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Mainstreaming travel plans in the UK: Policy proposals for Government

**Research Report to the Department for Transport and the
National Business Travel Network**

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Mainstreaming travel plans in the UK: Policy proposals for Government

1. Introduction

The seminal publication in terms of current UK Transport Policy was the 1998 White Paper 'A New deal for transport: Better for Everyone' (DoE, 1998). This stated that there was now a consensus for a radical change in transport policy with recognition of the need to improve public transport and reduce the dependency on the private car. It confirmed the UK Government's commitment to tackling the problem of congestion and pollution. As such, the main aim of the White Paper was 'to increase personal choice by improving the alternatives and secure mobility that is sustainable in the long term'. The White Paper also sought to enhance local transport planning by creating a partnership between local councils, businesses, operators and users.

The Government, via the Department for Transport, is consequently keen to promote initiatives that seek to reduce congestion, improve the local environment and encourage healthier and safer lifestyles. 'Smarter Choices' is currently an approach being used in order to influence individuals' travel behaviour towards the use of more sustainable options such as encouraging workplace, school and individualised travel planning. Smarter Choices seeks to improve public transport and marketing services, for example travel awareness campaigns, setting up websites for car share schemes, supporting car clubs and encouraging tele-working.

Two high profile reports have recently been published in the UK with an impact on Transport Policy, namely the Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change (HM Treasury, 2006) and the Eddington Transport Study (Eddington, 2006). The Stern Review argues that in terms of climate change 'strong and early action far outweighs the economic costs of not acting'. Failure to act in terms of climate change is estimated to be equivalent to losing at least 5% of global GDP per annum. The Review argues that climate change can be tackled in a way that 'does not cap the aspirations for growth ... Emissions can be cut through increased energy efficiency'. Policy options include: 'action to remove barriers to energy efficiency, and to inform, educate and persuade individuals about what they can do to respond to climate change'. Clearly there is a role here for travel plans. The Eddington Transport Study (December 2006) views key economic challenges facing the UK transport system as capacity and performance, with congested and growing urban areas impeding growth and impacting on productivity. To address this challenge, the Eddington Study – as a guide to transport strategy priorities – states that the UK Government should focus on improving the performance of existing transport networks.

In responding to these documents, the UK Government published *Towards a Sustainable Transport System* in October 2007 (DfT, 2007) which considered the two reports and incorporated the main features of both directly into Government policy, setting out an initial position for the government in relation to those reports

One potential tool that has emerged in the UK over a similar period to address the issues raised in the policy arena has been the travel plan, which UK Government guidance (EEBPP, 2001) defines as being:

'a general term for a package of measures tailored to meet the needs of individual sites and aimed at promoting greener, cleaner travel choices and reducing reliance on the car. It involves the development of a set of mechanisms, initiatives and targets that together can enable an organisation to reduce the impact of travel and transport on the environment, whilst also bringing a number of other benefits to the organisation as an employer and to staff.'

The idea behind travel plans, which have their origins in the US, was as a relatively quick and easy response to the fuel crises during the 1970s. Travel plans were fairly slow to translate to a European setting, arriving in first in the Netherlands in the early 1990s and then in the UK in the mid 1990s. As of 2008, a number of travel plans are now in place across the European Union, from Ireland to Austria – Travel Plans are not yet widely known about in Eastern Europe – and from Sweden to Malta.

The relative merits of travel plans to Governments and local authorities are that they are reasonably quick to introduce, relatively cheap and, most importantly, are usually politically acceptable. This is in marked contrast to most other transport improvement schemes which often require high levels of investment over a long period of time and can carry a high political risk – especially in the short term as conditions frequently deteriorate while improvements are being carried out. Moreover, travel plans can be effective at peak times and in peak locations and can be used to address a wide variety of public policy goals including reducing congestion, energy use, air quality and noise impacts, and improving accessibility, equity, health and the economy.

Crucially however, travel plans are dependent on the willingness of other organisations (i.e. traffic generators such as employers, retail parks, schools and hospitals) to get involved in helping to address something that is normally outside their operational remit. This potentially is a major barrier.

At the site level studies have shown that UK travel plans combining both incentives to using alternatives to the car, together with disincentives to drive, can achieve a 15-30 per cent reduction in drive alone commuting (DTLR, 2001). For instance, Rye (2002) estimates that travel plans have removed just over 150,000 car trips per day from British roads each working day, or 1.14 billion km per year, i.e. around three quarters of one per cent of the total vehicle km travelled to work by car overall.

The purpose of this report therefore, is to build upon the findings from a literature review (see Enoch and Zhang, 2008) and a series of in-depth interviews conducted with ten Travel Plan experts by the authors (Enoch and Ison, 2008) to propose a series of policy actions as to how Government, local authorities, businesses, organisations and the travel plan industry might improve the situation.

Given the limited resources available for conducting the project, no new data has been gathered. Instead, 'real life' evidence has been gathered wherever possible so as to illustrate possible outcomes more usefully. Spicker (2006, pp.166) supports this approach thus:

“Recommendations for improvement are subject to much the same kinds of political constraint as findings of fault; they have the same disadvantage that, unless they have been piloted within a small part of the operation, they are rarely based directly in evidence from the organisation itself. The strongest arguments for adopting new practices are based on analogies with practice elsewhere – work done in similar agencies, or in response to similar constraints. This is one of the reasons why many agencies tend to imitate the practice of neighbouring agencies – there are often regional patterns in the delivery of local authority services like education, housing and personal social services. (Policy transfer tends to be reinforced by the exchange of personnel between neighbouring authorities who bring related practice along with them.) Unless they are accepted and endorsed by the agency, recommendations are unlikely to be effective in practice.”

2. Identifying policy actions

In identifying available policy actions, Enoch and Potter (2003) develops a taxonomy of policy instruments available to national and local governments to support travel plans, namely: information/exhortation, regulation, subsidy, and fiscal regime. To this can be added a fifth: institutional. A further development to the taxonomy is to separate the direct travel plan measures from the indirect supporting measures. This is crucial given the emphasis placed on the role of supporting policies during the previous studies already referred to from which the following proposed policy proposals were derived. The following sections present the proposals and subsequently a range of suggested specific policy actions that could be introduced in order to apply the proposals in practice.

