Setting up Local Travel Plan Groups: the future of workplace travel planning in urban conurbations? Examples from London, UK.

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ABSTRACT
Any group of organisations that comes together to share resources and ideas for developing and implementing a travel plan (site based Transportation Demand Management plan, known as a Travel Plan in the UK) in their local area could be described as a local travel plan group. Whilst the concept is not new for workplace travel planning in North America, recently several new variants have been established in the UK.

   This paper reviews and sets out a typology of local travel plan groups, including development zones, area based groups, Transportation Management Associations and Business Improvement Districts. It then highlights the case of London, where, perhaps uniquely, at least one example of each type of group is present. One new example is then examined in more detail to illustrate some of the challenges in setting up a local travel plan group and the way in which they may develop in the future to providing a framework for involving businesses in local transport improvement decisions. Finally, the main characteristics of the London groups and how they differ from their North American predecessors are briefly explored.

INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses the concept of local travel plan groups and their contribution to the future of site-based Transport Demand Management workplace travel planning. It is divided into three sections.

The first sets out a definition of a local travel plan group and develops a typology of existing local travel plan group types, namely development zones, area based groups, Business Improvement Districts and Transportation Management Associations, both in North America and the UK.

The second section presents four local travel plan groups, one of each type, that have recently been set up in London and highlights the contexts in which they have been established, as well as some of their key objectives and activities.

The third section illustrates some of the challenges in setting up a local travel plan group through the example of the Better Bankside Travel Planning Group. Here the group was set up as part of an action research project to investigate how such a group might facilitate travel planning amongst businesses and provide a framework for involving businesses in local transport improvement decisions.

Finally, conclusions are drawn as to the extent to which the London based groups differ from their North American predecessors and the implications this might have for local transport policy making in the future.

TRAVEL PLANS AND LOCAL TRAVEL PLAN GROUPS
What is a travel plan?
A travel plan (the UK term for site based TDM) is

"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" (*1*).

The idea behind travel plans derives from the concept of 'Transportation Demand Management' (TDM) in the US. TDM refers to "any action or set of actions aimed at influencing people's travel behaviour in such a way that alternative mobility options are presented and/or congestion is reduced" (*2*). When discussing demand management strategies, the term 'Mobility Management' in many European countries (*3*) and 'Smarter Choices' in the UK (*4*) are used. They are more narrowly focused on measures such as information, marketing, partnerships, communications to promote public transport and other sustainable modes. Similar to the 'Trip Reduction Plan' or 'Employer TDM Program', a travel plan is an important element of the above mentioned strategies targeting a particular site or area (*5*).

Initially, travel plans were required by regulation in the US. The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendment required employers with 100 or more employees to implement trip reduction

plans in areas where ozone levels were classified as being serious or above, to reduce commute related vehicle miles of travel by raising average vehicle occupancy for employee work trips by at least 25% above the area average (*6*). Most of these regulations have now been abandoned although state-wide regulations were subsequently introduced in the states of Washington, Oregon, and Arizona (*7*). Instead, the US government has since remarketed travel plans as being good for business and has encouraged participation through tax relief measures on initiatives that employers use to promote 'green commuting' (*8*). In the UK travel plans only first began to appear during the mid 1990s, with the first official policy record being made in the 1998 Transport White Paper (*9*). Private employers are encouraged to adopt travel plans voluntarily. In addition, the UK government also encourages the use of the planning system to require the adoption of travel plans in new developments (*10, 11*).

What are the Barriers to Implementing Travel Plans?
Both public and private bodies are encouraged to implement travel plans, but the presumption is that these organisations are keen to introduce them. Consequently, the basis of travel plans may be undermined as the whole philosophy is predicated on other organisations being motivated to participate in helping to solve something that is not legally or institutionally 'their problem'. Thus, unless these organisations have some pressing motivation, for example, access issues, staff recruitment problems, or a shortage of parking, they are unlikely to participate.

