

**Bath and North East Somerset Council
Transport to Secondary School Review
2009**

**A review by the Children's and Young People
Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

Cross Authority full review

Single Member Decision

Cllr Chris Watt (Children's Services), Cllr Charles Gerrish, (Customer Services)



Review Panel Members

Steering Group Members

Chair 08-09: Sally Davis

Councillors: Marie Longstaff, Andrew Furse, David Speirs

Parent Governor: David Guy

Project Officer Donna Vercoe

Project Support: Lauren Rushen

Democratic Service Officer: Mark Durnford

Full Panel Members

Councillors: Sally Davis, Marie Longstaff, Andrew Furse, Nathan Hartley, Marian McNeir, David Speirs, Shirley Steel

Statutory Co-opted (Voting) Members: David Williams (Diocese of Bath and Wells); Tess Daly (Diocese of Clifton); David Guy (Parent Governor); Vacancy (Parent Governor)

Participating Observers (Non-voting): Vacancy (Primary School Governor); Vacancy (Secondary School Governor); Hillary Fraser (Special School Governor); Peter Mountstephen (Primary School Representatives), Raymond Friel (Secondary School Representative), Chris Batten (Professional Teaching Association, ATL) Rob Hendrson (Professional Teaching Association, NUT) Andrew Pera (DAFBY) and George Lindars-Hammond (DAFBY)

Foreword



The CYP Panel are delighted to have had the opportunity to be involved in such an important piece of work which will help improve the current and future transport for young people and help to reduce congestion for all who live, work and visit the area.

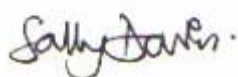
The current transport system provides for all children eligible for home to schools transport such as on distance and hazardous route grounds but does not meet the needs of many young people aged 11 - 16 years who do not qualify for transport.

The Panel listened to the concerns of local parents and children about the current transport system and through this review have made recommendations which we hope will be taken forward by the relevant Cabinet Members.

The Panel reviewed various best practice methods to help to identify the most workable option available to us, taking into consideration; value for money, meeting the individual needs of sectors of the local community, the environment and also providing the best overall benefits to young people and parents living in B&NES.

The Panel also received over a thousand responses to the survey into local school transport and we are delighted that so many people took an active interest in the work that we have done.

I hope that this report has a positive impact on shaping the transport needs of school children for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Davis".

Sally Davis

Chair of the Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel

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What is Overview and Scrutiny

Overview & Scrutiny is a key part - nationally and in Bath & North East Somerset - of the new political management arrangements, often referred to as modernising local government. The main decision making powers in Bath & North East Somerset Council (B&NES) lie with nine Councillors who sit on the Cabinet. Overview & Scrutiny is the name given to the system of checks and balances implemented by the rest of the Councillors as they monitor the activity of the Cabinet and also assist them in developing policy.

There is a clear division between the roles and responsibilities of these two functions. The Cabinet is intended to create clear leadership and clear accountability for service delivery. By contrast Overview & Scrutiny is intended to review the work of the executive and to enhance the performance of services. It is also designed to provide a forum through which policy review and policy development can be extensively examined before consideration and decision by the Cabinet and/or full Council.

Overview & Scrutiny has two key roles:

Overview

1. To assist the Council and the Cabinet in the development of new policy
2. To assist the Cabinet by giving comments on issues identified as "Key Decisions" prior to a decision being made.
3. To assist the Cabinet by giving comments on selected Service & Budget Plans at their draft stage.

Scrutiny

1. Scrutinise performance management information to ensure that the Council is performing to agreed targets and to agreed Action Plans.
2. Determine "call-ins" of decisions made but not yet implemented by the Cabinet.
3. Scrutinise particular "Key Decisions" and other aspects of Cabinet activity to ensure compliance with agreed Council policies and plans.
4. Evaluate the impact of Council and or Cabinet decisions and policies.

In addition to regular meetings, Overview & Scrutiny Panel's in Bath & North East Somerset carry out reviews. These involve undertaking a mixture of "Overview" and "Scrutiny" on a selected subject, which may be a review of a policy or an investigation of an issue of local concern.

The Panels

There are five Overview and Scrutiny Panels:

- Pupils and Young People
- Corporate Performance and Resources
- Enterprise and Economic Development
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Stronger and Safer Communities

The Overview & Scrutiny Panel Workplan

Each Panel has a workplan these are designed to assist the public in identifying issues to be considered by O&S bodies, and to assist Councillors and officers to plan ahead and to ensure that the work priorities agreed by the Council are properly resourced and considered.

The workplan is an evolving document corresponding with the Executive Forward Plan

Executive Summary

This review has set out to investigate what school transport is currently being provided by non statutory providers within Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) and determine whether the transport system currently provided is meeting the needs of young people travelling to secondary school within our community.

The Children & Young People's Overview & Scrutiny Steering group have carried out several consultation exercises and listened to presentations from service providers and best practice schemes to try to identify what the Council can do to maintain and improve transport services for young people within B&NES. The key findings identified from the research and investigation carried out by the Panel can be broken down into the following key topics:-

Cost of transport (page 22)

A survey was undertaken to try to determine what the main issues are for young people and parents travelling from home to school. Over half of parents that responded to our survey felt that the cost of their child's transport to school was too high. Furthermore parents also raised their concern of the high cost of paying for transport when they have more than one child using public transport.

With the help of the Council's Service Officer's the Panel considered a number of possible options available to them, this included estimating the cost of subsidising parents with 2 or 3 or more children aged between 11 – 16 years with half-price weekly tickets for the second and third child. Or alternatively, parents could pay the full fare for first and second children, and the ticket for the third and subsequent children would then be free. This would cost a lot less and would target the families with the greatest transport costs.

Distance and Journey time (page 23)

The distance and journey considered to be acceptable for children to travel was evaluated and discussed by the steering group and it was agreed that 1.5 miles = 30 minutes, is a reasonable distance to walk to school. The survey results also reflected this agreement as the majority of children were found to live between 1-6 miles from their school, and on average most children take between 15 & 30 minutes to get to and from school.

Reliability (page 23)

The Bath Home to School Transport Campaign group and our survey results raised the concern regarding the reliability of local buses to get young people to school on time and safely. Traffic congestion was considered to be a common cause of the unreliability of local buses. Some parents also choose to drop their child at the bus stop to make sure that they don't miss it, thus adding to the traffic congestion.

The steering group felt the issue of reliability surrounded capacity. Further investigation has revealed that the reliability of buses within B&NES is currently no different than in any other local bus operator. However the ongoing issue which has been brought to the Councils attention surrounds the capacity concerns of pupils travelling to Ralph Allen School and the most recent withdrawal of buses 20A/C.

Safety (page 24)

There were a number of issues regarding the safety of children travelling to school, these included-

1. Providing a seat and seat belt for every child. This compulsory use of seatbelts on school buses was discussed by the CYP steering group and it was agreed that the Council is

2. The safety of children waiting for transport in the evenings after attending school clubs.
3. The need for children to carry a bus card rather than change which makes them vulnerable to theft. *The steering group briefly examined the YoZone card' used within York Council, this provides pupils with a discounted travel card. (see page 17)*

The Environment (page 26)

Bath HTS Campaign group reported that “*Without adequate and affordable public transport, many parents feel that it is safer, more reliable and cheaper to use their cars and end up unwillingly adding to the serious problems of congestion and pollution in this area and increasing the amount of carbon emissions.*” This review supports the Sustainable Modes of Transport work being carried out by Andrew Stuck and encourages the use of alternative means of travel such as cycling and walking, (*walking and cycling Strategy Appendix 2*)

The Green Bus Scheme was considered by the steering group as an excellent example of school transport which has helped to lower the Carbon footprint by increasing the amount of children using the low emission buses and decreasing the amount of cars on the road at peak school travelling times. The steering group received a presentation from them and discussed the feasibility of the provision of a similar service being provided within B&NES.

Paulton (page 26)

This review has helped raise the specific issue of Secondary School transport for those children living within the Paulton area of B&NES. Young people who currently live in Paulton previously received a subsidy for their school travel until 2006, following the closure of Paulton Secondary School in 1971. The cost and reliability of children’s travel from Somervale to Paulton is both expensive and unreliable.

This also raised the concern that not enough parents on low income and living less than 3 miles but more than 2 miles in Paulton are taking advantage of the new legislation¹ to gain discounted travel which is currently being funded by Central Government. During this review local bus operator (Somerebus) has recently agreed with Somervale School to provide a School Bus service from Paulton after Easter (22nd April 2008).

Travel Plans (page 27)

The Panel considered the feasibility of developing Travel Plans corporately, however it was agreed that Travel Plans need to be owned by the school and not imposed on them if they are to be successful. 80% of school children are currently covered by School Travel Plans and it is important that they are monitored and reviewed on an annual basis and good practice rewarded.