Direct Measures: Information and exhortation

Proposals:

- IE1 Action should be taken to ensure travel plans become as effective as possible.**
- IE2 The priority is for Government to develop a strategy in terms of the future of travel plans.**
- IE3 The message that travel plans are an important and integral part of Government transport, planning (and wider) policy needs to be highlighted perhaps through high level meetings between ministers and senior managers of agencies such as transport suppliers, multi-national organisations, public sector organisations, business groups and trade unions.**
- IE4 Efforts should be made by Government representatives to ‘persuade’ large organisations with a large number of sites across the country to adopt travel plans as company policy.**
- IE5 Government needs to work on convincing local authorities and other agencies that travel plans are a core element of its transport and planning policy arsenal.**
- IE6 The benefits of supporting travel plans need to be made more obvious, and if necessary should be enhanced by the provision of additional support from Government and local authorities. Such enhancements may include: financial grants and greater access to transport policy decision makers.**
- IE7 In selling the benefits, attention needs to be paid to the motivations behind the adoption of travel plans. For example, some organisations require evidence of how corporate social responsibility goals could be attained, while others will focus on environmental issues or efficiency savings.**
- IE8 Government should consider a re-launch of the travel plan concept – but only once it is sure of how they are to be applied in the future. This should incorporate the adoption of the accredited travel plan as a minimal standard (see later).**
- IE9 Strategic lessons should be learnt from the experiences of Transport for London and other ‘good practice’ agencies in terms of implementing a strategy for travel plans.**
- IE10 The profile of the travel planning profession needs to be raised. For example, attention should be given to the skill level of travel plan coordinators, possibly with bursaries being made available by local authorities and/or Government to encourage further study on sustainable transport and travel plan training and education programmes.**
- IE11 There is a need to identify key policy champions, able to drive the travel plan agenda throughout the country.**

Commentary:

The most urgent need identified during the interviews, is for Government to develop a strategy, setting out exactly how travel planning fits in to the overall Department for Transport agenda, and for Government as a whole. It is the intention of this research to aid this process.

Beyond this, the Government needs to communicate the importance of travel planning to local authorities and other agencies including public transport operators and other transport suppliers, multi-national organisations, public sector organisations, business groups and trade unions. This could be done in a number of ways.

One way would be for Senior Government Ministers to raise the idea of travel planning with heads of organisations, encouraging them to directly raise the profile of travel planning within their companies. This could be 'sold' as being a company benefit not only in terms of direct cost savings, but also in wider public relations terms. Such a proposal would be most effective if linked into the role of the National Business Travel Network, which has already opened communications between business and Government. At the same time, there could be scope to highlight the benefits of travel plans more generally among the business community – including those which stand to benefit most directly i.e. public transport operators and other transport suppliers who really must be convinced that it is in their own interests to develop new products to cater for the travel plan market. In particular there would seem to be scope for a range of services provided by consultants, public transport operators, local authorities etc offering everything from 'do it yourself kits' of travel plan tools, through 'off the shelf' measures and on to specially tailored 'bespoke' site specific travel plans. Moreover, these are required at every level – from the individual via the organisational, the neighbourhood and the local to the regional. Crucially, they would need to be tailored to the needs of the organisations, and should therefore be designed in such a way as to tap into the various motivations behind organisational decision making processes – e.g. improving profits, reducing costs, addressing transport issues and meeting Corporate Social Responsibility and/or environmental targets.

Other products that could be encouraged include home-shopping schemes; local network enabled joint distribution and home delivery schemes; videoconferencing; neighbourhood work centres; organisation-sponsored (and hence heavily discounted) public transport tickets; car club-based car pooling schemes; and shared/pool bicycle schemes. Such developments would be all the more effective if they could be tied in with the launch of a package of support measures (e.g. subsidy programmes and tax breaks and perhaps even a re-launch of the travel plan 'brand'). Such a re-launch would be particularly effective if it included some form of standard or accreditation for travel plans.

One area where the Department for Transport has a strong record is in the delivery of research and practical advice on the use and performance of travel plans. In particular, the *Making Travel Plans Work* series of Reports from 2002 and *Smarter Choices* research of 2004 (Cairns et al 2002; Cairns et al 2004). Ongoing research into the effectiveness of travel plans – particularly from a business viewpoint – is seen as being crucial if they are ever to become sufficiently attractive for organisations to want to 'take up'.

The recently launched National Business Travel Network, which is funded by the Department for Transport, offers additional support for business organisations to participate in travel planning activities, shares best practice experiences and funds travel plan research.

Particular research gaps however remain. For example:

- What is the full potential of travel plans across the UK in delivering transport and wider policy benefits?
- Under what circumstances are travel plans an appropriate measure to implement? Where should resources be concentrated to demonstrate best returns?
- What can we learn from examples of best practice, not only at an organisational level, but also at the local authority level? In particular, how can lessons from school travel plans be transferred to other travel planning sectors?
- What factors/pressures most effectively motivate organisations to participate in travel planning activities?
- What benefits from travel planning should organisations expect?
- Where within an organisation should responsibilities for travel planning rest?
- How can business travel initiatives be more effectively integrated with 'traditional' travel plans?

On a similar basis, training for travel planners is another area for work to be conducted. Currently, the organisations ACT Travelwise and MODESHIFT (the national associations for travel planners and travel plan officers, and for school travel planners respectively) as well as some companies – e.g. Mayer Brown – either already, or are about to provide short courses on the topic. Meanwhile, the Open University provides a Level 3 NVQ Continuing Professional Development course in Travel Planning. There are also several MSc programmes that touch on relevant travel planning material (e.g. at University of the West of England, Imperial College/University College London, Oxford Brookes University and the University of Surrey), and one that specifically specialises in travel plans – Loughborough University’s MSc in Sustainable Transport and Travel Planning. As yet however there are still no clear career progression pathways established for the sector and this needs to be rectified as a matter of urgency. Time and again during the interviews, the case was made that there is no real career path for travel planners. As a result, it was suggested that experienced travel planners often felt the need to move on if they want to further their career with negative consequences for the profession.

Finally, one recurring theme that emerged from the interview phase was the importance of identifying policy champions to drive travel planning forward. It is suggested that such people can be found at different levels – right from the part-time travel planner in a small organisation; up through local authority travel plan officers and travel plan consultants; to the major decision makers in multi-national boardrooms and the Department for Transport.

Direct Measures: Regulation

Proposals:

- R1 Travel plans should continue to be linked to the planning process.**
- R2 Travel plans need to be considered at a far earlier stage in the planning process if they are to realise their full potential.**
- R3 A framework for monitoring the effectiveness of travel plans is required rather than simply a ‘tick-box’ approach to travel plan achievement.**
- R4 Local authorities should ensure that the costs of monitoring and enforcing a travel plan are ‘built in’ to the original submission of each planning proposal where monitoring will be required.**
- R5 The possibility of introducing legislation and/or regulations legally requiring existing ‘appropriate’ organisations to introduce travel plans should be explored.**
- R6 An accreditation system for travel plans should be developed and introduced to ensure minimum standards and increase their effectiveness. This would range from a very simple exercise for small organisations to something more tailored and involved for larger bodies. Ideally, it should be tied in to existing environmental management system or corporate social responsibility regimes.**
- R7 Travel plan accreditation should be time limited to ensure continued development.**

Commentary:

Travel plan regulation currently in the UK is very much focused on the use of the planning system. Essentially, organisations needing planning permission to expand their existing site or develop a new one can be required to establish a travel plan. In England and Wales, national guidance on how this should be applied has been laid down in the last two editions of Planning Policy Guidance Notes 13 (PPG 13) – on transport and land use (DoE and DoT, 1994; DTLR, 2001). This guidance has attached significant importance to Travel Plans, and advises that local authorities should include Travel Plans as a part of their own planning policy (through the Local Plan document), and should also require all large scale employment, retail and leisure developments to have a Travel Plan (Rye, 2002).