Rye (*12*) identifies a number of key barriers to wider travel plan implementation. These are:

- Organisations' self interest and internal organisational barriers
- Lack of regulatory requirements for travel plans
- Personal taxation and commuting issues
- Poor quality of the alternatives to car use (particularly public transport)
- Lack of examples of travel plans to learn from
- Lack of knowledge about the process of developing a travel plan
- Perceptions that for small businesses, there is little value in developing a travel plan in isolation
- Relative lack of resources within local authorities to support the uptake of travel plans.

One possible way to overcome some of these barriers is to form a local travel plan group.

What is a Local Travel Plan Group (LTPG)?
Any group of organisations that comes together to share resources and ideas for developing and implementing a travel plan in their local area could be described as a local travel plan group.

The concept of a local travel plan group is not new with the first formal network of employers – known as a 'Transportation Management Association' (TMA) being established in 1982 in the US (*13*). In the UK however, while there have been a number of travel plan networks usually coordinated by local authorities, until recently these were relatively informal.

Since 2003 though, some formal groups have begun to evolve – typically within a narrower geographical area (business area, part of a city) or on a sector basis (e.g. an education or health based group).

As well as sharing resources and ideas, many groups also act as "lobby groups" for transportation improvements in their area and seek to implement their own measures, such as shuttle buses, car sharing systems and travel information.

What are the benefits of a LTPG?
There are a number of benefits of forming a local travel plan group, including:

- Facilitating an exchange of information, ideas and good practice
- Achieving a greater economy of scale, as a group is likely to be able to pool resources delivering higher investment, dedicated staff, and greater political influence
- Avoiding duplication of work, if more than one organisation is developing a travel plan in a particular location
- Minimising the effort and resources needed to implement a successful plan
- Increasing the potential effectiveness of travel plans by moving from a site-specific to a more flexible area-wide application
- Enabling smaller organisations to benefit from the support and assistance of larger organisations
- Improving communication between sectors (organisations, local authorities, transport providers) in a way that maximises benefits for all concerned.

A group or area-wide approach to developing travel plans has been supported in a number of works, for example, *Travel Demand Management and Public Policy* (*13*), TMA Handbook (*14*). In the UK, the seminal Department for Transport *Smarter Choices* (*4*) specifically stated that "travel planning might become more commonplace in smaller organisations if it was part of a neighbourhood or area wide approach."

Local authorities can also benefit from establishing a local travel plan group, because such a group can provide:

- A single contact point for a variety of organisations
- Novel ideas for improving transport, which might not have been considered by the local authority or individual organisations
- An ideal mechanism for consultation on the local authority's own initiatives
- Benefits for the local economy, by attracting new organisations to an area and retaining existing ones, because collective effort is being applied to solve transport and access problems (*15*).

What are the types of LTPGs?
In devising a typology for analysing the Local Travel Plan Groups, various theories of how 'group formation' occurs were examined, of which the most relevant was that presented in Cohen et al (*16*). This outlined eleven issues and accompanying questions faced by newly created 'work groups' (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 Issues Facing Any Work Group

Issue	Questions
Atmosphere and relationships	What kinds of relationship should there be among members? How close and friendly, formal or informal?
Member participation	How much participation should be required of members? Some more than others? All equally? Are some members more needed than others?
Goal understanding and acceptance	How much do members need to understand group goals? How much do they need to accept and to be committed to the goals? Everyone equally? Some more than others?
Listening and information sharing	How is information to be shared? Who needs to know what? Who should listen most to whom?
Handling disagreements and conflict	How should disagreements and conflict be handled? To what extent should they be resolved? Brushed aside? Handled by dictate?
Decision-making	How should decisions be made? Consensus? Voting? One-person rule? Secret ballot?
Evaluation of member performance	How is evaluation to be managed? Everyone appraises everyone else? A few take the responsibility? Is it to be avoided?
Expressing feelings	How should feelings be expressed? Only about the task? Openly and directly?
Division of labour	How are task assignments to be made? Voluntarily? By discussion? By leaders?
Leadership	Who should lead? How should leadership functions be exercised? Shared? Elected? Appointed from outside?
Attention to process	How should the group monitor and improve its own process? Ongoing feedback from members? Formal procedures? Avoiding direct discussion?