Further considerations and proposals (page 27)

The CYP steering group have listened to presentations from the Green Bus and Yellow Bus Scheme in reviewing the best options that are available to B&NES and have compared the advantages and disadvantages of both schemes being provided within B&NES.

¹ This information is provided in the booklet “A Secondary School for Your Child” which is available to all pupils transferring to secondary education and is also published on the Council website.

The current restructuring of schools in Bath, which could have an effect on the transport movements from the North to the South of the river, have also been significant in reaching any future recommendations regarding school transport.

Recommendations

B&NES needs to demonstrate that they are committed to ensuring that young people can travel to and from school as safely, reliably and affordably as possible. The Panel recognise that the solution cannot be achieved by the Council alone but will require partnership between the Council, bus providers, schools, parents, local businesses and the wider community to achieve this.

To address some of the key issues identified within our research and building upon existing Council work the following recommendations were formed:

Recommendation 1

Based on the evidence gathered for this review the Panel believe that the current organisational structure for dealing with school transport issues in B&NES, whereby transportation policy is in a separate department to the procurement of statutory school transport, impedes the achievement of efficient and optimised school transport. The best practice evidence we have heard is that socially necessary transport and educational services should be managed together in the same department, and we believe this approach should be adopted by B&NES.

1.1 The Panel recommend an Integrated Transport Unit should be formed from elements of Children's Services and Transportation Planning with responsibility for overseeing the provision of safe and reliable school transport for all pupils in the Authority. Estimated Timescale (3 months)

(No cost implications as we already have staff in two areas but need joined up thinking and working arrangements)

Recommendation 2:

Based on the evidence gathered for this review the Panel believe that the Council should be aspiring to a standard school transport service which would prevent inconsistencies and benefit all children. The Council needs to think creatively to try to seek out possible funding opportunities in order to solve the current funding gap.

The Panel recommend the follow actions are undertaken:-

2.1 Use the key issues raised within this review to lobby the Government for general transport funding(Cost of a letter)

2.2 Examine the use of Kick start Funding. (Application deadline July 2009)
kickstart@dft.gsi.gov.uk. *(Customer Service Officers already aware of funding scheme)*

2.3 Investigate the possibility of the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) monies to provide a revenue stream for improving Secondary School transport. (Service officers to be asked the questions)

2.4 A strategy currently used by other Local authorities to bridge the funding gap is by maximising the off-peak use of school buses for other educational purposes e.g. swimming and other school trips in order to make buses as cost-effective as possible. (There is no cost implication but is a suggestion of how operators can raise more money to keep dedicated school bus costs down)

2.5 Integrated Commissioning of statutory and non statutory transport. (Cost: within Budget or by taking from fares we charge pupils)

Recommendation 3

The Panel recognise that the current transport system is not affordable for the majority of parents living within B&NES and particularly for those parents with more than one child at secondary school.

3.1 The Panel recommend that a £10.00 per week fair (Monday – Friday, term time only), fare to be paid up front and administered by the school. This would reduce the current price set by First Bus at £13.20. Timescale for action (3 months) to agree a term paid ticket. (Cost: This is part of the operators cost and a figure suggested to us by Green Bus that they would plan to use)

3.2 The Panel recommend a subsidy for parents with 2 or 3 or more children aged between 11-16 yrs with half price weekly tickets for the second and third child. (Cost: this is offered by the Operators, (Green Bus) Not subsidized by the Council)

Recommendation 4

This review has raised the concern that not all parents on low income and living less than 3 miles but more than 2 miles are taking advantage of the new legislation to gain discounted travel which is currently being funded by Central Government.

4.1 The entitlement needs to be re-publicised to all parents living within B&NES. This could start with a publication in the next Issue of Council News. (No cost implications)

Recommendation 5.

The key issues surrounding improved Secondary School Transport within B&NES have been raised and discussed within previous reviews; (2005 Secondary Education Provision in B&NES review and the Joint O&S Panel, Passenger Transport Service Review 2007.) This review has returned to many of the same issues which were not resolved in previous reviews and raises the concern that the issue of improved secondary school transport is not considered as a priority within the Council.

5.1. The Panel recommend that the current and ongoing issues of secondary school transport needs to be raised in the Councils priority of funding. (No cost implications)

Recommendation 6

The Panel recognise that the recent 'Somersbus' Service will only partially address the problem of transport for pupils living in and around Paulton as it will not serve the whole community.

The Panel recommend the follow actions are undertaken to improve the current transport system for pupils living in Paulton:-

6.1 Investigate the feasibility of low income entitlement families being used to subsidise the cost of running a local bus for the whole of the Paulton community. (Cost: within budget)

6.2 Investigate the possibility of re-routing statutory transport to pick up paying pupils. e.g. Farmborough via Ham Lane, and High Littleton via Downsway. (Cost: Tony Parker is already planning to ask Green bus to undertake some consultancy work and we anticipate that this can be included from within the budget he has available for this)

Recommendation 7

7.1 Any future transport plans should take into account the school issues raised within this review and consider the current restructuring of schools in Bath, which could have an effect on the transport movements from the North to the South of the river. (No cost implications)

Recommendation 8

8.1 The Panel recommend that a pilot scheme is undertaken at Ralph Allen School based on the high response to our online survey and the current transport difficulties that they are facing. We recommend that 'The Green Bus' are approached to provide the Council with a feasibility study on Ralph Allen School to determine the needs and requirements of the school pupils and parents.

8.2 The Panel also recommend that a pilot scheme (as above) is undertaken at Somervale School as this is the school that most pupils from the Paulton children travel to.

Estimated timescale for pilot schemes: September 2009, at the start of the next academic year. For a whole year and then reviewed.

The outcome of these pilot schemes could then be evaluated to determine its feasibility and benefits for the rest of B&NES Secondary schools.

Recommendation 9

The Panel recognise that safety is important to local children and parents and that further research should be undertaken into which local providers can provide a safe and reliable transport service for pupils travelling to secondary school within B&NES.

5. 1 The Panel recommend that the Executive Member examines the advantages of using a bus service with seat belts and a seat for every child. (No cost implications)

Recommendation 10

The review has highlighted that it is not feasible or safe for large numbers of young people in this area to walk or cycle 3 miles to school. The Panel agree that 1.5 miles is the most that a young person should be required to walk.

10. 1. The Panel recommends that any provision for school travel should consider the topography of B&NES before making any new proposals. (No cost implications)

Introduction

1. Historical background

The basis of this review has developed from the 2005 Passenger Transport review which was a joint Panel project which included Education, Youth, Culture & Leisure (EYCL), Planning, Transportation, Economy & Sustainability (PTES), and Health & Social Services (H&SS) Overview & Scrutiny Panels at that time.

The review raised the questions of how much transport does B&NES provide, including statutory and non statutory transport, and the cost effectiveness of this transport, such as 'Safe Routes to Schools', 'Special Needs' and denominational transport. It set out to investigate opportunities around improving this service delivery and costs across the whole range of Council managed passenger transport provision.

One of the recommendations of this review (4.9.1-4) specifically suggested the reform of transport policy for school pupils, from which this review has developed.

There has also been pressure from local parents. During the 22nd Nov 2007 Council Meeting there was a full submission from parents who were in support of the Bath Home to School Transport Campaign. A small group presented a petition which urged the Council to take action quickly to improve the bus services to schools and make bus services more affordable for all. Local Parents and Yellow Bus representatives had also attended the January 2008 Children and Young Peoples Panel meeting to follow the progress of this issue.

Specifically local parents wanted the Panel and Council to:-

1. Investigate free travel for 0-19 yr olds (O&S Panel and Parents talked about affordable travel)
2. Achieving seat belts for all children on public transport
3. Combat congestion, support sustainability
4. Provide a dependable service for young people to get to schools.

The combination of the above two developments has supported the move towards this review.

At the CYP Panel meeting on the 28th January 2008 it was agreed to:-

1. Carry out a single issue meeting to discuss the current non statutory home to school transport system in B&NES².
2. It was agreed at this meeting that the current transport system is outdated and is therefore unable to meet the needs of the young people living within our community.
3. This will be a cross authority review specifically looking at non-statutory Secondary School transport and those young people aged between 11 – 16 years.

2. Relevant policy developments (Education Inspection Bill 2007)³

The Bill places a duty on Local Authorities to ensure that suitable travel arrangements are made, free of charge, for certain 'eligible children' in their area including children from low income families, i.e. those entitled to free school meals, or whose parents are in receipt of their maximum level of working tax credit.

² Although the phrase "Home to School transport" was used at the meeting, it was not intended to imply the Councils own provision of transport to schools. This term will not now be used within this review.

³ www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/educationandinspectionact.

From September 2007 this applied to primary children aged between 8 and 11 from low income families attending a qualifying school more than two miles from their home.

From September 2008 this applied to secondary children aged between 11 and 16 from low income families attending one of their three nearest qualifying schools more than two miles but less than six miles from their home. It also applies to secondary children aged between 11 and 16 from low income families attending the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where they live more than two miles but not more than 15 miles from that school.