However, in the UK, regulation is limited only to where employers require planning permission to develop a new or existing site. This means that more often than not it is suburban and city-edge sites that are required to implement Travel Plans, not necessarily the companies in areas which would benefit the most from the introduction of the measure. In addition, there

are several other problems as far as using planning agreements to limit traffic growth. One is that the planning rules are implemented purely at discretion of local authorities, and although PPG 13 is now increasingly encouraging more standardisation in how these are applied, Institution of Highways and Transportation (1997) notes:

'As with many other demand management measures, competition between adjacent localities for economic strength can seriously reduce the effectiveness of well-intended policies. Given the choice between accommodating the requirements of a major project, which will enhance the local economy, by relaxing their more stringent policies or maintaining those policies and seeing the project go elsewhere, many authorities will opt for the former. While a firm national, or regional, policy framework might help to avoid such 'bidding' situations, it would be at some cost to local autonomy on key decisions.'

IHT (1997), pp.293

At the practical/detail level too, there are difficulties. For example, there is relatively little data on how effective Travel Plans are – making it difficult for local authorities to judge whether a Travel Plan is good enough or not. In addition, developers do not often know how to write Travel Plans, leading to negotiations and delay while the Plan is improved. Finally, many development proposals are speculative and transport is dealt with at the outline planning stage. This means that often there is not a very high level of detail about the type of development and the number of employees, which adds to the difficulty of drawing up the Travel Plan (Rye, 2002).

Current research referred to during the interviews suggests progress in how local authorities have used the planning system to encourage the development of travel plans has been disappointing. In particular, “the quality of monitoring information is poor even with those authorities that are furthest ahead”, a situation the interviewee suggests was down to “resources”. Specifically, “what has become very clear is that unless [the monitoring of travel plans] is part of some assessment process; it will go on the back burner... because local authorities deal with what is on their radar [and allocate] resources for assessment processes” accordingly. This is corroborated by Rye et al (2008). This finds that local authorities need to devise a workable enforcement plan for organisations that breach their planning obligations or agreements, a task that is especially urgent given that only four respondents of 86 had ever taken enforcement action while the vast majority had no idea how they would go about doing so. This was despite 46 of the 86 respondents stating that there were examples in their areas of travel plans that had not been implemented or were likely to be in breach of their condition/obligation for some reason.

Fundamentally, despite the problems outlined the introduction of travel plans through the planning system is likely to (and should) remain a key instrument for local authorities for a number of reasons.

Firstly, planning decisions are intrinsically linked to the transport performance of a particular area. Thus, the earlier a travel planner can become involved in the planning process the more influence s/he will have (ODPM and DfT, 2002). In practice, in the UK it could be argued that travel plans are not considered early enough in the process. This has often meant that developments may not be as well situated from a transport planning perspective as perhaps they should be, meaning that travel planners are seeking to mitigate a problem that may not have existed if the ‘correct’ location had been chosen. This is a crucial area that Government needs to emphasise further in future planning guidance notes.

Secondly, the planning process offers significant flexibility in how travel plans requirements may be implemented. Thus, in the capital, Transport for London has sought to develop a system whereby every development must consider travel plan issues before planning permission is granted by the planning authority. These range from a single page check list for the smallest schemes to a full site-specific travel plan for the largest developments. There are also other potentially interesting ways of using the planning process to secure travel plans beyond what is done currently. One idea could be to use planning gain arrangements from particularly large schemes to develop the core of a Local Travel Plan Network for the local neighbourhood. This might function rather like the ‘anchor store’ concept in a shopping centre, whereby many small shops benefit from the high trip attracting nature of one or more

large department stores located within the development.⁴ This approach may soon be tested in Cambridgeshire as part of the TRAVEL PLAN^{plus} project, which is to be funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe STEER Programme of the European Commission, and promises significant benefits in terms of developing LTPNs that involve the key players within an area and are financially sustainable over the medium/long term.

Thirdly, the planning decision stage is currently the only point at which a local authority can influence how a development will operate over its lifetime.

The other side of the coin meanwhile, is to ensure that travel plans introduced via the planning (or any additional regulatory) system include a budget to cover the costs of monitoring activities by the local planning authority.

Nevertheless, because of the relatively small proportion of organisations seeking planning permission in any one period, it also may make sense to investigate alternative mechanisms for requiring organisations to more actively engage with travel plans.

One potential way of increasing the use of regulation may be to require some or all organisations in a particular area – and not just those seeking planning permission – to adopt a travel plan.

This can be achieved in various ways. For example, in Italy organisations with more than 300 employees are required to employ a travel plan coordinator although there are no quantitative targets set and no penalties are in place for companies not complying (MOST, 2001).

In the USA, several State/Provincial, regional and local jurisdictions formerly mandated so-called Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) programs for certain types of employers, although many have now been abandoned.

Of particular concern is that the use of standardised travel plans, while desirable in that they potentially make the process more efficient and ensure that the basic elements are incorporated, convert the travel plan from being a site-specific tool into a mere 'box ticking exercise'. One proposed solution for addressing poor quality travel plans would be to establish a national minimum standard. This could be designed to incorporate a monitoring framework and could be integrated within an existing accreditation regime such as Investors in People, ISO 14001 or British Standards. Professor John Whitelegg of the Stockholm Environmental Institute of the University of York is working with DfT, TfL LEPT and NBTN to develop such a standard at the moment. In addition, the European Union funded COMMERCE project is investigating the development of a Europe-wide standard for workplace travel plans.

Overall, in a review of the use of regulatory travel plan mechanisms in the USA and the Netherlands, Rye (1999) reports that regulatory mechanisms had largely been abandoned in both countries. In the USA, this was due to the Federal Clean Air legislation that had imposed mandatory travel plans on companies of over 100 employees in major urban areas being repealed in 1996 after lobbying from businesses (Rye, 2002), a lesson that was later taken on board by Dutch policy makers. Instead, changes to the fiscal system (in the form of tax breaks to companies and employees) were being developed instead (see later).