From these issues, the most suitable 'primary criteria' for the taxonomy were deemed to be 'Atmosphere and Relationship' and 'Member Participation'. The remaining 'secondary criteria' formed the basis of the analytical framework. Following an initial investigation of the data, a further issue not covered by the framework relating to the main purpose of the group – i.e. whether the group was set up specifically to meet transportation goals or not – became an additional primary categorisation factor.

Overall, four types of LTPG can be identified. These are:

- Development Zones
- Area Based Groups
- Business Improvement Districts
- Transportation Management Associations.

These structures differ in several ways. For example, Development Zones and Business Improvement Districts are both existing organisations which could provide a starting point for a local travel plan group, whilst the others are set up for the specific purpose of addressing transport related issues.

The following sections describe the characteristics of each organisational structure, followed by a brief comparison of the different types.

Development Zones
Development zones are areas developed for specific uses, such as business parks, retail parks, industrial estates and even airports. They provide a useful basis for setting up a local travel plan group because a number of businesses will be located in one area, with shared transport issues.

The overall area is usually owned, or at least managed, by a single private or public sector body, which may be able to lead and/or co-ordinate the local travel plan group. They are generally located on the outskirts of towns or out-of-town sites with good road access. While sometimes developed by local authorities, the majority of development zones are privately owned.

The travel plans are always funded by the landlord and/or tenant organisations, whilst the local authorities provide technical or financial support.

Three West London examples of development zones which have acted as local travel plan groups include the Heathrow Airport site (*17*), Park Royal (which is considering becoming a TMA) (*18*) and Stockley Park (*19*), while there are also similar sites across the UK.

Area Based Groups
Area based groups are informal networks of a number of separate organisations that are developing and/or implementing travel plans and are located within a particular area. They exist where there are two or more organisations agree to jointly deal with some of the common transport issues that their respective travel plans are seeking to address. Consequently, the nature of the location, type, size and mix of member organisations can vary enormously between groups.

Area based groups are generally formed either by local authorities 'suggesting' that neighbouring organisations get in touch with one another, or by one organisation in a particular area deciding to take a lead. So far, they have only been found in the UK context.

Good examples of UK groups with a mix of different business types are the Temple Quay Employer Group in Bristol (M. Ginger, Bristol City Council, March 4 2005, unpublished data)*,* the Northside, Southside and Lenton Lane Employer Groups in Nottingham (J. Prince, Nottingham City Council, March 4 2005, unpublished data) and the Islington Zonal Travel Plans in London (see below). Area based groups can also be sector based.

Business Improvement Districts
Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are a partnership management initiative between a local authority and the business community, which provide investment in the local environment for a clearly defined area. They are set up on agreement of the majority of local businesses, which is determined by a ballot. The specific aims and priorities of a BID are identified and agreed by local businesses, and its activities are funded by mandatory contributions from local business tax within the BID area.

BIDs can fund a wide range of initiatives, including environmental improvements, such as better pedestrian access and signage, or warden schemes which improve perceptions of safety. While BID objectives extend beyond transport, the presence of a management organisation, the engagement of a large number of businesses, and the availability of a budget for delivering initiatives make a BID a very useful organisational basis for forming a local travel plan group.

BIDs are common throughout North America. One example is the Perimeter Community Improvement Districts (PCID) in Atlanta Georgia (*20*). Here, the group works with the Perimeter Transportation Coalition to implement transport improvements coupled with land use strategies to promote "smart growth".