3. Transport for non-entitled pupils

Some parents are not entitled to free transport and may decide to send their children to school by bus. This may be for a relatively short journey or much further because they choose a school which is not the closest to their home address. In these circumstances the Council does not have a legal obligation to assist with the provision of transport. If spare seats are available on a vehicle carrying entitled children these can be allocated at a charge per term. Alternatively parents can choose to send their children on a public service bus if available.

From September 2006 the Council decided to remove the subsidy from all supported school public bus routes which has led to a much reduced service in Bath and North East Somerset. All parents whose children do not qualify for free transport must arrange the best way to get them to school whether this is by private car, bus, bicycle or walking.

Purpose

The purpose of this review is to maintain and improve transport services to school for young people in B&NES

Objectives

The objectives of this Overview & Scrutiny Review are to:-

- To incorporate the involvement of stakeholders (Parents, School, First Bus and all other local bus companies) in order to find the best possible solution to make non statutory transport from home to school meet the needs of young people in B&NES today)
- Ensure that the Council are meeting the five aims for every child as set out in the Children's & Young People plan 2006 – 09 (Local Area Agreement)
- Identify the non-statutory Secondary School transport routes currently being taken by young people, specifically focusing on their timings, frequency and usage.
- Identify the most affordable solution and maximise the use of existing resources.
- To understand the Education and Inspection Act 2006 and the new Extension of rights to free transport changes made from September 2008, specifically looking at any financial implications and in preparation for effective service delivery.
- Consider the outcome of choices made by parents if the current problems were met?

Methodology

The Panel undertook a number of different activities to gather information for this review

1. Research

- Investigated significant Legislation and Guidance documents available on transport from Home to school. (See Bibliography for full list)
- Reviewed previous work undertaken by the Council
- Determined what Travel Plans were in place within B&NES
- Contacted all Parish Councils for their views and experiences
- Determine the outcome of choices from parents if the current problems were met.
- The current facts and figures on public services provided by First Bus.

2. Best Practice Examples

- Investigated the financial feasibility of providing the Yellow Bus Scheme
- The Green Bus Scheme, Birmingham
- York YOzone card and the feasibility of providing something similar within B&NES
- Kent Youth Travel Card Entitlement for all 11- 16 year olds
- RidePegasus, Surrey County Council

3. Consultation

- A survey was sent to all Secondary School heads and School Governors within B&NES to try to help gain a picture of some of the key experiences and concerns of parents and children currently using non statutory transport in B&NES. The electronic consultation system was used to capture this information, but was also available in a variety of different formats. *(The response figures to this survey can be found in **Appendix 1** of this document)*
- A Public Contributor session was held on Dec 8th 2008, to establish the views of key stakeholders. I.e. parents, children, local residents, and First Bus.
- The following have presented or been consulted as part of this review
 1. **Campaign Group for Better Home-School Transport in B&NES**
 2. **Paulton Parish Council**
 3. Jenny Macleod Operations Director (First Avon & Somerset Ltd) **First Bus**
 4. Steve Jukes, General Manager & Ian Mack (The Green Bus' Managing Director) **Green Bus Scheme**
 5. Chris Large and Steve Hobbs, the **Yellow Bus Scheme**
 6. Various **Service Officers** have also been consulted for advice and guidance throughout the review
- We have also used various methods of communications to try to publicise the review to the general public i.e. (via e-mail, B&NES public O&S site, and the electronic consultation site, various press releases were also sent out throughout the reviews life cycle)

Out of Scope

Whilst the Panel recognise that there is some non-statutory transport provided for children with Special Educational Needs, this review did not consider transport for this group.

Findings

6. Research

The below strategic plans, strategies and travel data for B&NES all have a part to play in the general understanding of transport measures for school transport within B&NES. Each have informed the CYP steering group, when considering the feasibility of different options available to us and in reaching any recommendations.

- **Local Area Agreement (L.A.A)**

This review supports the five aims for every child as set out in the Children's & Young People plan 2006 – 09 (Local Area Agreement)

These are:-

- **Be Healthy**
- **Stay Safe**
- **Enjoy and Achieve**
- **Make a positive contribution**
- **Achieve Economic Well-being**

- **20 year vision**

The vision encourages the development of school Travel Plans and suggests that strong legible pedestrian and bicycle networks should also be incorporated into the transport infrastructure around schools and colleges as a means to build on "Safe Routes to Schools" initiatives.

Section (6.5) of the vision highlights the importance placed on cycling and walking within the Strategy. It is considered essential that these important modes are fully considered in the development of transport measures and that the Strategy builds on existing initiatives throughout the authority. (See **Appendix 2** for B&NES Walking and Cycling Strategy)

However, walking and cycling is not feasible for all children due to the topography of Bath, which makes it particularly difficult for some children to cycle or walk to their school, for example, Ralph Allen, Beechen Cliff, St Gregory's, and Wellsway School are both situated on a steep hill.

Bath package⁴

The package is a £54 million scheme to improve public transport and pedestrian access for all residents and visitors in the City of Bath and the surrounding area.

Developments in transport will include:-

- *Showcase bus routes* - upgrading 10 local bus routes throughout the city to showcase standards by improving accessibility with the introduction of level bus boarding, new shelters, and real time information on the busiest stops.
- *Bus-based Rapid Transit* -BRT will provide significantly faster journeys. A dedicated right of way for buses for a proportion of the route will segregate the bus from congestion and this will result in more consistent journey times on state of the art vehicles using cleaner fuels.
- *New and expanded Park & Ride sites* - doubling the current Park & Ride space provision
- *City Centre vehicle access restrictions, bus priority measures, and pedestrian enhancements are proposed.*
- *Travel Information Systems* providing Access to good information about travel choice and parking availability.

⁴ <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/transportandstreets/transportpolicy/plansandstrategies/bathpackage/>

However the Bath package does not appear to help address any of the issues raised within this review or benefit children using public transport to travel to secondary school in B&NES.

- **Sustainable Modes of Transport (Census Data)**

A consultant by the name of Andrew Stuck is currently producing a Sustainable Modes of Travel to School Strategy which will, when completed, include an audit of the sustainable travel and transport infrastructure within the authority that may be used when travelling to and from, or between schools / institutions. The overarching goal of which is the modal shift away from car use for the journey to and from school.

Key findings which are significant to this review include:-

- A significant proportion of pupil in Bath and North East Somerset do not attend their local school, instead attending a school of their parents' choice, for some these schools are beyond a reasonable walking or cycling distance
- There are approximately 3000 school pupils that are eligible for free home to school transport
- The majority of pupils in the authority area do walk to school, but there is a significant minority that are being taken to school by private car.
- Based on key pupil data contained within detailed Maps provided to the Panel, Chew Valley and Somervale School recorded a high percentage of pupils within walking threshold not walking to school. One reason for this could be that the mode of transport data for these two schools is largely unknown.
- Comparing B&NES to the West of England data, B&NES has the greatest reduction in car % mode journeys between 2002 and 2008 and also has the highest proportion of public transport journeys in the West of England which is also one of the highest in the country. On the other hand walking and cycling is relatively low in B&NES. (See Appendix 3 West of England data on school Travel 2008)

- **Public transport to school (Department for Transport Data DFT)**

The data supplied by the DFT indicates that 45.8% of Secondary School pupils travel by public transport, which is very high, compared to our boarder Local Authorities of Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset at 20.1%, 14.5% and 14.6% respectively and this high demand partly explains the problem that some pupils are experiencing.

Although there is some missing data from some schools, there are 4235 pupils travelling by public transport in B&NES (Captured during 2008). The highest recorded number of car sharing is reported at Oldfield Secondary School compared to Beechen Cliff and Culverhay who have no reports of car sharing transport. The DFT data also shows that Ralph Allen and St Gregorys schools have the highest reported use of local taxis to transport young people from home to school

7. Current Facts & Figures on public transport provided by First Bus

1. Each bus in the First Bus fleet needs £120,000 a year to cover all costs (but will make no profit) further costs such as servicing, MoT (Annual Test) and accident repairs also need to be taken into account in annual costs.

2. Current fare structure:

First discounts child fares (based on the adult price):

- A single ticket or peak return is available for those travelling on one bus to and from school. (£1.55 single, £2.80 return zones 1-3).
- A child First day ticket offers unlimited travel across all Bath City services on the day it is purchased (£2.90).

- A child weekly ticket (introduced Sept 08) is available offering unlimited travel across the city network for 7 days (£13.20).

3. First is committed to working closely with schools in the Bath area on school travel. A Schools Liaison Officer post has been established to work directly with schools and maintain dialogue on specific issues. However, dedicated school transport is considered by First Bus to be costly and is not easily integrated into the commercial network.

8. Best Practice



FirstGroup plc has set up a Yellow School bus Commission (see *Appendix 5*) chaired by the Rt. Hon. David Blunkett, to examine and quantify the environmental, social, educational, and time and cost benefits of a nationwide network of home to school transport.