That said, there have been moves by local and provincial government associations in the Netherlands towards including the environmental impacts of business travel and commuting journeys within the purview of the Environmental Law – which sets limits on the amount of environmental damage that organisations can inflict on society. So far a national scheme whereby organisations are awarded points for reducing their environmental impacts (including those from transport) has been resisted by business groups, but the City of Amsterdam is one municipality that has implemented such a regulation (Sonderse et al, 2007).

Such an approach may be possible in the UK, although it should be noted that in continental Europe the employer is 'responsible' for the employee's commute trips. This is not the case in the UK. Moreover, 'in all situations regulation' tends to generate a view that Travel Plans are a cost – and not a benefit to be exploited, providing a contradictory message to the information and exhortation approach and leading to a counterproductive attitude. Nevertheless, if climate change and the continued security of energy supplies continue to be seen as a reason for regulation at the European level, the pressure for Government and local authorities may well one day result in some form of organisational and/or personal carbon

allowance, and at that point travel would certainly need to be incorporated into any such scheme.

As a minimum, a strong case remains for allowing local authorities the power not only to retain the planning system as a means for implementing travel plans but also for extending them further – especially in terms of allowing travel planners to intervene earlier in the planning process.

Direct Measures: Subsidy

Proposals:

S1 On funding, travel plans would benefit from a higher proportion of revenue rather than capital funding being made available.

Commentary:

As is often the case in the public sector, a key barrier preventing the widespread adoption of travel plans is seen to be a lack of sufficient financial resources, and revenue funding in particular. This means that many authorities claim they are unable to set up new travel plans or even maintain links with those organisations with a travel plan already in place. Clearly this has severe implications for the continued operation of travel plans in general, and especially on their monitoring and evaluation.

One potential way forward may be either to widen the scope of the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) to allow all activities that reduce congestion to be eligible, rather than just congestion charging-related proposals, or else introduce a similar Fund for mobility management-related measures. This could involve innovative Travel Planning-focused solutions such as establishing Local travel Plan Networks across suitable locations in a local authority area.

A second and related proposal would be for so-called Smarter Choice Accredited Authorities and Smarter Choice Centres of Excellence to be established, whereby extra money would be made available to selected local authorities to develop travel plans in a more comprehensive manner than currently.

Third, there are options for raising revenue available through the planning route. Thus, the so-called 'roof tax' in parts of Milton Keynes essentially replaces the typical 'site by site' approach to calculating planning gain with a standardised, transparent and formula-based method for calculating the fee charged. Other perhaps more appropriate 'impact fee'-style mechanisms – in that they would directly incentivise developers towards adopting a travel plan – could charge developments either for the car parking spaces provided at the site or else the number of predicted vehicle trips to be generated by the development over the course of its lifetime (Enoch and Zhang, 2006). Guidance on how these might work in practice across the country would need to be developed.

Fourth, developers submitting planning applications with a high quality (ultimately accredited) travel plan could be offered some form of incentive – either in terms of speedier and/or cheaper administration fees and/or in terms of reduced parking provision requirements/higher building densities.

Fifth, the Travel Plan Bursary scheme could be re-introduced, as a minimum for those authorities contemplating becoming a Centre of Excellence.

Sixth, a modified Site Specific Advice (SSA) programme, whereby organisations would be offered consultant support in developing travel plans for a limited period, could be developed. This would replace a previous scheme which was dropped by the Government in spite of an evaluative research project which suggested the scheme continue, albeit in a modified form (Potter et al, 2003). Interestingly, SSA schemes still continue in Scotland and in London.

Seventh, subsidy schemes allowing organisations to buy travel plan-related infrastructure such as bicycle racks, showers etc for less money – as already happens in Nottingham and London for example – could be encouraged and developed. Possible areas could include grants for establishing Local Travel Plan Networks, or innovative travel plan related tools more generally e.g. joint distribution centres and delivery clubs for networks of retail outlets, car clubs, video-conferencing suites or neighbourhood 'virtual work centres'.

Direct Measures: Fiscal regime

Proposals:

- F1** There is a need for government to revisit the tax system as it relates to travel plans. For example, there would appear to be only slight benefits for bus or bicycle users but much bigger breaks in terms of car parking spaces.
- F2** Government needs to continue exploring ways of making travel plan benefits increasingly attractive *vis a vis* car-based benefits.
- F3** Government needs to clarify existing travel plan-related tax benefits, which are currently often too complicated for businesses to understand.
- F4** Government needs to publicise existing (and any future) travel plan-related tax benefits far more effectively.

Commentary:

Potentially the most effective way of persuading organisations to adopt travel plans is to offer them financial incentives to do so, and this is the mechanism that has been favoured in the United States. In the UK too, policy initiatives in the area (for example during the 2001 and 2002 Budget Reports) have meant that while several of the tax barriers facing organisations wanting to incentivise their staff to switch from using their car to get to work have been removed, others remain. Meanwhile the Government has so far stopped short of using the personal or corporate tax regimes to penalise car use. So, for example car parking spaces provided by employers for commuting trips are not considered to be a benefit in kind (whereas public transport season tickets provided by employers for commuting are and are thus liable for income tax), and organisations can still claim capital tax allowances when providing new car parking facilities. Thus, for example there would appear to be only slight benefits for bus or bicycle users but much bigger breaks in terms of car parking spaces.

Specifically, employers cannot subsidise employee's commuting to work by 'green modes' without paying tax (benefit-in-kind). Similarly employers offering 'Parking Cash-Out' schemes to encourage their staff to drive to work are liable for tax. One solution may be to allow employers to provide Travel Vouchers, contracted 'Green Commuting Services', or Parking Cash-Out payments up to a value of £600p.a. to each of their staff (Open University, Napier University and WS Atkins, 2001).

In addition to these measures which highlighted issues with the personal tax regime, recent work by Professor Stephen Potter of the Open University has focused on identifying issues with the corporate tax regime, specifically business rates, capital/industrial business allowances and travel plan tax credits.

On Business Rates, organisations could be taxed according to the number of parking spaces they had in place – although there could be significant boundary effects as rates would probably need to be differentiated by location. In addition, there could be scope for similar but perhaps more radical discounts with the proposed introduction of a Supplementary Business Rate.

Alternatively, businesses could be offered tax relief on the amount of money they spent on travel plan measures. This could be done through Enhanced Capital Allowances or Industrial Building Allowances. These approaches would be applied to specific travel plan capital or industrial building expenditure e.g. bicycle parking, bus shelters, cycleways, car park charging equipment or car sharing bays. They could also be offset by reducing the capital allowance for car parks (e.g. to 20% of an investment in the first year and then 20% in subsequent years on the reducing balance), therefore possibly even making such an adjustment a tax raising measure. Here though there is a problem that travel plans are generally not particularly capital intensive – instead they tend to need revenue to be spent and so any change would have only limited impact.