In the UK, BIDs only began to be established in 2004. As of April 19, 2006, ballots of local businesses in 34 locations had occurred with a view to establishing BIDs, of which 29 were positive (*21*). In London, these include organisations in Holborn, Paddington, Bankside, the New West End and London Bridge.

Transportation Management Associations
Transportation Management Associations (TMAs), also known as Transportation Management Organisations, are "organized groups applying carefully selected approaches to facilitating the movement of people and goods within an area. TMAs are often legally constituted and frequently led by the private sector in partnership with the public sector to solve transportation problems" (*14*). TMAs were first created as employer associations to deal with local transport problems in the early 1980s and were initially stimulated by Federal, State and Local grants, (e.g. from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration and Suburban Mobility Initiative), as well as regulations (e.g. the Clean Air Act Amendments and the Employee Commute Options mandate). Interestingly most of the earliest TMAs – those initiated by private businesses – have remained active and productive while the later Associations that resulted from the 'push' of public agency grants rather than the 'pull' of the demand of the business community, have struggled or ceased to exist (*14*). Most TMAs are established to manage travel demand, with the associated benefits to traffic congestion reduction and environmental improvements. They often manage services such as vanpooling, public transit pass sales and shuttle services. Funding comes from membership fees, which may be supplemented with other contributions. Overall, the number of TMAs in the USA grew from around 50 in 1989 (*22*) to 146 in 2003 (*23*).

Good examples can be found in Toronto, Ontario (*24*) and Portland, Oregon. The Lloyd District TMA in Portland promotes transit, carpooling/ vanpooling, cycling,

telecommuting and compressed work weeks. It has also installed parking meters in its area, helping to generate $75,000 annually for the TMA as well as revenue for the City of Portland (*25*).

TMAs have only recently began to be adopted in the UK, and are now in the process of being implemented in Aberdeen, west and central London (see below), and in Exeter, Devon.

There is one further category, "Transportation Management District (TMD). However, so far this has only been developed in one location – Montgomery County, Maryland, USA, which has four (*26*). The crucial difference between a TMD and the other forms of local travel plan group identified here is that organisations above a certain size within the district are legally required to participate. Participating organisations are usually obliged to develop, implement and monitor the success of a travel plan. This type is therefore very unlikely to be transferred elsewhere for the foreseeable future.

Table 2 compares some of the key features of the different organisational structures of local travel plan groups and the way in which they may interact with the relevant local authority (LA).

TABLE 2 Comparison of Key Features of Local Travel Plan Group Types

	Development Zones (DZs)	Area Based Groups (ABGs)	Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)	Transportation Management Associations (TMAs)
Definition	Local areas developed for specific uses	Informal networks in a loosely defined neighbourhood	LA-business partnership to invest within a defined area	Organized group within an area, often legally constituted
Group structure	Leading organisation and members	Organisations all equal	Coordinating organisation created	Coordinating organisation created
Leader-member relationship	Landlord-tenant – formal	Common interest – informal	Financial (tax) – very formal	Financial (member fee) – fairly formal. Service provider – service beneficiary
Power structure	Landlord in control	Power shared equally	Membership in control	Membership in control
Transport only issue?	No	Yes	No	Yes
Primary lead organisation	DZ/LA	LA/private companies	LA initially, then private BID company	Typically led by the private sector
Secondary lead organisation	LA/DZ	Private companies/LA	Private company members	Often public sector, funding agency
Role of local authority (voluntary travel plan)	Support	Support	Initiator and facilitator	Support and sometimes initiator
Role of local authority (mandatory travel plan)	Regulator	Support	N/A	Regulator
Sector based?	Not possible	Possible	Not possible	Possible
Funding	Ad hoc grants, rent	Ad hoc grants, scheme basis	Business levy	Ad hoc grants, membership fees

LOCAL TRAVEL PLAN GROUPS IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES FROM LONDON
Perhaps uniquely, London has at least one of each of the LTPG types described above. This development has occurred in parallel to an increased emphasis on travel planning to solve the UK capital's transport problems and to maintain its position as a business friendly city. In particular, there has been a focus on promoting solutions other than public transport for

commuting trips at peak times, when the Underground and rail networks are already operating at near full capacity.