The Yellow School bus is an icon of safety and reliability in North America and is the largest student bus company including the Greyhound Bus Co. And now for many parents across the UK, it is already their preferred choice for getting pupils to and from school each day. For example, three more services have been introduced this year with West Yorkshire being the biggest.

Yellow School Buses can be introduced to provide dedicated home to school transport for pupils who don't live close enough to school to either walk or cycle. They can offer parents a safe and reliable alternative to taking their child to school in the car, with pupils arriving at school, relaxed and ready to start the school day.

Recent work by the Yellow Bus Commission indicates additional expenditure on providing dedicated primary school bus services would be more cost effective than additional expenditure on secondary bus services as around twice as many travel by car to primary schools than Secondary Schools and the need for escorted trips is higher.

First Bus representatives came to talk to the Steering group on the 12th March and provided a breakdown of the benefits of the Yellow Bus Scheme and how it works in practice.

Benefits of the Yellow Bus Scheme:

- First offer a salary sacrifice scheme which allows employees tax incentives for using public transport.
- Dedicated home to school transport option which is bespoke and can be specialised to the school.
- Only registered students can use the service. It is not for general public use as they feel that this could risk the safety of pupils.
- Drivers are all CRB checked and trained to work with pupils, the same driver is used each day, pupils have the same seat every day and only new dedicated buses are used.

⁵ <http://www.ysbcommission.com//index.html>

- All buses have CCTV and CD players/radios to allow pupils a smooth journey to focus their minds before school.
- Drivers can produce registers at the schools request, parents will call the contact centre to tell them if their child isn't going to school and the driver will call the contact centre who will then contact the parent if a child does not show up.
- The buses used are 55 seater buses with wheel chair access, all have seat belts and all buses are new.
- Route planning is based on registered students post codes so that routes can be adapted annually as needed.
- Yellow Bus can work directly with the school or local authority who would be responsible for the administration.
- The bus will always run the whole route, even if it's running late, to ensure students get home safely.
- Yellow bus have trialled the use of GPS but are also looking for alternatives, they currently use radio.

Pilot schemes and trials

The pilot which ran in Bristol several years ago saw the Council set the fares and do the administration with the schools. The pupils were issued with passes by either the school or Council and they didn't pay on the bus. The school's collected the fares upfront. First Bus were then paid in the same way as any other contract. The scheme had the added benefit of reducing truancy by 58%. Unfortunately the price increased after the council withdrew funding.

In Hampshire, the schools handle the administration of forms and these are collated by Hampshire County Council. The school deals with the bulk of administration and around £4 per day of the fare is subsidised by the school.

15 Yellow Buses were also used in Bath during the student games.

Costs of running a Yellow Bus Scheme

£250 per day for 190 days (£47.5k per year) and utilised between 7.30-9.30 and 2.30-5.30. The cost is based on mileage, the actual cost would be nearer £350 per day but the Yellow Bus Co. uses 'inter peaking' which involves renting out the bus when it is not in use during the school day e.g.

Swimming trips, school trips etc. In Southampton the Yellow Bus scheme generated an additional £200k to help reduce overall costs. The £250 per day will be charged regardless of whether the bus is full or not.

In general, the more pupils who can make use of the same bus by staggered start times, school clubs etc, the more likely a scheme is to be viable as fewer buses would be needed.

If we assume that we have a fully occupied 50 seat Yellow Bus, this equates to an unsubsidised fare of £5 a day per pupil. In practice, Yellow School Bus schemes are usually subsidised by the Local authority, with fares ranging from £1 to £2.80 a day.

The overall estimated cost still works out cheaper than the original quote supplied to us from First Bus who said a commercial bus run would cost £120k, which does not take into account those students who receive free statutory home to school transport.

Possible options

It may also be possible to run a scheme for a particular school, however making a decision of which school would be difficult, and considering the lack of defined catchment areas for schools, which results in some pupils travelling much further than others also adds to the complexity.

The Yellow Bus Company would be looking for a minimum of a 3 year contract, even for a pilot scheme which they estimate would take around a year to set up.

Sponsorship from local businesses is another option to consider but it would have to be a suitable company. I.e. not a fast food company for example.

The number of bus distances involved and hours the bus is in use all affect the price. The YSB will also have to be kept with the First Bus fleet during school holidays, and the cost of the driver will still need to be covered.

An agreement was made by the steering group that the Council would need to contribute to make the best use of the Yellow Bus scheme.

(Option 1)

- a. Assume the price is £2 a day (£1 a journey) and eligibility is living > 1.5 miles away by reasonable walking route. Figures could be estimated for the whole of B&NES and for a single school. (i.e. Ralph Allen)

First Bus would consider the plans for providing Secondary School transport if B&NES could provide the funding:



6

The Green Bus advertises itself as a fun, low carbon way for children to travel to and from school. It's the traditional school bus, but re-invented for the 21st Century.

In the academic year 2005/2006 the Green Bus operated 9 bus services, and in 2006/07 the brand quickly spread across other schools, making a total of 19 services in 2008. Green Bus currently operates 23 bus services in the Birmingham area. The company plans to expand into other areas, starting in September 2009.

The Green Bus is operated by a private for-profit company, and its services are subject to the same regulatory framework as any other commercial operation.

What's different about the Green bus?

- A very strong customer service focus - customers can talk to real people quickly
- All buses are tracked using GPS technology every 6/7 seconds
- Customers can track their own bus via their website, www.thegreenbus.co.uk
- Free text messaging service (automatic)
- Free on board Wi-Fi (wireless internet)
- Excellent lost property service

⁶ www.thegreenbus.co.uk

- They will also be introducing biometrics to identify pupils, with the aim of speeding up boarding

Green Bus representatives came to talk to the steering group on Feb 25th and highlighted some of the many benefits that the service can provide and questions were asked of how this scheme could meet the needs of young people living within B&NES.

The following summarises the issues relevant to this review arising from the Green Bus presentation:

1. Services are provided to Secondary Schools only.
2. Children are dispersed around the Local Authority and many travel for much longer distances than would be usual in B&NES. Very few children in the Birmingham area are entitled to statutory transport.
3. Green Bus aims to deliver a significant modal shift from parents/pupils using cars to get to school. It was claimed that modal shift of 35% had been achieved, which is much higher than usually achieved by yellow bus schemes (circa 20%).
4. Green Bus has evidence to show reduced congestion and pollution, diminished traffic risks around schools and time benefits for parents.
5. Current cost per day for an annual ticket in Birmingham is around £2.50, and everybody regardless of distance pays the same fare. However, the local Passenger Transport Executive (Centro) subsidises each ticket by this amount, so the unsubsidised cost is around £5 a day.
6. Despite the relatively high annual cost of a Green Bus pass (£475) the service is very popular and the company has found that parents seem to be prepared to pay a premium for a reliable, safe service.
7. A new service is planned in another city from September 2009 that is able to offer a ticket for less than £2.50 a day without any subsidy. This is achieved because each bus serves two schools each day, with the schools having a start time staggered by 50 minutes. This illustrates the efficiencies that can be gained from staggered school start times.
8. It costs Green Bus around £57k a year to run each bus. This is the full cost, including the capital cost of the bus itself. This is more than the circa £45k that the Yellow Bus Commission believes should be possible but significantly less than the estimated £120k cost provided to us by First Bus. Green Bus operates mid-age vehicles – it was pointed out that brand new buses would cost a lot more.
9. For those families on low income and entitled to free travel, the Local Authority will purchase the cost of the ticket from Green Bus
10. Second and subsequent children from the same family using the service receive a discount of a third.
11. One of the key aspects of the Green Bus is their partnership with the schools, which provide them with postcode details of where pupils live and allows detailed consultation to determine what local parents/ pupil's requirement are i.e. match bus size to service demand.
12. The application process for students is by free post and requires home address details and a photo. This would remove the complicated application process that currently exists within B&NES. This can be paid on an annual basis or through instalments (with no interest)
13. Green Bus plans to pilot the use of free bus passes for sixth form (Year 13) users to try to discourage use of their own cars and improve the bus experience of this age group using public transport.
14. The Green Bus guarantees a dedicated bus driver and the same driver every day (CRB checked)

15. Green Bus does not provide seat belts, and it does not guarantee to avoid standing – although this is rare because of the care taken to match demand to bus capacity.
16. Green Bus provides the facility to hire the bus out during the day, for activities such as school trips etc, which can help to reduce the overall cost for parents.

The evidence from Green Bus suggests that the basic cost of operating a high standard, dedicated school bus service is around £5 a day per pupil (£25 a week). This is considerably more even than the current First Bus weekly ticket in Bath (£13.20), and would be unaffordable to many. Strategies for reducing the cost include using each bus for two school runs each day (which means staggering school start times), finding alternative uses for the buses during school hours and obtaining sponsorship.

