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BestPractice



A guide on travel plans for developers

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About this guide

The purpose of this guide is to help organisations involved in existing or new developments to understand the implications of the growing number of travel plans being introduced. The guide aims to demonstrate the benefits of making sustainable travel elements an integral part of their proposal.

This is one of a series of guides published by TransportEnergy to provide advice to organisations to promote the use of sustainable transport.

This guide will be of most use to:

- > property developers
- > site managers
- > planners
- > architects
- > engineers and designers
- > consultants
- > local planning officers

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- > Institution of Civil Engineers
- > Institute of Highways and Transportation
- > Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland
- > Institute of Purchase and Supply

What is a travel plan?

A travel plan is a strategy for managing all travel and transport within an organisation. It seeks to improve access to a site or development by sustainable modes of transport. A travel plan contains both physical and behavioural measures to increase travel choices and reduce reliance on single-occupancy car travel. Organisations that introduce travel plans for their staff, students or visitors are able to reduce congestion, pollution and the demand for parking spaces. Many travel plans have already been implemented, but the next few years will see the rate of introduction of new plans increase as legislation enforces greater choice in transport.

Travel plans are relevant to any developments irrespective of sector and are principally designed to increase choice and reduce reliance on the car. They also assist in managing the transport needs of an organisation. They are being introduced predominantly for journeys to or from work, or for journeys made during the course of the working day. They involve the introduction of incentives to staff to change their mode of travel, such as discounts or interest-free loans for rail, buses and bikes. Often organisations employ a 'carrot and stick' approach; not only encouraging positive modes of transport but also discouraging car use by either restricting access or increasing the costs to the user.

At the centre of successful travel planning is partnership. By working in partnership with other organisations and businesses, including local planning authorities and public transport operators, it is possible to design and build sites that reduce reliance on the car and provide real alternative transport choices to a site.

There are a range of guides that provide detailed information on the benefits of travel plans and how to develop and implement a plan within an organisation. Please see under 'Sources of information' for further details.

The role of developers and related professions

Why you should be involved

The number of businesses implementing travel plans is increasing. This will continue as local authorities pursue traffic reduction targets and the Government sustainable transport policies set out in the 'Transport ten year plan of 2000' and the 'Future of transport' White Paper published in 2004. New developments will find it difficult to gain planning permission unless there are substantial elements of sustainable transport proposals included. It therefore makes good business sense to be aware of what this involves in order to keep ahead of competitors.

Travel plans can produce many benefits for organisations such as:

- > reducing congestion and air pollution
- > widening accessibility of the site and buildings

- > improving road safety on and near their sites
- > preserving valuable land and avoiding the costs of providing too much parking
- > improving the amenity of the area around their buildings
- > supporting staff retention and recruitment
- > promoting the corporate social responsibility (CSR) credentials of the organisation

You are in a position to help realise these benefits for your customers through a development that facilitates and encourages alternatives to single-occupancy car travel.

Travel demand is inextricably bound up with land use. Therefore, this guide is designed for developers, architects, planners and engineers, all of whom are aware of the established requirements for energy efficient buildings, but may not be so aware of the transport consequences of new developments. The principal areas that can be addressed are:

- > location of the development
- > density, scale and mix of land uses
- > design and layout of the development

Travel plans and the development control process

Current Government policy (Planning Policy Guidance note 13 on transport - PPG13) indicates that local planning authorities can require planning applications to be accompanied by a travel plan:

- > for all major developments comprising jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services
- > for smaller developments comprising jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services which would generate significant amounts of travel in or near to Air Quality Management Areas. This would also apply in locations where there are local initiatives or targets set out in the development plan or local transport plan to reduce road traffic or promote public transport, walking and cycling. This particularly applies to offices, industry, health and education uses
- > for new and expanded school facilities, where a school travel plan should be implemented to promote safe cycle and walking routes, restrict parking and car access at and around schools, and include on-site changing and cycle storage facilities
- > where a travel plan would help address a particular local traffic problem associated with a planning application, which might otherwise have to be refused on local traffic grounds

However, PPG13 goes on to state that 'unacceptable development should never be permitted because of the existence of a travel plan'.



Location of development

Many local authorities are concerned that local economies have suffered as a result of out of town or edge of town retailing, traditional high streets have seen business decline. Coupled with this, car dependency has increased, and those people in the community who cannot drive are unable to access services and are placed at a disadvantage, and can suffer social exclusion.