The Mayor's Transport Strategy recognises importance of working with businesses to achieve reduce congestion and improve travel choices, when it speaks of:
"new partnerships…. with the business community to ensure that its views are heard" (*27*).

Transport for London, the regional transport authority for the city, has recently increased its capacity to deliver workplace travel planning. From a baseline of one post two years ago, there are now six full time posts at the workplace travel team and a further 11 full time members of staff funded on a sub-regional basis to coordinate local authority workplace travel planning activity. The total budget allocated has almost tripled from 2005/6 to 2006/7 (K. Collins, Transport for London, July 24, 2006, unpublished data).

In the last two to three years, part of this funding has been allocated to supporting pilot LTPGs in different contexts. The aim is to identify appropriate structures to generate far greater uptake of travel planning amongst businesses of all sizes, particularly for those where there is no legal obligation for them to develop a travel plan. Currently, obligations can only be applied within the context of a planning application to build or extend business premises.

The four examples set out below demonstrate the approaches being piloted and where relevant, highlight when they differ from the North American concept.

Stockley Park (Development Zone)
Stockley Park is located next to two motorways and immediately to the north of London's Heathrow Airport and extends to 400 acres with 1.85 million square feet of office space. On-site organisations include a number of multinationals and well-known national companies which together accommodate 7,700 full time equivalent staff.

The site is operated as a single entity, and the travel plan is included within this management remit. The Park has had a travel plan since 1998, and set up a Commuter Centre in 2003 to implement various initiatives e.g. car sharing, cycling and walking, public transport and awareness raising.

To evaluate its travel plan effectiveness, Stockley Park regularly conducts travel surveys. A comprehensive web-based travel plan survey in 2002 confirmed that since 1999, there has been a reduction in single occupancy vehicles of 19.6%, with a 1% increase in underground use, a 1.2 % increase in rail commuting and a 3.4% increase in bus use. Apart from travel surveys, Stockley Park also has a comprehensive travel information section to its website (*19*).

Islington Zonal Travel Plans (Area based groups)
Two area based groups meanwhile operate in the northern part of inner London. Known as the Angel and Holloway 'Zonal Travel Plans', one has been created in the "town centre" of Islington, and the other operates along the corridor of a major road. Both the were set up in

late 2004 by the London Borough of Islington with the aim of improving accessibility by all modes and making the area more attractive to customers.

In brief, the plans identified a small number of shared objectives for businesses in a small area. In return for becoming partners with the local authority when looking at long-term transport improvements, the businesses are requested to provide staff travel data on an annual basis (home postcode and main mode for commute). The businesses are also encouraged to promote sustainable modes to their employees and provide suitable facilities (cycle parking, showers etc.). The local authority helps provide all the promotional materials and analyses the annual survey data. More importantly, the partnership allows dialogue between the businesses and the local authority on public realm improvements and parking and delivery policies.

This approach was first applied to businesses which were perceived to be receptive to working with the local authority. An added incentive was the offer of a "free transport consultancy" session during initial one to one meetings. To date, eight pledges have now been signed, primarily with retailers.

Measures introduced have included a car share scheme and a website, with links to information on a range of modes and initiatives such as discounted tickets. Currently, the main initiative is the development of a freight quality partnership (FQP) for retailers which seeks to coordinate their delivery schedules (*28*).

Holborn Transport Management Association (TMA)
Holborn is located in central London, on the borders of three Boroughs: Camden, the City of Westminster and the City of London.