One proposal discussed during this meeting was to investigate undertaking a pilot operation in one secondary school first, such as Ralph Allen. Green Bus agreed to undertake a detailed survey and analysis to determine the needs and requirements of the school pupils and parents. B&NES could then analyse the outcome of this experiment to determine its feasibility and benefits for the rest of B&NES secondary schools.

- **YOzone Card (York Council)⁷**



Thousands of young people who live or study in York are taking advantage of a discount card to get out and about, with the help of the City of York Council.

More than 5,000 young people use the YOzone card, launched by the Council in March 2007, which offers a huge range of benefits for youngsters up to the age of 16 years.

The main advantage of the card is the chance to use the buses at discounted fares. Prices start as low as 50p for a single journey on some services if you have a YOzone card. The card also entitles pupils to discounts at leisure facilities, including swimming pools. Leisure centres, museums and outlets, including Vue Cinema, Tenpin, Bella Italia and discounts on healthy food at Out of this World.

The YOzone card is available free to any young person still in secondary education in years 7-11 who is resident and/or student in the City of York Council area.

The Democratic Action for Banes Youth (DAFBY) Members looked at the YoZone card scheme from York Council and felt that it was a good idea. However they did raise concerns that some young people in the more rural parts of the authority would not benefit because public transport is almost non-existent in those places. This scheme is also a Local Authority scheme, rather than an operator scheme and there are currently more operators in York than in Bath which makes the running costs more viable.

DAFBY have previously looked at the idea of supporting a similar scheme, called the 'smart card' for young people, that could be used to enable discount in local shops, leisure facilities and transport - public and private hire - and to replace the c-card for accessing free condoms. The Members felt that this report could encourage the review of this card scheme again for the future.

⁷ <http://www.york.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/july/229736>

- **Kent Youth Travel Card⁸**

Kent Council have been undertaking a consultation from April 2008 to March 2009 regarding the introduction of a Kent Youth Travel card entitling all 11 to 16 year olds to free public transport in the County, subject to the outcome of two district pilots.(One in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells and in the Canterbury District).

The Travel Card Scheme is subject to a small processing charge to cover the administrative costs. They have surveyed the views of young people in the pilot areas to ascertain the demand. These schemes will run for two years, after the first year they will be evaluated and then plan to roll them out across the whole of Kent if the pilots succeed.

To date over 40% of Kent's schools have a Green Travel Plan which helps to reduce the 'school run', promotes safe routes to school and supports walking buses. The majority of these plans relate to primary schools. They also continue to work with schools on road safety and cycling schemes to encourage alternatives to car journeys to school.

- **RidePegasus⁹**

RidePegasus currently provides a state-of-the-art transport service for primary aged school children in Surrey. It aims to reduce traffic congestion and local pollution by encouraging parents to regularly send their children to school by bus instead of travelling by car

RidePegasus is similar to the Yellow Bus Scheme operation, for 850 pupils from 14 schools. The kids pay £1.70 a day. It appears to be a great service however it costs £5M in capital to initially set up, and requires an annual subsidy of £1M a year to keep going. This illustrates the point that Yellow Bus schemes invariably seem to require large subsidies.

⁸ <http://kent.gov.uk/Council-and-democracy/about-the-Council/Council-performance/annual-plan/ap07-moving.htm>.

⁹ www.surreycc.gov.uk/ridepegasus

9. Consultation & Investigation

The Public Contributor Session, Public Surveys and Consultation with the Better Home to School Transport Campaign Group have helped to identify specific key issues and concerns with transport to secondary school. Service Officers have also undertaken several investigations to examine the feasibility of possible options available to the Council in resolving some of these issues.

Each of the below key issues and concerns have been summarised and examined below:-
(Please note: 90% of pupils survey results came from Ralph Allen School)

• Cost

Bath HTS Campaign group “Affordable means bus journeys priced so that parents can actually afford to send their pupils to school on public transport. Please note that we are NOT necessarily asking for free transport – just affordable transport.”

Survey results of the cost of transport with B&NES

- 52% of parents felt that the cost of their child’s transport to school is too high.
- 65% of pupils said that the transport that they use to get to and from school is not free
- 12% of pupils use part subsidised transport to get to/from school. The majority of this transport is used daily.
- Some parents with more than one child using public transport felt that having to pay out a full fare was too expensive so they choose to drive them half the way to reduce the cost.
- The Cost of school transport is the top key concern or problem raised by parents and pupils. (See **Appendix 6** which provides a detailed explanation of each issue or concern highlighted from parents and pupils)

The key issues surrounding the cost of Secondary School transport are:-

- a) What others are paying for transport?
- b) Cost becomes a significant issue for parents when having to pay the cost of multiple children travelling to Secondary School in B&NES?

The Panel have considered possible options available:-

(Option 1)

- Weekly Rover card (Mon- Fri) anytime/ journey or route =£10.00 (11-16yrs olds, currently £13.20)
- Approach First Bus for a £130 term ticket organised by the school – collected and paid up front
- Pilot at Ralph Allen School

(Option 2)

The question was raised, approximately how much might it cost to subsidise parents with 2 or 3 or more children aged between 11-16 years with half-price weekly tickets (i.e. £5.00) for the second or third.

The ONE team have produced a report which enables us to identify the number of families with more than one child, this has provided the steering group with the following estimated costings:-

B&NES currently serves a total of 1930 families with 2 children, 154 families with 3 children, 6 families with 4 and 2 with 5 attending secondary school. This gives a total of 2092 that could possibly be subsidised. Approximately a third of all children live between 1.5 and 3 miles so we could be subsidising approx 1400 students.

If a £5 subsidy was offered for each children this would give an annual cost of 1400 pupils x 39 weeks x £5 = £273,000. Note: this does assume that ALL children in this bracket will travel by bus.

Or alternatively, parents could pay the full fare for first and second children, and the ticket for the third and subsequent children would then be free. This would cost a lot less (£40k on a very rough estimate) and would target the families with the greatest transport costs.

B&NES current fare paying charge for passengers who take up places on our home to school buses is £47 per term (6 term year) with a 50% reduction for the 2nd and 3rd child.

• **Distance & Journey time**

Regional data gathered and shared by the Department for Children Schools and Families School Travel Advisory indicates that a distance of 2000 metres is a reasonable distance to expect Secondary aged children to walk to school. However the steering group felt that this should be less and agreed that: 1.5 miles = 30 minutes, is a reasonable distance and time to walk to school. The survey results also reflected this agreement. (See below)

Survey results on children's travel and distance to school

- The majority of children live between 1-6 miles from their school.
- On average most children take between 15 & 30 minutes to get to and from school.
- 40% of children have to wait 5-10 minutes for a bus
- 20% of parents drop their children at a bus stop to catch public transport. One of the reasons provided by parents for this is because it would take too long for their child to walk to the bus stop
- Some children have to take more than one bus to get to school, which can take an hour to get to and from school each day.

• **Reliability**

Bath HTS Campaign group “*Reliable means =*

a) Providing buses that get young people to school on time, unstressed and ready to learn

b) Reliable also means providing buses that get young people home swiftly and safely in the afternoons, so that they can get on with their homework in a calm frame of mind and have time to relax

c) And reliable means providing buses that have enough space on them for the numbers of children who need to get on them.”

The survey asked children what effects their time taken to travel to school, traffic congestion was considered the most common cause coupled by the un-reliability of the bus. As a consequence of this unreliability some parents also choose to drop their child at the bus stop to make sure that they don't miss it, thus adding to the traffic congestion. Furthermore if the buses are too expensive, parents will not use it and add to the congestion and reliability will continue to be an issue.

The CYP steering group felt the issue of reliability surrounded capacity. Further investigation has revealed that the reliability of buses within B&NES is currently no different than in any other bus operator. However the ongoing issue which has been brought to the Council's attention surrounds the capacity concerns of children travelling to Ralph Allen School and the most recent withdrawal of buses 20A/C.

- **Safety**

Bath HTS Campaign group

- "a) Safe means a seat for every child travelling by bus, not standing*
- b) Safe also means providing enough buses at the times our children need them, so that they are not left standing around in lonely spots in the dark*
- c) And safe means not having our children walking around with pockets full of change for their bus fares, easy prey for those people who know they are likely to have cash on them"*

The steering group has briefly considered and examined the various options available to provide travel cards which are similar to the 'YoZone card' used in York, which would mean that children would not need to carry change, and would potentially become less of a target for thieves.

