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BestPractice

Travel plans: new business opportunities for information technology providers

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About this guide

This guide aims to highlight the opportunities that are available to suppliers of information and communication technology (ICT), in the growing field of travel plans and other sustainable transport initiatives. Travel planning is becoming increasingly sophisticated, creating a demand for a range of communication, data analysis and mapping tools and the support services needed to implement them. Suppliers of these services are well placed to respond to this demand by working closely with organisations that are involved in travel plans and by tailoring their products to provide the best solutions.

The guide provides a brief summary of what is involved in a travel plan and where the main needs for ICT arise in the process. It will be of interest to suppliers of these products and services, and also to in-house IT departments of organisations that are considering setting up a travel plan.

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

What is a travel plan?

A travel plan is a coordinated package of measures to reduce traffic problems by encouraging car sharing, public transport, cycling and walking, and by avoiding the need to travel through the use of communication technologies. Many successful travel plans have already been implemented across the country and the number continues to grow. Travel plans are encouraged by national Government policy and guidance and most local highway authorities now employ staff with responsibility for coordinating travel plans in their areas.

The measures that are used in a typical travel plan involve the use of ICT throughout their development and implementation. To illustrate this, the figure below lists some common elements of a travel plan and highlights the ICT needs associated with them.

This guide looks at the ICT needs in greater detail and discusses the role of the supplier in making use of the opportunities they lead to.

Travel plan measure	ICT need
Encouragement for home working	Remote access to telephone, email and files; 'extranets', training and support
Tele-conferencing	Video-conferencing systems
Improved public transport information	Intranet and email information services, mapping and route planning tools
Lift sharing	Bespoke lift sharing software, intranet bulletin boards
Staff travel survey	Online survey software, databases
Publicity and awareness raising campaigns	Graphic design, mapping services, contact databases
Planning new bus services	Mapping and geographic information system (GIS) tools, accessibility software
Fleet management	Telematics, fuel management software, routing and scheduling systems

The opportunities

IT provision for remote workers

Remote working by employees, often known as 'teleworking', may be from other company sites, on the road (for example, from variable locations between visits to clients or sites), at a local work centre or from home. Remote working can replace office working permanently, or for part of the time. Even for office based staff, the ability to work at home can provide greatly increased flexibility and efficiency, for example by avoiding the need for travel to the office on days when out on meetings.

The rapid expansion of domestic broadband internet access in recent years has made it much easier for more people to work from home, for at least some of their time. However, for staff that rely heavily on office ICT systems to undertake their job, successful home working requires more than just a fast internet connection.

ICT needs for successful home working include:

- > basic hardware, taking account of home layout and health and safety considerations
- > remote access to work email and documents
- > the ability to pick up work telephone calls and voicemail messages
- > security, virus protection and file backup systems
- > access to centralised administration systems (for example timesheet and leave bookings, finance system, employee guidance and procedures)
- > ICT helpline support that is familiar with the home worker's systems



- > at home support in the event of hardware failure
- > training in the use of the systems that they will use

It is important to be aware of the wider health, safety and staff welfare issues associated with home working, for which expert advice and training may be needed.

Focus Consultants (UK) Ltd

This Nottingham based consultancy uses remote working practices to reduce business travel.

Relocation of the head office to a new location increased employees' reliance on the car. This was seen to be incompatible with the company's corporate objectives. Therefore, a travel plan was developed.

Remote access to the company's central computer server was provided so that staff can work from home or from a remote office. Laptop computers and portable printers allow staff on the road to prepare between appointments without needing to return to the office.

Through these simple measures, Focus have cut business travel costs by £7,439 per year; reduced business mileage by 9%, as well as improved staff productivity.

Business telecommunications

Business travel is the travel that employees have to make during the course of their working day in order to carry out the requirements of their job. This covers staff attending external meetings or undertaking site visits, and travel between sites within their own organisation. Business travel accounts for approximately 3% of trips undertaken, however this equates to 10% of the mileage. The more innovative travel plans recognise that many business trips can be replaced by the use of advanced telecommunications.

Tools and services that might be used for fleet management include:

- > spreadsheets and databases for monitoring vehicles and fuel use
- > in-vehicle telematics and communication systems
- > specialised routing and scheduling systems

Cornwall County Council

Between July and December 2002, Cornwall County Council relocated 140 staff to an office complex on the outskirts of Truro with just 65 car parking spaces. Staff found transport to their edge of town setting quite a challenge and to help them, the Council embarked on a travel plan.

As well as promoting walking, cycling and car sharing, video conferencing facilities are used by Council employees to reduce the need for staff to travel to meetings.

The Council have calculated that, over a year, the combined effects of their travel plan measures has resulted in 56,000 commuter miles saved and 7,200 fewer vehicle trips.