Travel Plan Tax Credits would relate to the non-capital expenditure of a travel plan and might work like tax credits for Research and Development, whereby companies can deduct 125% (150% for a small medium sized enterprise) of the qualifying spending on R&D when it determines its profits, as opposed to 100% normally. Here though, the measure would be output not outcome based, and the spend would need to be additionally audited. One other related approach, could rely on a system of accredited travel plans whereby discounts of say

5%, 10% and 20% could be given to organisations in receipt of a bronze, silver or gold rated travel plan. This would reward outcomes and would be audited by a separate organisation.

Overall, corporate tax benefits would only apply to private enterprise and not to the public sector. Moreover, many companies already take full advantage of any available allowances.

Beyond these, several more radical options could be considered. These could include providing:

- Tax benefits for employees living near to their workplaces.
- Tax benefits for employers providing accommodation for their employees (within a limited distance of the work site).
- Tax breaks for communication equipment such as tele-conferencing and video-conferencing suites, neighbourhood work centres and so on, designed to minimise the need for people to commute and make business trips.

Essentially, most of the fiscal measures introduced so far by Government have been designed to maximise behavioural change while minimising 'deadweight' (i.e. rewarding people for continuing their existing behaviour). A side effect of such measures however has been to make the regulations extremely complicated and difficult to understand and thus 'take up' (and the resulting impact on travel behaviour) has probably been less than hoped. Worse, there is little information available from either the DfT or Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs of how organisations can benefit from such tax measures, or on how the measures actually work, and the information that is available is difficult to find. Arising from these criticisms are two suggestions. First, Government ought to develop clear guidance on existing travel plan-related tax benefits. Second, such guidance ought to be publicised far more effectively, and at least should appear on the Travel Plan section of the DfT website.

Overall then, the key decision facing the Government in altering the tax regime focus on whether it is prepared to risk an increase in 'deadweight' in order to generate a potentially significant benefit's in terms of cutting car use. It is hoped that at the very least the Government provides far clearer information about the current available tax benefits and that ideally it takes the next step in expanding those benefits still further. So far however, indications from HM Treasury, HM Revenue and Customs and the Department for Communities and Local Government are that officials have yet to be convinced of the merits for such measures.

Direct Measures: Institutional

Proposals:

- I1 The role of National Government with respect to Travel Plans needs to be clarified. Fundamentally, a decision needs to be taken as to the future of travel plans. Are they to continue to evolve slowly as currently on minimal resources, or are they to potentially become the core component in delivering the Smarter Choices agenda? A half way house may be to test the more involved approach, perhaps in a similar way to the successful Sustainable Towns demonstration sites (see below).**
- I2 Government should consider how strategically applied travel plans and local travel plan networks could be developed to become the main policy delivery mechanism of Smarter Choices measures and resultant benefits on the ground.**
- I3 Travel plans should only be seriously pursued where the organisational and site contexts make them an appropriate measure.**
- I4 Implementation efforts should be focused on those organisations in the locations that would demonstrate the best returns.**
- I5 Local authorities serious about pushing the Smarter Choices agenda should first introduce a travel plan for their own premises, if one does not already exist.**
- I6 Local authorities should encourage and support the establishment of local travel plan networks where conditions are suitable. LTPNs can provide significant economies of scale and can reduce barriers to entry. They can be a**

particularly effective way of involving small and medium sized enterprises in travel planning.

- 17 Lessons can be learnt from school Travel Plan strategy in terms of bringing them more into the mainstream.**
- 18 The Government should consider establishing ‘Centres of Excellence’ (CoEs) within local authorities to deliver Smarter Choice measures. Here, one or more local authority, public transport operator, consultant, the regional Highways Agency office would work together to implement Smarter Choice measures through travel plans and/or Local Travel Plan Networks. They would provide advice and develop a series of travel plan services for local organisations with travel issues; help establish local travel plan networks; carry out monitoring and enforcement roles; and develop and prepare bodies of evidence of how well travel plans are working. The centres would be eligible for Transport Innovation Fund financing and would benefit from greater flexibility in how they met their Local Transport Plan targets.**
- 19 Advice and support also needs to be made available for organisations located in non Centre of Excellence areas that wish to develop travel plan initiatives. This could be introduced on either a national or regional basis.**

Commentary:

In order to implement the previous recommendations effectively, it is necessary to consider the institutional framework. This is particularly important in the case of travel plans, because the whole concept centres on travel plans being the most appropriate mode of delivery for a range of other transport policies. In other words, large organisations or perhaps groups of smaller organisations may often be the most effective means of delivering parking, walking, cycling or public transport policy measures than a regional or local authority – providing it has the necessary resources and support.

As noted earlier, the most urgent need is for Government to clarify its approach to travel plans and hence develop a travel plan strategy. This would require a decision to be taken as to the future role of the travel plan – either as being a key delivery mechanism for local transport policy, the relatively minor tool it is currently, or somewhere in between.

Should it be decided that travel plans are to be developed further, Government must highlight this and re-establish its leadership role. This could be done perhaps by establishing Sustainable Transport as a Division within the DfT, or else by moving it to a Division more cross cutting of the Department as a whole.

As a minimum, any new strategy must commit the DfT towards rewarding local authorities that are taking a lead on Smarter Choices with greater political and policy support such as, improved access to funds (along with greater flexibility in spending them). This is because it is clear that travel plans are more effective in some areas than others. From this, it would be sensible for them to be implemented in places and at times where they offer the best return. However, recent research from the Government Operational Research Unit on the take up of Smarter Choices in England (outside London) reports that of 82 Local Transport Plans reviewed, 22 made significant reference to Smarter Choice measures, 44 made reasonable reference and 16 minimal reference (GORS, 2007). It adds that there is no clear relationship between the type of region, congestion targets or population density and the use of Smarter Choice measures, rather, “it is determined most by the opinions of local authority management who essentially assign local transport prioritisation” (GORS, 2007, pp.40). This would seem to indicate that financial resources should be allocated at least partially on the basis of the strength of local authority commitment to Smarter Choice measures. Should a more radical approach be favoured, additional regulatory powers for local authorities could be considered.

At the local level too, an element of leadership should be evident from any local authority looking to benefit from enhanced Government support for implementing Smarter Choice measures and the simplest way for this to be determined would be for a council to have established its own operational (and ultimately accredited) Travel Plan.

Local Travel Plan Networks can be a particularly effective way of involving small and medium sized enterprises in travel planning by grouping organisations into a single entity for travel

planning purposes with a single point of contact they can also be more attractive for local authorities or regional government to deal with. Consequently another institutional measure for local authorities to apply might be to encourage and support the establishment of such networks where conditions are suitable. In particular, authorities might set up links between the network and transport providers and seek to provide officer time and/or grants for travel plan improvements.