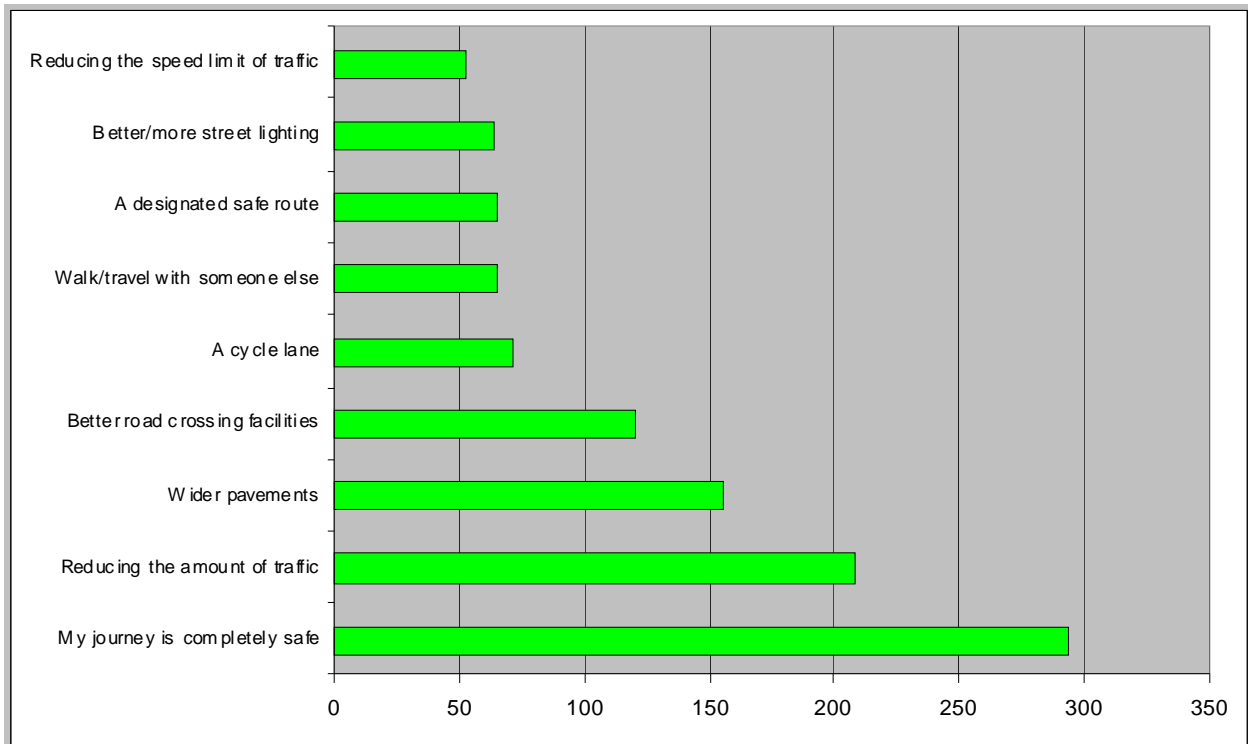
Survey results on children's safety to school

Of those children that take the bus, 77% said that there were no seatbelts on the bus and 72% said that where there was seatbelts they were not made to wear them.

This issue regarding the compulsory use of seatbelts on school buses was also discussed during one of the CYP steering group meetings and it was agreed that the Council is unable to enforce Private Bus Companies to provide seat belts if it is not part of their statutory entitlement, but raises questions regarding the suitability of private school transport providers

The survey also asked parents what concerns they have about their children travelling to/from school. The top concern was their child's safety. Some parents reported dropping their children at the bus stop depending on how dark it is as they felt that it was not safe for them to walk.

Children were also asked what would improve their safety to school (*See below bar graph*)

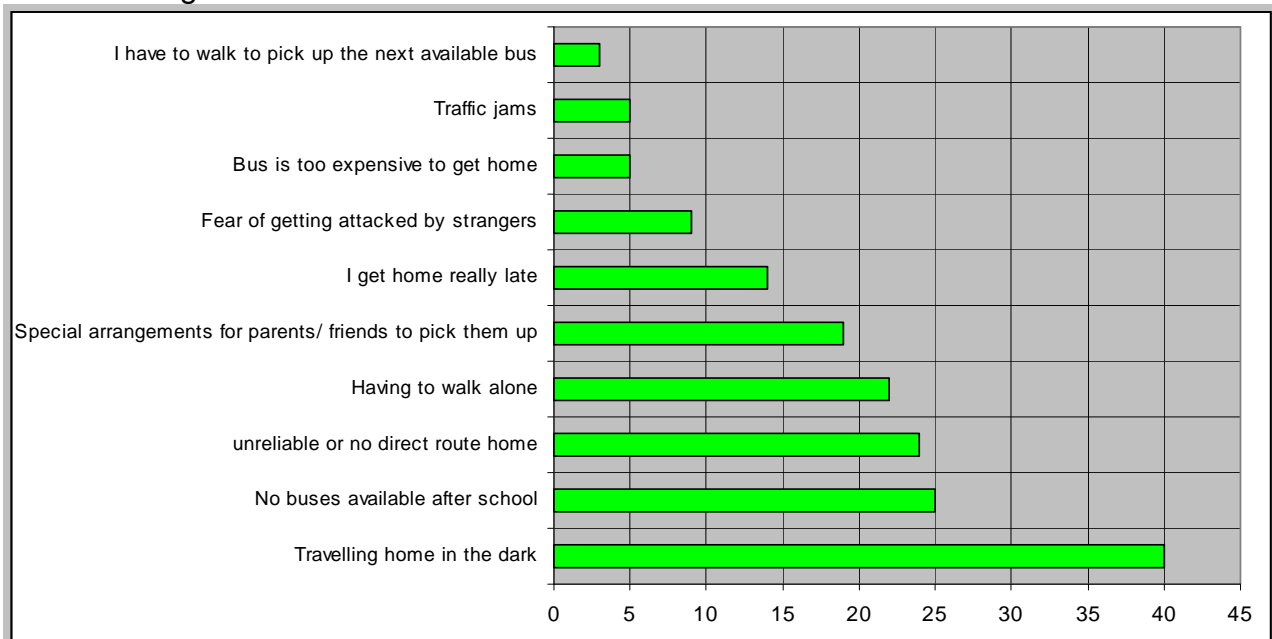


A large number of children felt that their journey to school was completely safe.

Other suggestions made by parents to improve their child's safety to school, were to, improve the overall standard of buses, bus lanes, frequency of buses available and also enforcing parking restrictions near to Secondary Schools

The surveys also highlighted parents and children's concerns with the safety of children involved in after school activities.

The below bar chart highlights some of the main concerns that children have about travelling home after school, the top two being concerned about travelling home in the dark and no available bus for them to get home.



50% of the pupils that responded to the survey were involved in after school activities. However these figures could be higher if it is safer to travel home after school.

- **The Environment**

Bath HTS Campaign group “ *Without adequate and affordable public transport, many parents feel that it is safer, more reliable and cheaper to use their cars and end up unwillingly adding to the serious problems of congestion and pollution in this area and increasing the amount of carbon emissions.*”

This review supports the Sustainable Modes of Transport work being carried out by Andrew Stuck and encourages the use of alternative means of travel such as cycling and walking, (*walking and cycling Strategy Appendix 2*) It also looks for alternative options available to the Council to decrease the current carbon footprint of pupils and parents travelling to Secondary School within B&NES.

Some of the Best Practice methods used by other Councils, such as Birmingham and the Green Bus scheme have helped to lower the Carbon footprint by increasing the amount of pupils using the low emission buses and decreasing the amount of cars on the road at peak school travelling times. (See page 18)

- **Paulton**

This review has helped raise the specific issue of Secondary School transport for those children living within the Paulton area of B&NES.

Council Members from Paulton Parish Council and local resident Teresa Edwards (who provided a list of signatures of local parents for the free return of school buses to Somervale and Norton Hill School) addressed the Panel at the Public Contributor session on Dec 8th. They highlighted that young people who lived in Paulton previously received a subsidy for their school travel until 2006, following the closure of Paulton Secondary School in 1971. It currently costs £2.70 a day for a child to travel to Somervale from Paulton – the 8:23am service however often arrives at school after 9:00am making the service unreliable for local pupils.

Village boundaries appear to have an impact on who is able to receive a subsidy, for example, pupils in Farrington Guerne and Timsbury currently receive free transport.

Possible options investigated & reviewed

The Panel are concerned that not enough parents on low income are taking advantage of the new legislation¹⁰ funded by Central Government to gain discounted travel. This grant enables more low income parents to access a variety of schools. Parents who's children already go to school and live less than 3 miles but more than 2 miles within the Paulton area will also qualify for free transport to school.

(Option 1)

a) Further investigation of those families who are entitled to the Government grant and a letter sent to them explaining their entitlement?

¹⁰ This information is provided in the booklet “A Secondary School for Your Child” which is available to all pupils transferring to secondary education and is also published on the Council website.

Response: There is currently no requirement for B&NES to write to all parents regarding the low income grant. The grant is advertised in our Admission Booklets and on the Council web site. B&NES Officers within the Admissions & Transport Unit will advise and check for parents if a transport application is received. If however, Council Officers write to all parents and they discovered that more children qualify than we expected, then B&NES would have to fund the difference if the cost exceeded the grant.