Getting from A to B in Dundee

Dundee City Council's 'Bringing confidence to public transport' (BCPT) project now has 14 journey planning kiosks in several key locations throughout the city to encourage people to take the bus. In the first 12 months more than 4000,000 journeys have been planned.

The kiosks allow users to plan their journey directly from an interactive map by typing in an address, postcode or place of interest. Details of the quickest and most direct journey are given, which can be printed and retained. Real time information for every bus stop will be available at www.dundeetravelinfo.com, SMS, wap and journey planner kiosks.

Dundee City Council were winners of the Scottish Transport Award 2004 "Travel Information Technology".

Lancashire uses real time Information

Lancashire County Council uses real time information to promote sustainable transport.

Real time information displays have been installed at bus stops interchanges and hospitals around Preston and nearby areas to make it easier for people to use public transport.

In addition, real time information is available from the council's website. Users can even bookmark their favorite bus stops to track their bus. The council website www.transportforlancashire.com also offers a one-stop facility for all forms of transport information. Regular maintenance ensures the information is clear, uncluttered and relevant.

Transport and travel information provision

A core element of many travel plans is improved information to staff on the availability of alternatives to the car. This can include up to date bus and train timetables, often customised to meet the needs of staff at that particular employment site. It can also include information on recommended cycle or walking routes, ideally tailored to a particular location. Lift sharing, both for commuting and business travel can be encouraged by providing intranet bulletin boards, lift sharing databases or dedicated lift sharing software.

These applications all present business opportunities for suppliers of the necessary ICT systems, such as:

- > route planning and mapping software
- > intranet bulletin board systems
- > lift sharing matching and management software
- > real time public transport information
- > graphic design applications

Data collection and analysis

A critical element of any travel plan is the gathering and analysis of information on staff travel patterns. This will usually involve a survey, through which employees are asked how and when they travel, what modes they use, their attitudes and other questions to assess the potential for change.

Quantitative information is also gathered on the availability of transport infrastructure and services, for example, availability of car parking spaces, cycle parking provision and bus services.



Lancashire County Council

Clearly, surveys can be very labour intensive, so tools that help to automate the collection and analysis of this data will be very beneficial. With the help of mapping and Geographic Information System (GIS) tools, survey results can be interpreted to assess the potential demand for new bus or cycle routes, for example by plotting home postcodes against existing and proposed routes. This information is also useful during the implementation of travel plans, to target bespoke information at the appropriate user groups and to identify which measures will be most effective.

The data collection stages of a travel plan are therefore likely to require the following:

- survey / questionnaire software, including web-based tools for use on company intranets
- database tools
- mapping and GIS tools
- personal journey planners

In each case bespoke solutions may be needed as well as training in their use.



Telematics and fleet management

Many travel plans will look at the efficient management of the organisation's vehicle fleet. This will include measures like the monitoring of vehicle fuel and mileage, efficient planning of routes and managing the bookings for pool cars. Organisations that are involved in transporting goods will want to ensure that vehicles and loads are optimised to avoid wasted mileage and vehicle use

Tools and services that might be used for fleet management include:

- spreadsheets and databases for monitoring vehicles and fuel use
- in-vehicle telematics and communication systems
- specialised routing and scheduling systems

Maxi-Taxi

The Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council has a computerized taxi sharing scheme, called Maxi-Taxis, to help Telford employees travel to and from work. The scheme uses a GIS based system to match people to a particular taxi for the journey to work and back home.

The scheme appeals to many employees who value the 24-hour, seven days a week service, priced at similar fare levels to buses, but with the added advantage of door-to-door security and convenience. Maxi-Taxis complement public transport as they only operate where public transport is not an option for employees.

Commenting on the initiative, Tony Herraty, Work Travel Co-ordinator for Telford & Wrekin Council, said "Many local employers report vacancies and local residents want to take these jobs, but cannot do so because they do not have transport. Maxi-Taxis enables people to commute safely, door to door, and sharing the ride creates greater efficiency and increases revenue for Maxi-Taxis drivers".

Promoting the benefits

Organisations with low uptake of ICTs typically incur higher costs than necessary and work less efficiently than they could, due to the following factors:

- property is underutilised, with people leaving desks empty as they travel from the workplace for face-to-face meetings
- time and money is wasted on travel
- opportunities for less expensive and more effective means of interacting with customers are not exploited while paper and face-to-face meetings are the primary means of contact
- opportunities to interface with new markets are missed
- less flexibility in working patterns

It is also important to be aware that there are tax incentives for the purchase of ICT equipment for travel plans. The Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) Home Computing Initiatives guidance explains in detail the tax exemptions that are available. Furthermore, if an employer buys computer equipment and related software to set up and monitor the travel plan these would qualify as 'machinery or plant' for which capital allowances are available.