As a result, local authorities are increasingly looking favourably at development locations that are well served by public transport. This often means locating developments close to town centres rather than on the town periphery. At the same time, there is emphasis on reduced levels of parking associated with development and legislation now gives local authorities powers to levy charges on parking spaces - known as the workplace parking levy.

The professions involved in development should be aware of the new policy context and be prepared to take advantage of the positive aspects of sites located in, for example, regeneration areas, which can be conveniently linked to nearby public transport. Within the context set by PPG13, transport interchanges offer ideal locations for office, leisure and retail development, due to their excellent public transport facilities.

Industrial and distribution enterprises could consider locating close to rail links. Even when a firm's operations are mainly road-based, travel plans can have a role to play for permanent on-site staff. In addition, when considering new developments, proximity to suppliers and customers could have a significant impact on operations that, in turn, could reduce the amount of freight mileage and empty running.

For housing development approvals, similar criteria apply. Local authorities will be looking for proposals that maximise the potential for residents and visitors to use available public transport, walk or cycle, or for the site to sustain new or improved transport services. The location of new housing in relation to employment, schools, shops and hospitals will be an important influence of travel demand. Furthermore, local authorities can use planning agreements to put in place improved public transport facilities and walking and cycling routes, or improve existing facilities where there is very little at present. Other measures may relate to the provision of comprehensive walking, cycling and public transport information and membership of a local car club.

Density and mix of land uses

By allowing higher density development near to good quality public transport, and mixing development uses, it is possible to reduce travel by private car. Mixed development, combining shops, commercial development and housing, can reduce the length of journeys and the need to drive, and encourage walking and cycling. The provision of 'metro' type convenience shops at transport hubs enables people to shop on the way home from work, reducing the need to make a separate trip.

Design and layout of development

The layout of a development needs to be amenable to the use of alternatives to single-occupancy car travel. This requires, for example, careful detailed design to ensure that pedestrians can take the shortest possible route on paths that are pleasant to use. Similarly, careful attention should be given to convenience, access and safety for cyclists.

Business

Generally, the site layout should favour non-car users where the buildings are closer to the highway, and therefore to bus stops, footpaths and cycle routes, rather than being located at the rear of a large parking area. Special parking spaces can be set aside for those employees that share a car, or car pool, and similarly cycle parking areas can be located close to building entrances and accessed, where possible, by separated and direct cycle ways.

School development

Safety considerations should be at the forefront of design and layout in order to give parents and teachers the confidence to encourage children to walk or cycle to school. Consideration should be given to providing bus bays and turning spaces to improve safety for children walking between bus stops and school.

Housing development

New schemes will be designed with less car parking and designers should consider providing cycle parking for both residents and visitors. Bus routes within developments should be set out to minimise journey time in comparison to car journeys.

Secure cycle parking should be considered in all types of development, including housing.

Engaging with the planning process

Where travel plans are produced as part of an application for planning permission, developers can take several steps to smooth and speed up the process.

Firstly, it is important to understand the role of travel plans as an integral aspect of addressing access issues within the planning process, and not to treat this simply as an add-on. Costings for preparing and implementing a travel plan should be included in project budgets.



It is also key to become familiar from the outset with both the national policy context and also the local context - this can help prevent mistakes that could cause delays and additional costs. Relevant national policy documents are listed in 'Sources of information' (at the back of this guide), whilst local policy documents to bear in mind could include any of the following:

- > local plan
- > local transport plan
- > green transport strategy
- > air quality management plan
- > parking standards and/or strategy
- > supplementary planning guidance
- > development control manual

Good communication is essential for effective implementation. Developers should identify a single person, with a relevant background, to be the first point of contact. This person should contact the relevant local authority early on in the process and maintain contact about the progress of the project, significant dates for work and for occupation of the site.

It is also important to consult with local businesses, a local travel plan forum or network and TravelWise contacts, as this can highlight potential benefits such as ways of sharing costs. In addition, co-ordination with public transport operators, other businesses and developers can lead to joint initiatives such as joint travel discount schemes, joint monitoring and shared travel plan co-ordinators.

Finally, collecting relevant information about the likely transport characteristics of a development (perhaps using similar sites as a benchmark) will help determine what needs to be included in the travel plan. Presenting this data in a format, which is standardised and easily comparable, is likely to speed up the process.

The characteristics of new development travel plans

Travel plans for new developments differ from those for established sites in a number of ways. It helps to be familiar with the key issues from the start.