As noted earlier, there is a need to identify policy champions able to drive the travel planning agenda throughout the country. Once identified, these champions could be recognised as being 'experts' perhaps by ACT Travelwise/MODESHIFT or the DfT and asked to become advisors or mentors to travel planners or travel plan officers in particular sectors and/or areas of the country, or else to give lectures or seminars in their areas of knowledge. Such experts could be linked to local Centres of Excellence.

Also noted earlier, best practice experience should be shared more effectively. This should be done through new research projects, travel plan industry networks (e.g. National Business Travel Network, ACT Travelwise, MODESHIFT etc) but also through wider networks such as the Confederation of British Industry, British Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions, Public Sector bodies like Higher Education Institutions and the National Health Service and the public transport sector. Related to this point, more effort needs to be made to incorporate business travel and freight transport within the auspices of workplace travel planning. Currently these two areas – both of which are multi-billion pound industries – are often treated separately from the core commuting interests. Similarly, there is much to learn from the school travel plan and individualised marketing (personal journey planning) sectors, and so there is a need to examine how these services are supported and delivered *vis a vis* workplace (and other forms of) travel planning.

One key proposal that pulls together many of the above proposals is to set up a number of Smarter Choice Centres of Excellence. These could be of a type similar to the Regional Centres of Excellence (RCEs) set up by the Department of Communities and Local Government to promote efficiency savings in local authorities, and would take the work of the so-called Sustainable Travel Towns a step further. Such a model whereby extra resources are granted to local authorities to implement smarter choice measures is also now being tested by Transport for London, which has recently set up two so-called 'Smart' Boroughs in Sutton and Richmond. Thus, in September 2006 the London Borough of Sutton (GLA, 2006) was awarded £5m over a three year period to invest in measures including:

- Personalised travel planning for Sutton residents;
- Grants of up to £1000 to businesses that submit a workplace travel plan to be spent on cycle parking racks lockers and showers for example;
- A School Travel Adviser and Cycle Projects Officer for Sutton schools.

In essence, the Centres would seek to embed Smarter Choice measures, and travel plans in particular, into the local consciousness and thus reduce reliance on the car by implementing policies tailored to meeting the needs of local neighbourhoods initially in the areas of greatest need, but ultimately across the whole of the local authority area. This could be done in a number of ways. For example, Birmingham City Council has adopted a centralised approach to delivering travel planning services which sees a large number of organisations participating at a relatively low level of involvement. London too, has adopted a relatively top-down scattergun approach, although here the involvement of both Transport for London and the organisations is rather deeper than in Birmingham. By contrast, Nottingham City Council has targeted only the largest employers and aims to maximise the effectiveness of the travel plans at cutting car use at those sites. A third model, is the Dutch approach of the so-called Traffic Coordination Centres. These regional centres operate almost independently of local government and actively engage with local organisations to persuade them to adopt travel plan measures. A fourth way forward may be for a Centre to set up a number of Area Transport Plans to implement transport measures at one step removed (Enoch and Rye, 2006).

As already noted, it is envisaged that such Centres would be able to attract TIF and other additional sources of funding and perhaps be able to develop new financing streams if necessary. There may also be scope for such Centres to be granted further regulatory powers

(see earlier). Most likely these would be granted through the planning system, but further environmental or car parking powers may be appropriate in some cases.

The Centres should also be given a regional role in helping neighbouring local authorities that are 'sympathetic' to Smarter Choices introduce and operate their own travel plan strategies. Such authorities could aim to become Smarter Choice Accredited Authorities – which could be seen as a step on the way to becoming a Centre of Excellence. One example to follow here could be the Fairtrade Towns initiative (Fairtrade Foundation, 2008). Here, local authorities wishing to join must aim to meet five key goals, namely:

1. The local council must pass a resolution supporting Fairtrade, and serve Fairtrade coffee and tea at its meetings and in offices and canteens.
2. A range of Fairtrade products must be readily available in the area's shops and served in local cafés and catering establishments.
3. Fairtrade products must be used by a number of local work places educational establishments, faith communities and other community organisations. A flagship employer is required for populations over 100,000. However if your community is smaller than this, you may still wish to have a flagship employer.
4. Attract media coverage and organise events to gain popular support for the campaign.
5. A local Fairtrade steering group must meet regularly to ensure continued commitment to Fairtrade Town status. The composition of your steering group should be representative of your community overall.

Such accreditation could be awarded either by DfT or more likely by ACT Travelwise/MODESHIFT. Alternatively, there may be scope for tying such an award to an already existing environmental or corporate social responsibility labelling system.

Indirect 'Supporting' Measures

Proposals:

- SM1** Government should seek to better integrate travel plans within transport, planning and wider Government policy proposals.
- SM2** Government should seek to better integrate and support Smarter Choice measures within transport, planning and wider Government policy proposals through a mix of information, regulatory, subsidy, fiscal and institutional mechanisms designed to reduce reliance on the car.
- SM3** Specifically, the status of travel plans needs to be raised in the Local Transport Plan process.
- SM4** There is a need to benchmark travel plan initiatives against other transport policy initiatives e.g. park-and-ride to determine their relative effectiveness in meeting policy goals.

Commentary:

The core finding from the interviews was the need for wider supporting measures to 'lock in' the benefits afforded by travel plan interventions. The following measures are suggested for consideration.

Information measures here suggest the need for wider Government campaigns educating the public as to the threat of global warming; and the benefits of using alternatives to the car. More focused measures may include highlighting the costs that businesses pay for parking as a proportion of their Business Rates for example, or else applying the type of Individualised Marketing campaigns used in London and in the Sustainable Travel Towns i.e. Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester, across more areas of the country.

Regarding regulation there are three methods for supporting travel plans – planning, environmental and parking. Of these, the former two options have already largely been discussed, but there is significant scope in the latter.

In essence, travel plans tend to work best when the provision of parking is tightly controlled. One direct way of achieving this could be to impose a 'parking cap' on a particular area,

development or organisation as occurs in Boston and Portland in the United States. Another approach is used in Santa Monica, California, where the local council has introduced a mandatory Parking Cash Out program (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2000). This applies to firms employing 50 or more people that have at least one work site located in the South Coast Air Basin who:

- do not own their own parking (normally this means parking is leased),
- subsidise employee parking (i.e., pay all or part of the cost of parking for any employee)
- can calculate the out-of-pocket amount paid for subsidised employee parking (e.g., parking costs are unbundled, or separated in the lease agreement), and
- can reduce the number of parking spaces leased without penalty (e.g., without having to break the lease or pay for unused spaces).