Established in 1999, the Holborn Business Partnership was one of the first in Britain to successfully ballot the businesses in its area to become a Business Improvement District on 1st April 2005. The BID involves 344 businesses and aims to deliver on four key promises: "Cleaner, Safer, Coordinated and Connected". The five year BID programme, endorsed by the ballot in February 2005 therefore does not include transport as a stand alone category. Rather is a seen as making a contribution to the "Coordinated" and "Connected" streams.

Work began after the BID launch to develop a number of transport related initiatives. In this, the Holborn BID team worked closely with Camden Council. Initiatives included introducing street rangers; a bus specific map for the area; and a range of other public realm improvements.

In October 2005 a steering group of businesses met with other key partners, with a view to setting up a Transport Management Association. The TMA was officially launched in March 2006. Since then a number of initiatives have been implemented including travel information pages and the promotion of electric scooters for business use. It is also planned to have one overarching travel plan, with the option for companies with over 50 employees to develop their own.

The TMA has a legal constitution and is led by a steering group, made up of representatives of the Holborn BID team, the London Borough of Camden, BID business members and Transport for London (*29*).

Whilst the services provided are in some ways similar to a North American TMA, there is a much greater focus in Holborn on improvements for those walking around the area and on linking with safety issues. In addition, as a central London location within the congestion charging zone, the high number of bus routes in the area are sometime perceived to be more of a problem than workers commuting by car (Liz Halsted, London Borough of Camden, December 9, 2005, unpublished data).

Better Bankside Travel Planning Group (BID)
The Better Bankside Travel Planning Group is a partnership initiative between the Better Bankside Business Improvement District and the London Borough of Southwark. It was launched in November 2005. The group brings together interested businesses, both Better Bankside levy payers and non-payers to discuss transport improvements in the area and work on joint projects to improve travel choices.

Bankside is a historic part of London, located immediately south of the river from the City of London. Like the Holborn BID, Better Bankside evolved out of a pre-existing business partnership, set up 2000. In January 2005, the organisation successfully balloted Bankside businesses to become a BID. It formally started work on its five-year programme in April 2005.

Better Bankside set out a number of "pledges " as part of the ballot process, which now form part of its programme. These can be clustered under the following six themes: Safety, Enhanced Street Cleaning, Greening, Business Services, Social Responsibility and Promoting Bankside. To help deliver these pledges, a number of theme groups were set up, including an Environmental Improvements Group, a Business Club and a Corporate Social Responsibility Group. Transport was not originally conceived as being a priority for the BID; transport problems were perceived as being too large for the BID to address. However, the Travel Planning Group was formally endorsed as being part of the BID structure at the Better Bankside Annual General Meeting in March 2006 (*30*).

Since then a group of up to 25 businesses has been meeting on a six to eight weekly basis and involved in a number of joint projects.

To illustrate some of the challenges of setting up a local travel plan group, the process leading up to this endorsement is set out in more detail in the section below.

SETTING UP A LOCAL TRAVEL PLAN GROUP: THE CHALLENGES
The Better Bankside Travel Planning Group was established as part of a European Union funded project called OPTIMUM 2, which seeks to develop innovative travel planning strategies for business and hospital areas (*31*). The aim was to investigate the extent to which

setting up such a group could facilitate the uptake of travel planning amongst businesses of all sizes and provide a framework for involving them in local transport improvement decisions.

The development of the group is an example of the emerging public private partnership approach to local travel plan groups in the UK. In addition it highlights the need for a different business case for travel planning in central city areas where, unlike many North American BID areas, car commuting is less common than public transport use.

Initial Research

In late 2004, the London Borough of Southwark commissioned a study to determine where best to set up two local travel plan groups (*32*). This research was carried out in parallel to work on different LPTG types as set out in the first part of this paper (*33*). The study looked at a number of factors, notably travel to work patterns, employment locations and transport provision. It also examined possible locations for the groups in the context of significant regeneration initiatives in some parts of the Borough.