As the final occupiers are generally not known, new development travel plans need to be flexible and dynamic. An interim travel plan agreed in order to gain planning permission may need to specify later phases once the site is ready for occupation. Multi-occupier sites can include an umbrella travel plan and travel plan co-ordinator for the whole site, with provision for subsidiary plans for each occupier.

Potential occupiers should be advised in advance if they will need to adopt a travel plan. This can provide benefits to the site and individual organisations in terms of marketing and recruitment.

Where the eventual occupier is not known, an interim travel plan is important for preventing car-based travel patterns becoming established, and can include measures such as:

- controls on car parking
- nomination of a travel plan co-ordinator
- provision of improved public transport, cycling and walking facilities
- interim or aspirational targets for modal split

Councils will usually take one of three broad approaches to travel plans for new developments, depending on circumstances:

- minimalist approach - used where details of measures are not critical. This approach requires the implementation of a travel plan as a condition
- measures approach - used where there is high confidence that measures agreed will achieve the agreed targets or outcomes
- outcomes approach - used where there is lower confidence in the effectiveness of measures and where more variables have to be considered. This approach specifies targets rather than measures

The role of development professions in the development process

Planning professionals

Planners and developers should be aware of the requirements of local planning authorities. The following items are relevant:

- become familiar with Government policy guidance, in particular PPG13 on transport, and local authority policies (see under 'Sources of information')
- select sites which favour the introduction of a travel plan and have good linkages with areas of population, employment and commercial centres ('development plans' should indicate appropriate locations). Begin discussions with local planning officers at an early stage, to resolve issues quickly and strategically
- where public transport accessibility or infrastructure falls below that which is deemed necessary, work with operators to define improvements and, where appropriate, reach Section 106 agreements¹ (Section 55 in Scotland) between the developer and local authority to secure services
- consider how the adoption of a travel plan could enable you (or your client) to require less parking space - space which could provide more accommodation on the same site



¹ Section 106 agreements enable planning authorities to agree development or expansion of an organisation's premises subject to certain terms and conditions



Design professionals

Good design concerns all those involved in making or shaping decisions affecting the quality of new development. It rarely happens by chance, and is most likely to arise from a collaborative effort involving input from a range of professionals such as architects, landscape architects, planners, engineers and surveyors.

The overall concept and design should take account of:

- the future needs of those using a development, encouraging arrivals by public transport, walking and cycling
- relationships with local housing in commercial developments
- access to services and employment in residential developments
- requirements for lobby areas where information about public transport or car sharing can be made available
- lighting, landscaping and shelter to make pedestrian and public transport waiting areas pleasant and secure
- the provision of shower and changing facilities at convenient locations throughout the development
- well designed and conveniently located cycle routes and cycle parking areas

Sound practical advice on how to achieve good urban design is set out in the joint ODPM/CABE publication 'By design, urban design in the planning system: towards better practice' and the complementary guidance issued by English Partnerships, the 'Urban design compendium'.

Engineering professionals

As well as the building structure and foundations, civil engineers are responsible for internal highway and parking layout and can influence the gradients of sites. These aspects can, with sufficient awareness, be used to the advantage of cyclists and pedestrians.

The following points should be considered:

- traffic speeds on development sites should be low - priority should be given to non-car modes
- junction layouts can be made more compact to suit pedestrians and raised to be level with the rest of the pavements
- signing should be sympathetic to cyclists and pedestrians by clearly highlighting safe routes and providing warnings for motorised vehicles
- new surface treatments and street furniture can be specified for the benefit of walkers and cyclists

Working in partnership

Consultants, architects, developers, engineers and planners should work together from the early stages of a development proposal to ensure they promote sustainable transport choices and reduce the need for travel, especially by car. Regular contact with transport providers and local authority officers in the early stages of the development process is recommended to address strategic issues with a balanced range of professional experience. This will help to ensure sites are easily accessible for all users and travel plans are of high quality.

Co-ordinators working for large employers or partnerships generally promote, manage and develop their own plans. Many local authorities and some businesses or partnerships now employ travel plan co-ordinators. The role of local authority co-ordinators is generally to provide ongoing advice and guidance on travel plan measures. They are well placed to provide general guidance to developers wishing to incorporate sustainable travel measures. Also, local authorities may increasingly seek to secure appropriate measures to promote sustainable transport choices and travel plans through planning conditions or planning obligations tied to planning permission. These may include: bus stops, cycle parking and changing facilities, safe pedestrian routes or provision of travel information.