Such employers are required to offer all eligible employees the option – in lieu of subsidised parking – of a cash allowance equivalent to the parking subsidy. Eligible employees are those to whom a subsidised parking space is available, even if it is not used. The parking subsidy is equal to the out-of-pocket amount paid by the employer for employee parking minus any contribution by the employee and minus any commute-related subsidies otherwise given to the employee (e.g., for public transport or lift sharing). Employees have the choice of foregoing the cash offer and continuing to receive subsidised parking or accepting the offer and either paying for parking themselves or finding an alternative way to commute to work. Santa Monica recognises Parking Cash Out for its contribution to overall trip reduction and to the emissions reduction requirements of the area's Clean Air laws.

One other approach may be to require all new developments to provide parking spaces as currently, but then transfer the control of these spaces to the local authority thereby effectively abolishing the creation of any new PNR spaces.

Slightly different, is the use of municipal regulations requiring employers to refund a proportion of the cost of public transport season tickets to their employees. Such schemes are in place in cities across France and in Brazil (Ubbels et al, 2004).

Less direct may be to encourage local authorities considering Quality Contracts – i.e. bus re-regulation at a local level – to include travel plan related elements when tendering for an operator to run the network.

One subsidy-led approach supportive of travel planning is already occurring, thanks to the announcement in January 2008 that Government is to invest an additional £110m to create a further ten Cycle Demonstration Towns and one Cycle Demonstration City, on top of the existing six demonstration towns (DfT, 2008). Similar further efforts could be made in supporting bus services (such as with the Rural and Urban Bus Challenge and Kickstart schemes).

Regarding charging, clearly the introduction of road user charging either nationally, or in more places at a local level would strongly reinforce the role of the travel plan. Once again there are possibilities in targeting parking provision. Thus, VAT could be re-applied to parking spaces. Or, an option could be to re-balance the Business Rates to increase the value placed on parking spaces while possibly reducing that placed on less environmentally damaging aspects of a building. Alternatively, parking spaces could be taxed, either through the revenue of commercial parking operators as in the United States, or through employers as proposed with the workplace parking levy in Nottingham in the UK (Enoch and Ison, 2006). Interestingly, the link between the WPPL and travel plans has already been made in Nottingham, with the latest proposals for the charge suggesting that organisations with travel plans in place be made exempt from paying it.

Continuing with the parking theme, a possible institutional measure may be to link Special Parking Areas – i.e. areas where parking offences have been decriminalised and are now enforced by the local authority – more closely with travel plans. This may allow revenues gathered to be earmarked directly into travel plan improvements therefore reinforcing the acceptability of both the parking regime and travel plan.

Other wider institutional measures could include:

- modifying project appraisal criteria for transport planning, highway and railway schemes to include the potential role of travel plan (and wider Smarter Choice) measures where appropriate;
- explicitly including travel plan elements such as the cost of car parking and business travel in auditing procedures for local authorities, Government Departments and public sector bodies – e.g. in Audit Commission and National Audit Office practice and guidance documents; and
- considering how travel planning measures might be incorporated either into a future development of the European Union Greenhouse Gas Emission Trading Scheme (at a company level) or else in any personal carbon trading scheme arrangement.
- increasing the profile of travel plans within the Local Transport Plan process, such that they could become a primary delivery mechanism of transport improvement measures at the neighbourhood level;
- as part of this, there is a need for the performance of travel plans to be benchmarked against other transport policy mechanisms, ideally by using the same (albeit suitably modified) assessment criteria as used to judge more traditional transport planning, highway and/or railway infrastructure schemes;

Ironically, one of the most effective wider support measures for Government to take may well be to do nothing but let the transport system continue to become more congested and less reliable. Anecdotal evidence would seem to indicate that there is a steady shift occurring in how people perceive driving, from it being something they enjoy to something they have no choice in doing. For that reason if for no other, travel plans somehow need to be able to capitalise on this feeling by offering people a real alternative to them always taking their car.

However, in the review process for the revised Planning Policy Statements it looks like Government is apparently also beginning to abandon the concept of maximum parking standards on the other (Local Transport Today, 2008), therefore seemingly actively undermining the very basis on which travel plans are founded. Instead, Government needs to recognise that as a minimum Smarter Choice measures are complementary to supply side solutions and where providing more road, rail or air capacity becomes ever more difficult due to the changing political, economic, social and environmental climate, they offer an alternative (and more acceptable) way forward.

3. Potential Future Policy Pathways

From the above policy proposals, it is suggested that Government could follow three possible pathways with respect to Travel Plans. These could be termed Business as Usual, Centre of Excellence and Comprehensive Local Transport Delivery Tool.

Business as Usual

The Business as Usual model would see minor modifications to regulations, institutions and the tax system. For example, Government could:

1. Raise travel planning with organisation heads through Senior Ministers to encourage them to directly raise the profile of travel planning within their companies.
2. Encourage home-shopping schemes; local network enabled joint distribution and home delivery schemes; videoconferencing; neighbourhood work centres; organisation-sponsored (and hence heavily discounted) public transport tickets; car club-based car pooling schemes; and shared/pool bicycle schemes.
3. Encourage local authorities to consider travel plans earlier in the planning process.
4. Grant tax relief on the amount of money they spent on travel plan measures through Enhanced Capital Allowances or Industrial Building Allowances, or maybe allow Travel Plan Tax Credits.
5. Encourage local authorities to support the establishment of Local Travel Plan Networks where conditions are suitable.
6. Continue to encourage the sharing of best practice experience through new research projects, travel plan industry networks (e.g. National Business Travel Network, ACT

Travelwise, MODESHIFT etc) and wider networks such as the Confederation of British Industry, British Chambers of Commerce, Trade Unions, Public Sector bodies such as Higher Education Institutions and the National Health Service and the public transport sector.

7. Incorporate business travel and freight transport within the auspices of workplace travel planning.
8. Link Special Parking Areas – i.e. areas where parking offences have been decriminalised and are now enforced by the local authority – more closely with travel plans.
9. Explicitly include travel plan elements such as the cost of car parking and business travel in auditing procedures for local authorities, Government Departments and public sector bodies – e.g. in Audit Commission and National Audit Office practice and guidance documents.
10. Benchmark travel plan performance against other transport policy mechanisms, ideally by using the same (albeit suitably modified) assessment criteria as used to judge more traditional transport planning, highway and/or railway infrastructure schemes.

Such measures would arise in an ad hoc manner as a result of actions by local authorities or other organisations. There would be no real push from Government.

From a performance perspective, the BAU model would likely see only a relatively modest shift in the uptake of Travel Plan measures and only in local authority areas that are already convinced by the Smarter Choice agenda. As a result, while the costs of implementing such improvements would remain relatively small so would the corresponding benefits.

