young people in rural areas are at a disadvantage when compared with their urban counterparts:

- the average discount is lower,
- more time restrictions are applied (especially for travel to school), and
- more people have to pay full fares from a lower age.

Added to the average rural journey being longer, and so the fares paid being higher, service levels are generally inferior and it appears perverse that it is young people in the metropolitan areas who almost exclusively benefit from current concessionary fare schemes, accounting for 90% of current public funding in this area.

Despite operators maintaining most child concessions commercially, many face growing cost pressures to review the level and/or times of validity for such discounts, especially where these impinge on large-scale home-to-school movements (which now form the backbone of much of the peak bus travel demand).

We emphasise the critical importance of the relationship with education transport, which underpins many rural bus services and often helps to determine operators' commercial attitude to concessions. The recent introduction of post-16 transport partnerships has led to some new student concession schemes, often replacing previously free transport offered to a more restricted group. We feel that local authorities should deal with these issues in a coherent and corporate way, overriding narrow departmental budget interests, with co-operation from the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) and colleges.

Discounted fares for young people can be shown to deliver benefits in social inclusion⁶⁹ and transportation terms. Although our consultees laid more emphasis on the social aspects, the results of the "Low Fare Card" experiments in West Sussex⁷⁰ between 1997 and 2001, and more recent "yellow school bus" projects, have demonstrated that substantial modal shift can be achieved away from cars to more sustainable modes. While some of this can be achieved by marketing alone, the price advantage offered by fare concessions provides powerful incentives to sustained bus use, together with social, health and environmental benefits.

Such subsidies can increase the independence of young people, who do not generally decide their home locations. Meanwhile, increasing rural bus patronage will also help to sustain a network that has been under increasing cost pressures in recent years.

3. MORE GENERAL COMMENTS ON SCHOOLS TRAVEL IN RURAL AREAS

There are many aspects of the provision of transport to school that are different to urban areas, and which, put together, imply that a different approach to schools travel may be necessary in rural areas. The key differences can be summarised as:

- A larger proportion of children in rural areas live more than three miles from the nearest school (two miles for primary schools) making the provision required proportionally greater per head of population. In addition, many rural Local Authorities feel it is necessary to provide transport for those nearer than two, or three miles, on grounds of safety, where children need to travel along narrow or busy roads. Many rural Local Authorities spend considerably more on schools transport provision than they do on supporting public transport.
- This pressure on spend means that many schools services double up as regular bus services. Cuts or changes to schools transport provision could impact on regular bus services in many areas.
- The demands for schools journeys tend to be much more dispersed than in urban areas, since the population is more dispersed. As a result, away from the larger villages, much provision is by taxis, and by taxi operators providing minibuses for transport. A consequence of this has been that there is a large amount of anecdotal evidence of difficulty in other people being able to use taxis in rural areas at school journey times.
- While congestion caused by the "school run" is a major factor behind calls for "yellow bus" schemes in urban areas, the general lack of congestion in rural areas, combined with more dispersed population means that such schemes would probably not attract the demand that they would in rural areas, and the costs of provision would probably be higher.

⁶⁹ As identified in "Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion" (ODPM, 2003)

⁷⁰ Offering quarter fares, supported by creative marketing and some enhanced home-to-school services

The tension between choice in education and the provision of transport

Qualitative research carried out by CRC in 2006 on choice in secondary education in rural areas found that parents were more concerned that their local school was of high quality, than having an effective choice of schools. This is probably affected by the greater distances to schools, and a corresponding lack of desire for their children to have to travel (by any means) to a more distant school. Hence the choice of parents tended to be to see the local school run well, but a feeling that expanded potential choice of schools in rural areas would not in itself create better schools.

Suggestions have been made to provide free transport to a choice of schools (within two and six miles) for those eligible for free school meals, rather than the current transport to the nearest school (over three miles) for all pupils. While we cannot comment on that proposal in an urban context, it would seem that the implications for rural areas imply that it is not a sensible option. Firstly, for many there would be a very limited choice within six miles. Secondly, the implications for the already dispersed school travel demands would place a heavier burden on a taxi industry that struggles to cope with the current demand. Finally, the school buses that currently double up as regular bus services could become less viable, leading to a reduction in the provision of rural public transport.

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