Where to go for further guidance

Your local authority transport or development control officers should be able to tell you more about travel plans and general planning requirements in their areas. Alternatively, consult your relevant professional institutions. Local Chambers of Commerce may also be able to offer advice on organisations that already have travel plans that you could consult with locally.

You may decide to give a member of staff responsibility for researching alternative transport issues, though it is advisable to make staff more aware of the rapidly changing transport agenda by sending them on training courses.

Practice what you preach

One of the best ways of promoting travel plans is by example. Property development, consultancy and architecture firms can do this by developing travel plan initiatives for their own staff.

Greenway: outcomes approach with sanctions

Greenway is a National Trust garden in Galmpton, South Devon. The National Trust submitted a planning application to South Hams District Council in 2001 to open Greenway to the general public and Trust members, and for a change of use for existing buildings to accommodate a visitor reception, café and toilets. Roads leading to Greenway are very narrow and pass through a small village. The council was concerned about the potentially large number of cars travelling to the garden and the effect this would have on the local community in terms of congestion, noise and pollution.

Therefore, Greenway was asked to develop a travel plan as part of a Section 106 Planning Agreement. The agreement restricts the number of vehicles admitted to the property and Greenway has to:

- limit the opening times (Wednesday - Saturday, March - October)
- give access to no more than 12,800 cars per year and 125 cars per day
- permit only one coach at any one time and no coaches in excess of 25 seats

A clear travel plan strategy ensured that for the first two years, over 60% of visitors arrived by alternative transport.

Source: TransportEnergy BestPractice. 'Greenways to Greenway'.



Sources of information

Travel plan guides

There are many guides available on how to implement a travel plan. The Department for Transport's website (www.dft.gov.uk) includes several travel plan guides and reports under its 'Sustainable transport' section. Key resources of use to developers include:

- 'Making travel plans work: lessons from UK case studies' (02TA00337/a)
- 'Using the planning process to secure travel plans: best practice guide' (02TA 00338/d)
- 'Using the planning process to secure travel plans: research report' (02TA00338/e)
- 'Using the planning process to secure travel plans: appendices to research report' (02TA 00338/f)

These are available free as downloads. The first three are also available by post from the Department for Transport's free literature line on 0870 1226 236.

The following resources give an excellent overview of travel planning:

- 'A travel plan resource pack for employers'. A comprehensive handbook with detailed information on all aspects of developing and implementing a travel plan. Available as a soft back and CD-ROM
- 'Greenways to Greenway'
- 'Travel Plan News'. A regular newsletter to keep you up to date about issues related to travel planning

These are available free through the TransportEnergy Hotline on **0845 602 1425**.

General advice on travel plans

Several organisations can offer general advice on setting up and running travel plans. The ones listed here may be able to help you directly, or may refer you to other local or more detailed sources, depending on the nature of your enquiry.

TransportEnergy BestPractice

Hotline: 0845 602 1425

E-mail: transportenergy@est.org.uk

Website: www.transportenergy.org.uk

For further information on any of the issues covered in this guide or free, independent information and advice on travel plans, contact the hotline.

Association for Commuter Transport (ACT)

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Department for Transport (DfT)

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Website: www.dft.gov.uk

The DfT website covers all areas of the Department's work including local and integrated transport and a section on travel plans.

Other information

The following references will be helpful in terms of policy background and practical infrastructure design. Many of the Government's publications are available on the DfT or ODPM websites (www.dft.gov.uk; www.odpm.gov.uk) or can be obtained from The Stationery Office Publications Centre, PO Box 276, London, SW8 5DT, Tel orders: 0870 600 5522. Other useful websites are National TravelWise (www.travelwise.org.uk) and Local Government Association (www.lga.gov.uk).

'The future of transport: a network for 2030'. White Paper. HMSO. DfT. London 2004

'Full guidance on local transport plans: second edition'. DfT. December 2004

'PPG13 Planning policy guidance on transport'. ODPM. London October 2002

'Planning for sustainable development: towards better practice'. ODPM (DfT). October 1998

'National cycling strategy'. DfT. July 1996.
See also: www.nationalcyclingstrategy.org.uk

'Cycling to work: traffic advisory leaflet 11/97'. DfT. November 1997

'By design, urban design in the planning system: towards better practice'. ODPM (DfT)/Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. May 2000

'Places, streets and movement: a companion guide to design bulletin 32'. DfT. 1998

'Better places to live: by design'. A companion guide to Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (ODPM and Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE))