The study confirmed the north of the Borough as the main location of businesses and more importantly, where the majority of employees work. Using data from the 2001 Census, the study highlighted that although the percentage of those driving to work was less than 20% in the northern wards, the total number of employees using the car for the work commute was much more than in other parts of the Borough.

In terms of location, two business partnerships had been set up in north of the Borough. The first, Better Bankside, was due to ballot to become a Business Improvement District in January 2005. The second, the Pool of London Partnership, covered an area encompassing parts of Southwark near Tower Bridge and parts of the City of London on the opposite side of the River Thames. Both on the basis of location and the likelihood of early BID status, Bankside was chosen to approach first.

Approaching Better Bankside: Making the business case

Better Bankside were first contacted in March 2005 about setting up a local travel plan group. The BID ballot process had confirmed the priorities for Better Bankside, in terms of the eight pledges. However, what was less clear was the extent to which transport could contribute to meeting those pledges. Initial meetings focused on exploring transport related concerns that had emerged during the pre-ballot campaign. These ranged from overcrowding on public transport at peak hours to poor quality street environments.

As an organisation set up with a remit to "add value" to existing local services provided by public bodies, Better Bankside was keen to ensure that whatever task it took on, it could deliver real benefits to its levy payers. Therefore a compelling business case had to be made for setting up the group. Points in favour included:

- Better Bankside levy payers would have the opportunity to directly affect transport planning in Southwark and London

- There would be the opportunity to create a number of new "travel planning tools" deploying at least £100,000 ($184,716) match funding to the BID levy (financed by the OPTIMUM 2 project)
- The Group would also provide a framework for exploring existing innovative transport measures in the area.

These points were put before the Better Bankside Board in April 2005 and they agreed to support setting up a group if the response from businesses was positive (G. Semper, Better Bankside, April 2005, unpublished data).

In parallel to this approach, more work was done internally within the London Borough of Southwark to promote the concept of a local travel plan group and to explore how the groups would co-exist with existing consultation mechanisms. For instance, Southwark has "Community Councils" for each of the eight areas of the Borough. Each has elected councillors as voting members and is allocated a budget for local improvements. For senior officials and the Executive Member (senior politician) in charge of transport, the benefits of a forum for an effective dialogue with businesses had to be balanced against the risk of creating an additional consultation burden.

Recruiting business members and preparing the launch
Consultation with businesses
A small number of meetings were held between individual representatives of businesses and one of the Southwark OPTIMUM 2 team. A proforma was used to gather information on transport concerns and on the company in question's travel policy (existing travel plan, parking provision etc.). Even from this small sample, the most consistent finding was that the travel to work data collected as part of the 2001 Census probably no longer reflected the reality for Bankside employees. (Bankside is within the Central London Congestion Charging Zone, which came into force in February 2003). Most businesses reported little or no parking spaces and very few employees driving to work. However, there were comments about the poor quality of the pedestrian environment, personal security and facilities for cycling. None of the businesses had developed a travel plan.

Perhaps due to the fact that Bankside is relatively well served by public transport, the consultation pointed to relatively low priority given to transport issues amongst businesses compared to other issues. The challenge therefore was to demonstrate how transport improvements and travel planning measures could have a positive impact not only on the local environment, but could have a knock-on effect on core business concerns.

Planning the launch
It was agreed with Better Bankside that a high level launch could help meet this challenge and to engage a large number of businesses. Planning started in September 2005 and focused on developing a programme that would attract a large number of participants, as well as serving as an information gathering exercise on transport related concerns.

Three key issues were identified: new developments in Southwark and the impact they would have on the local infrastructure; the redevelopment of the main commuter rail station for Bankside, London Bridge and the plans for the redesign of one of the main roads in the area, Borough High Street. An expert speaker was invited to give a briefing on each topic.