Centre of Excellence

The Centre of Excellence model would see Government recognising the benefits of travel plans and then investing significant resources in a tightly focused way in specific geographical areas known as Smarter Choice Centres of Excellence. Some resources would also be made available to 'sympathetic' neighbouring authorities for specific travel plan projects. Regulatory changes would be made only to strengthen planning rules, the tax regime would be significantly adjusted to favour non-car modes, while institutional and policy measures would see travel plans becoming a key element. However, there would be no real movement on indirect support measures. Specific policy measures here for Government might be to:

1. Develop a strategy, setting out exactly how travel planning fits in to the overall Department for Transport agenda, and for Government as a whole.
2. Set up Smarter Choice Centres of Excellence SCCoE).
3. Set up Smarter Choice Accredited Authorities (SCAA).
4. Reward local authorities that are taking a lead on Smarter Choices with greater political and policy support such as, improved access to funds (along with greater flexibility in spending them).
5. Encourage local authorities to require travel plans for all developments as a requirement for obtaining planning permission in SCCoEs and SCAAs.
6. Allow local authorities to require travel plans for all organisations within specifically designated areas in SCCoEs and SCAAs.
7. Establish some form of Transport Innovation Fund for Travel Plan measures, available only to SCCoEs and SCAAs.
8. Reintroduce Travel Plan Bursary scheme for those authorities contemplating becoming a Centre of Excellence for SCCoEs and SCAAs.
9. Reintroduce a modified Site Specific Advice (SSA) programme to SCCoEs and SCAAs.
10. Provide grants for travel plan related infrastructure, Local Travel Plan Networks, or innovative travel plan related tools more generally e.g. joint distribution centres and

delivery clubs for networks of retail outlets, car clubs, video-conferencing suites or neighbourhood 'virtual work centres' in SCCoEs and SCAAs.

11. Consider allowing SCCoE and SCAA local authorities to offer discounts with the proposed introduction of a Supplementary Business Rate for organisations with Accredited Travel Plans.
12. Consider tax benefits for employees living near to their workplaces, tax benefits for employers providing accommodation for their employees (within a limited distance of the work site), tax breaks for communication equipment such as tele-conferencing and video-conferencing suites, neighbourhood work centres and so on, designed to minimise the need for people to commute and make business trips.
13. Encourage home-shopping schemes; local network enabled joint distribution and home delivery schemes; videoconferencing; neighbourhood work centres; organisation-sponsored (and hence heavily discounted) public transport tickets; car club-based car pooling schemes; and shared/pool bicycle schemes.
14. Support the expansion of research into Travel Planning issues and training opportunities for Travel Planners.
15. Conduct wider Government campaigns to educate the public as to the threat of global warming; and the benefits of using alternatives to the car.
16. Link Special Parking Areas – i.e. areas where parking offences have been decriminalised and are now enforced by the local authority – more closely with travel plans.
17. Modify project appraisal criteria for transport planning, highway and railway schemes to include the potential role of travel plan (and wider Smarter Choice) measures where appropriate.
18. Explicitly include travel plan elements such as the cost of car parking and business travel in auditing procedures for local authorities, Government Departments and public sector bodies – e.g. in Audit Commission and National Audit Office practice and guidance documents.
19. Consider Travel Plans when introducing parking, environmental and planning regulations, and require local authorities to do the same.
20. Benchmark travel plan performance against other transport policy mechanisms, ideally by using the same (albeit suitably modified) assessment criteria as used to judge more traditional transport planning, highway and/or railway infrastructure schemes.

The key element here is that local authorities would make the decision as to the role of travel plans in their own areas, but with far more support than is currently available.

Based on the GORS (2007) report findings cited earlier, roughly one quarter of local authorities made significant reference to the Smarter Choice agenda in their Local Transport Plans while just over half made a reasonable reference. Realistically therefore, it could be expected that a significant proportion of these might seek to increase their commitment (and hence deliver a step change in transport and wider societal benefits).

Once again, the level of costs incurred would be commensurate to the benefits.

Comprehensive Local Transport Delivery Tool

Finally, the Comprehensive Local Transport Delivery Tool would see (area-based) travel plans becoming the key instrument on a national scale for delivering the most localised mobility management measures e.g. walking and cycling improvements, parking policy, etc. Here, every traffic generator in the country would become responsible for their transport impacts. Regulations would thus be introduced (perhaps through local Environmental Laws) requiring accredited travel plans to be in place at each site. Subsidies would also be made available to each travel plan and pro-travel plan tax incentives developed to 'sweeten the pill'. Concurrently, Government would implement a whole range of indirect support measures for example introducing road user charging either nationally, or in more places at a local level would strongly reinforce the role of the travel plan or re-applying VAT to parking spaces.

Such an approach would see transport policy (and crucially spending) being reoriented such that mobility management measures supported where necessary by capacity improvements became the default option, rather than the other way around as at present.

While the benefits could be substantial for a relatively minor financial cost, the institutional barriers to be overcome should not be under-estimated and would require a major political investment to convince first the transport sector itself and then the wider public to its merits.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, transport issues will always be an extremely difficult issue for any Government to address given the scale of the challenge to be faced and the integral part it plays in people's lives, not just from a practical perspective but also from financial, economic, environmental, social and particularly political perspectives. Specifically, traditional transport supply-side solutions involve large commitments of financial and political investment over a long period of time, and negatively affect significant numbers of people while they are being introduced. Consequently, the temptation for decision makers has been to leave them to one side. Unfortunately, though it is an entirely understandable policy, this 'do-nothing' approach has seen transport conditions continue to worsen and in the medium to long term is simply not sustainable by any definition.

Travel Plans offer a possible way of avoiding some of these unattractive traits by seeking to manage the use of the existing transport system more efficiently. They do this by targeting 'easy wins' – certain journey types in particular locations and at specific times – that result in the maximum benefit for the least cost, by convincing people that they will benefit by sometimes changing their travel behaviour when provided with a range of usable alternatives that are designed to suit their specific needs. Whilst this is by no means an easy task, an increasing body of evidence is showing that better information coupled with a mix of incentives and disincentives can deliver significant transport and societal benefits in a reasonable timeframe and at an affordable financial (and political) price. Moreover, by involving organisations with whom individuals already have an established relationship (e.g. employer, school, hospital, retail or leisure facility provider), there is often more of a willingness to become involved in such a process.

Crucially though, to be most effective such an approach needs to be implemented as part of a comprehensive overall package which includes a range of complementary transport and wider measures, and in particular a major marketing role to convince the country that such a policy is in their best interest not just in the short term but in the longer term too. In short, it requires leadership at the national level to kick start what would be a paradigm shift in transport policy so that transport providers, local authorities and other key stakeholders were fully aware of the new regime, how and what it seeks to achieve, and why.

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