(Option 2)

a) The feasibility for a bus to be organised on behalf of parents from Paulton to Midsomer Norton. Identifying any children less than 3 miles but more than 2 miles living in Paulton on low income who could claim the new free transport.

A local bus operator (Somerbus) has recently agreed with Somervale School to provide a School Bus service from Paulton after Easter (22nd April 2008). Details of the proposed route and times are now available (*see Appendix 7 of this report for further details*)

The vehicle will have 27 seats and some space for standing passengers, making the total capacity about 40. This will provide additional capacity to that already provided by First's bus service 178. Somerbus have stated that unfortunately it would not be financially viable to invest in a larger vehicle as the revenue would not cover the costs of running this service and may still not meet the needs of all those young children needing travel within the Paulton area.

Note: Concerns highlighted by parents and children which were specific to other Secondary Schools within B&NES were also analysed. (*see Appendix 8 for full list*)

• **Travel Plans**

Those schools with a Travel Plan are now required to collect 'usual mode of travel to school data' and to include it each year in their Spring Census return. For schools that do not have a School Travel Plan the collection of mode of travel to school data, via the School Census, is not mandatory however schools may supply this data on a voluntary basis.

A Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy for schools is currently being developed to guide and monitor the preparation of School Travel Plans and establish good practice. There is an annual budget plus an annual government grant of £25,000 for the development of school Travel Plans, which is used to employ a consultant who works with the schools to collect this data.

The Panel considered the feasibility of developing Travel Plans corporately, however it was agreed that Travel Plans need to be owned by the school and not imposed on them if they are to be successful. 80% of school pupils are currently covered by School Travel Plans and it is important that they are monitored and reviewed on an annual basis and good practice rewarded.

Key findings:-

- Out of the 13 Secondary Schools within B&NES 8 have Sustainable Travel Plans (see Appendix 4 for pupil mode of travel to school table)
- There are specific plans of where year 7 pupils live in relation to Ralph Allen, Hayesfield and Beechen Cliff Secondary Schools. These are three schools where public transport demand is particularly high based on the School Census data.
- B&NES currently provides free home to school transport for St Marks and St Gregorys Faith Schools, which require an assessment based on demand.

• **Choice**

Parents were asked how they would prefer their children to travel to school. 67% said that they would prefer to send them by school bus.

The majority of children felt that it was a joint decision between parents and children on how they choose to travel to school

The top four chosen methods of transport from home to school are by:

- School bus
- Public bus
- Car driven by parent/ carer
- Walk with friend/ brother/ sister

The top three reasons pupils gave for not using public transport include:-

- Its expensive
- I walk/ travel by bicycle
- or get a lift to/ from school

• **Other key Survey Findings:-**

Parents and children were also asked to provide us with one suggestion of how to improve the current transport to Secondary Schools within B&NES. The combined list highlights these suggestions in order of frequency of answers provided.

1. A dedicated school bus for all Secondary Schools which is either subsidised or free to pupils which would help in reducing congestion and the effects to the environment.
2. Provide bigger and newer buses which have more seats (with seatbelts) to reduce overcrowding
3. Provide more buses to reduce unreliability of travelling from home to school, particularly at specific peak times of the day
4. Improve the cycle lanes around B&NES (Specific request from Writhlington School to Peasdown) which would encourage more pupils to cycle to school
5. Better bus routes to schools i.e. fewer pick up's and quicker routes at peak times.
6. Provide more bus shelters for pupils
7. Pavements and roads on bus routes to school to make wider and smoother
8. Provide more bus stops
9. More zebra crossings to improve the safety of pupils travelling to school
10. Combine transport for boys travelling to Beechen Cliff and girls travelling to Hayesfield School

• **Further considerations (Future development)**

1) The restructuring of schools in Bath are key to future school transport movements as there is a very high demand for transport from the north to the south of the river because of the perceived lack of choice of schools to the north. This place's a strain on public transport services; however the services provided by First Bus appear to be coping reasonably well based on the evidence provided to date. It is also essential that in choosing a new location for a school in Bath that bus services are made as accessible as possible for those who need to use them.

2) Funding streams available: It is possible that Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) monies could provide a revenue stream for improving home to school bus services, but not at the expense of

walking and cycling. However, the topography of Bath only makes walking and cycling safe for a small minority of pupils as the hills and busy roads can make this option unfeasible for many.

The emphasis is very much on developing school Travel Plans rather than considering bus services on their own. The allocation of any new TIF money is likely to be consistent with the recommendations contained in the Yellow Bus Commission report. This report provides a reasonable basis for considering improvements to home to school bus services, but identifies primary school public transport as a priority over Secondary School public transport

Conclusion

This review has been a substantial piece of overview investigation and analysis to try to determine what the real issues are for local parents and children using the current secondary school transport system in B&NES. It has provided the CYP Panel with a number of proposals to consider of how the current school transport system can be improved and provided the opportunity for the Bath Home to School Campaign Group to play an active role in ensuring that we are meeting the needs of young people in our local community.

An acceptance of each of the recommendations proposed would provide significant benefits to children and help to resolve some of the key issues raised within this review. Some of these benefits would include; reducing congestion and pollution, increasing the time benefits for parents and making the service more cost effective for those families with more than one child travelling to secondary school. It will also add to the Councils modal shift targets with many more children choosing to travel to school by bus rather than by car.

Next Steps

The final Report and Recommendations will be presented to the full Children and Young People Public Panel meeting on the **23rd March**. The relevant Cabinet Members, Cllr Chris Watt (Children's Services), and Cllr Charles Gerrish, (Customer Services) will then receive the recommendations and supporting briefing papers and will have up to 6 weeks to respond to them. (estimated return by **8th May 09**)

The Cabinet has the following options:

- **Accept** the Panel's recommendation
- **Reject** the Panel's recommendation
- **Defer** a decision on the recommendation because a response cannot be given at this time. This could be because the recommendation needs to be considered in light of a future Cabinet decision, imminent legislation, relevant strategy development or budget considerations, etc.

Implementation Date

- For 'Accept' decision responses, give the date that the recommendation will be implemented.
- For 'Defer' decision responses, give the date that the recommendation will be reconsidered.
- For 'Reject' decisions this is not applicable so write n/a

Appendices

- 1. Response figures to the school survey**
- 2. B&NES Walking and Cycling Strategy**
- 3. West of England Data on School Travel**
- 4. B&NES pupil mode of travel to school: Pupils aged 11- 16 (Jan 08)**
- 5. Yellow School bus Commission Report 2008**
- 6. Table Key concerns problems with current transport Home to School transport (highlighted by local parents survey)**
- 7. The New proposed Paulton School Bus timetable**
- 8. Concerns within specific areas of Home to School travel routes within B&NES**

Response figures to the school survey

Surveys were sent to the following Secondary Schools within B&NES:

Beechen Cliff (Boys), **Broadlands** (mixed co-ed), **Chew Valley** (mixed co-ed), **Culverhay** (Boys)
Hayesfield Technology (Girls), **Norton Hill** (mixed co-ed), **Oldfield** (Girls with Boys sixth form)
Ralph Allen (mixed co-ed), **St Gregorys Catholic** (Mixed), **St Marks Church of England** (Mixed co-ed), **Somervale** (Mixed), **Wellsway** (Mixed), **Writhlington** (Mixed)

Parents and pupils were asked to complete the survey which set out to identify the key issues and concerns of pupils and parents travelling from home to Secondary School and to help inform the CYP Panel about the needs of parents and pupils within B&NES.

In summary we received 1007 surveys (215 came from parents of pupils at local Secondary Schools and 792 from local pupils) 90% of responses came from pupils at Ralph Allen School and parents at the following Secondary Schools:-

- Writhlington school
- St Marks CoE
- Chew Valley
- Ralph Allen School

The majority of parents and student responses to the survey came from pupils who are in year 7, 8, 9 and we received fewer responses from parents or pupils who were in older school years.

Walking Strategy

A Walking Strategy set aggressive targets that by 2010, to increase the number of pupils walking to school by 40% of the 2001 level.

The Council has already adopted a number of principles which will guide the development of the Walking Strategy. These include:-

- the need to reinforce natural corridors of movement. This could be, for example, through providing further crossing places or pedestrian priority
- making the Strategy destination-based – in other words, building it around existing or potential nodes of pedestrian concentration such as offices, suburbs etc
- incorporating it more formally within development control procedures (e.g. ‘how does this proposal assist walking?’)
- ensuring that those without access to a car have real choice (e.g. linking residential areas to shops with uninterrupted pedestrian links, providing good walking access to bus stops and railway stations).