In addition, small group discussions were arranged. These focused on ideas for transport solutions and "quick fixes" that could make travel around Bankside better in the short term. Participants were seated according to the location of their business within Bankside to enable discussions on specific localised concerns. Each group was encouraged to select a small number of issues which they felt to be a priority.

The launch attracted over forty business representatives. The results of the small group discussions were collated and analysed to determine the short, medium and long-term priorities for the new group and potential travel planning tools (*34*).

Developing a business plan
The second meeting of the group in January 2006 focused on defining priorities both for the long and short term, for an annual business plan, required by Better Bankside for each of their thematic groups. It involved the use of the "Six Thinking Hats®" technique, developed by Dr Edward de Bono (*35*).

Led by a professional facilitator, the session was divided into two parts. During the first part, four small groups were each allocated a subject area: cycling, public transport, information and signage, and streetscape. They were asked to explore the benefits, cautions, and alternatives or what could be done to improve on a choice of two ideas for short-term measures. An added category was information. A similar technique was used in the second part of the session to explore some of the longer-term ideas.

The results were then used to develop the business plan. This set out the main aim, objectives and principles of the group, as well as number of projects planned for the year, with details of budget and those responsible for delivery. Members of the group endorsed the plan before being submitted to the Board of Better Bankside in March 2006.

Starting initiatives
One of the main challenges to setting up a local travel plan group is achieving the correct balance between establishing the group and incentivising businesses to take part by implementing successful initiatives. In the case of the Better Bankside group, the funding available via the OPTIMUM 2 project did help to set up initiatives. However, in most cases, match funding had to be sought from other sources.

Two early initiatives were jointly funded by the London Borough of Southwark and Better Bankside. (These were examples of the travel planning "tools" mentioned above.) The first involved a cycle parking audit and the subsequent installation of cycle parking on both private business premises and public land. This related to a London wide initiative by Transport for London to offer free cycle stands to businesses involved in workplace travel

planning. The second was the development of a bespoke travel information website, hosted on the Better Bankside website.

Another key initiative was a comprehensive employee travel survey. This aimed to collect sufficient responses to be able to draw conclusions on how Bankside employees were really travelling to work and for work related journeys during the day, following the apparent gap between anecdotal evidence and the most recent travel to work data collected in 2001. The survey was "sold " to businesses as a way to gather evidence on where Better Bankside should concentrate their work to improve travel options and as a means to identify where businesses could reduce their costs.

Consistent with one of the long term aims of the group, a street space design tool has been developed to help formulate a response to a Transport for London proposal for the redesign of a much used major road. Finally, the feasibility of an overarching Bankside Area Travel Plan, with associated street or neighbourhood sub-plans is currently being explored.

CONCLUSIONS
There are currently a number of local travel plan types suitable for different contexts, both in terms of geographical location and links to existing business structures. Whereas these are not new in North America, a variety of types have recently been growing in importance in the UK and in London in particular.

The new groups in London differ in emphasis from that of their US and Canadian predecessors in some interesting ways. First, they are seen as much as a mechanism to boost travel planning by individual businesses as a way to deliver joint transport services. Second, in some cases they have become an important way for businesses to contribute to local transport decision making, for example on new transport schemes or street design plans. Third, their objectives tend to stress the importance of non-motorised modes, both for commuting and work related trips far more than public transport or vanpooling.

Local travel plan groups are often seen as way to achieve a greater and more efficient take up of travel planning. From the four examples given, it is clear that they could make an important contribution to encouraging a more widespread take up of travel planning amongst business of all sizes. However, this does not preclude the fact that the groups themselves require time, resources and dedicated funding to successfully attract business involvement and therefore the business investment needed for their continuation.

Equally, working within existing structures, such as Business Improvement Districts can enable groups to be set up more quickly, but requires careful planning to ensure that the implications for those structures are taken into account.

Finally, making a successful business case for setting up a group and ensuring that their activities are business led are crucial. Only then can the benefits of joint working between businesses and local authorities be fully realised.

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