Baggaley Construction

Baggaley Construction is a regional construction business based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire. The company directly employs a total of 180 people; 53 of whom are based at the head office, while the remainder are site based. The company currently operates a fleet of 43 company cars, 2 lorries, 3 pick-up trucks, 9 crew buses, and 12 transit vans to facilitate its operations.

Baggaley Construction has used technology as part of their travel plan to improve the efficiency of their business operations, by reducing the number of unnecessary journeys by introducing a number of measures.

Vehicle trackers have been installed in some vehicles to pin point vehicle movements in real time. Vehicle Tracking allows managers to send the closest vehicle/employee to the required sites, reducing unnecessary business mileage and non productive time.

Exploiting the use of ICT and introducing digital cameras on sites to transmit images has significantly improved communication with the head office and further reduced the need to travel to sites to see 'what's going on'.

Getting involved in travel planning

As a supplier of ICT you are well-positioned to assist organisations and local partnerships in the development of travel plans. To do this, however, it is important for you to understand the wider aims and objectives of travel plans, and the typical processes through which they are developed. This guide lists some useful background reading and general contacts for information on the broader aspects of travel plans.

There are a number of different organisations that get involved at different stages in the development of a travel plan. Some employers involved in travel plans will usually have a designated travel plan coordinator. Most local authorities have an officer responsible for coordinating travel plans and have set up travel plan networks or commuter planner clubs with local employers, to help develop partnerships for the implementation of travel plan measures.

Many organisations may need advice and guidance in:

- > the technical issues relating to implementing alternative transport initiatives, such as car sharing or public transport development
- > the technological issues of remote working, as well as those relating to changing work processes

In addition to working in partnership initiatives, there is a need to reach those organisations who have not thought of travel plans, but who may be open to considering improvements to work processes and organisational development using ICT.



The point at which you become involved in assisting travel plan development will vary according to circumstances. There are three basic reasons why organisations seek advice and support for travel plan initiatives:

- > as a response to internal pressures, for example, on office or car parking space
- > as a response to external pressures, for example, where a planning authority requires an organisation to develop a travel plan as part of an application for planning permission
- > to move forward from an initial interest in or commitment to the principles of travel plans (possibly in the context of local partnerships)

In each of these cases, it is important that you are linked into local networks, so that organisations know how to contact you and what you can offer. Through your network contacts, you should become aware of needs as they arise, helping you to develop appropriate responses and solutions quickly and, therefore, helping client organisations to move forward swiftly.

Sources of information

Travel plan guides

There are many guides available on how to implement travel plans.

- > 'Making smarter choices work'. This guide explains what smart choice measures are and how they can be used to improve traffic flows and the quality of life for local people

This is available from the Department for Transport's free literature line on 0870 1226 236.

The following resources give an excellent overview of travel planning and related issues:

- > '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 publication and CD-ROM
- > 'Travel Plan News'. A regular newsletter to keep you up to date with issues related to travel planning



- > 'Teleworking guide'. A guide outlining the wide range of issues relating to flexible working and the role it can play in assisting organisations to reduce the impact of their business transport operations

For further information on any of the issues covered in this guide or free, independent information and advice on travel plans, contact the TransportEnergy Hotline on **0845 602 1425** or visit our website at **www.transportenergy.org.uk**

General advice on travel plans

Several organisations can offer general advice on getting involved in 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)

1 Vernon Mews, Vernon Street

London W14 0RL

Tel: 020 7348 1987

Fax: 020 7348 1989

E-mail: mail@act-uk.com

Website: www.act-uk.com

An association and source of advice and information for employers that introduce travel plans.

Other information

The Telework Association (TCA)

Tel: 0800 616008

E-mail: Sue@teleworkforum.org

Website: www.tca.org.uk

The Telework Association is an organisation dedicated to the promotion of teleworking.

The Home Office Partnership

Website: www.flexibility.co.uk

The Home Office Partnership website provides case studies of companies that have introduced flexible working.

Tax information

Website: www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/pdfs/ir176.htm

The Inland Revenue leaflet 176 explains how the tax and National Insurance systems encourage employers to set up travel plans.

The Home Computing Initiative

Website: www.knowledgenetwork.gov.uk/oe/hci.nsf

Home Computing Initiative (HCI) schemes are enabled by the Government's 1999 tax exemption on loaned computers. This allows employers to implement a tax-exempt loan scheme for computer equipment for their employees to use at home.

Inland Revenue Home Computing Initiatives guidance

www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/employers/hci.htm

The Inland Revenue provides guidance on the HCI.