It is likely that the Strategy will create a particularly significant potential for increased walking in Education – schools, colleges and universities

Key developments within B&NES:-

- Bath’s CI:TE team is putting forward a programme of schemes for Bath City Centre which are developed around the principle of reallocation of road space to pedestrians. Keynsham and Norton-Radstock also have planned or approved schemes to improve the safety, convenience and attractiveness of the centres for pedestrians.
- A strategic urban walking network report for the City of Bath was undertaken in 2002 that identified a number of issues including pavement parking, inadequate footway widths, and hazardous crossing points, and subsequent budgetary provision has been made to prioritise remedial action. A similar network report for Radstock and Midsomer Norton was also undertaken.
- School keep clear zig zags have been installed outside a number of schools, and at the time of each new academic year, considerable publicity is made about them.
- School safety zones, 20 mph speed restrictions and traffic calming are all mechanisms that have been used by the authority to slow traffic and make drivers more aware of schools and school opening times.

Cycling Strategy

Strategic cycle network reports were undertaken in 2002 for the City of Bath, Keynsham and Saltford, and Radstock and Midsomer Norton.

Key findings:-

- Schools in Bath are not particularly well located for easy journeys by bicycle, with steep climbs and narrow historical streets being common, and although the city centre itself is relatively flat, journeys by bike have to compete with high traffic flows.
- The Bristol and Bath railway path to the west, and the Kennet and Avon canal to the east, offer flat traffic-free routes however there is a lack of strategic, coherent and continuous on-road cycle routes.
- Midsomer Norton and Radstock are compact towns, less troubled by traffic congestion and danger than Bath and the potential for cycle use is correspondingly higher. A strategic route has been created known as the Norton Radstock Greenway, which is

proving popular as a leisure route, and the authority is working towards creating cycle links from schools to the greenway.

Key developments within B&NES:-

- An authority wide cycle route map that includes school locations is published and distributed to schools.
- A Bike-It officer is in post who works on a sub-regional basis that includes part of Bristol and South Gloucestershire as well as in the authority areas; this has succeeded in substantially increasing cycling at two schools: Saltford Primary school and Broadlands School in Keynsham.
- More than 700 pupils in 51 schools received cycle training in 2007/8 and demand for cycle training is on the increase

West of England Data on School Travel

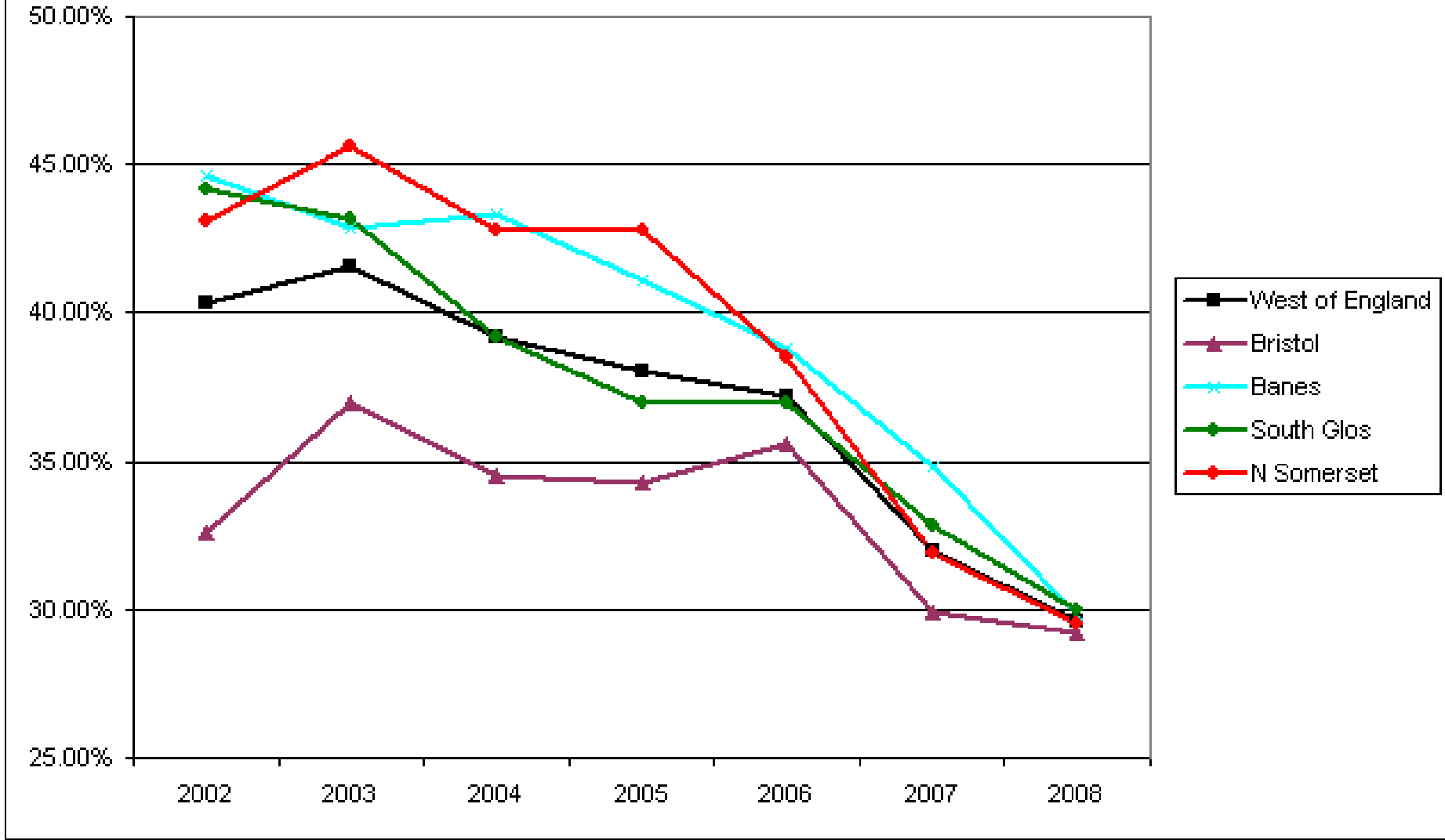
B&NES has the greatest reduction in car % mode journeys between 2002 and 2008 and also has the highest proportion of public transport journeys in the West of England which is also one of the highest in the country. On the other hand walking and cycling is relatively low in B&NES

School Travel

Car % mode share 2002-07	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007*	2008*	2002 to 2008 % change
West of England	40.3%	41.6%	39.2%	38.0%	37.2%	32.0%	29.6%	-10.7%
Bristol	32.6%	37.0%	34.5%	34.3%	35.6%	29.9%	29.2%	-3.4%
B&NES	44.6%	42.9%	43.3%	41.1%	38.8%	34.8%	29.8%	-14.8%
South Gloucestershire	44.2%	43.2%	39.2%	37.0%	37.0%	32.8%	30%	-14.2%
N Somerset	43.1%	45.6%	42.8%	42.8%	38.5%	31.9%	29.5%	-13.6%

Percentage mode share of travel to school	School Type	Car (including vans and taxis)	Car share	Public Transport	Walking	Cycling	Other form of transport
West of England	Primary	35.90%	4.20%	2.35%	55.90%	1.51%	0.13%
	Secondary	16.80%	2.87%	24.62%	48.62%	4.98%	2.11%
	Special	27.47%	3.62%	12.17%	52.69%	3.04%	1.01%
Bristol	Primary	32.5%	4.0%	2.1%	60.1%	1.3%	0.2%
	Secondary	14.4%	3.6%	20.1%	55.2%	3.7%	3.0%
	Special	25.5%	3.9%	9.0%	58.2%	2.2%	1.2%
Bath and North East Somerset	Primary	38.3%	2.2%	3.8%	55.1%	0.6%	0.1%
	Secondary	19.2%	2.0%	45.8%	28.0%	1.7%	3.3%
	special	28.9%	2.1%	24.5%	41.7%	1.1%	1.7%
South Gloucestershire	Primary	35.7%	3.6%	1.5%	56.9%	2.2%	0.2%
	Secondary	15.6%	3.9%	14.5%	55.8%	8.5%	1.6%
	special	26.7%	3.8%	7.3%	56.4%	5.0%	0.8%
North Somerset	Primary	40.8%	6.8%	3.2%	47.5%	1.7%	0.1%
	Secondary	19.4%	1.3%	26.9%	46.9%	4.6%	0.9%
	Special	30.5%	4.1%	14.6%	47.2%	3.1%	0.5%

Car % Mode Share 2002 - 2008



Appendix 4

All schools excluding independent schools, general hospital schools and pupil referral units: pupil mode of travel to school: pupils aged 11 – 16 (Jan 08)

	Sustainable Travel Plan	Walk	Cycle	Car/Van	Car Share	Public Service Bus	Dedicated School Bus	Bus (Type Not Known)	Taxi	Train	Other	Unclassified (Not supplied, Missing)	Total number of pupils aged 11 to 15	Percentage of pupils aged 11 to 15 for whom travel data supplied	Percentage of pupils for whom NO travel data supplied
Secondary School															
Beechen Cliff School	Yes	316	7	149	0	206	1	1	2	5	0	127	814	84.4	15.6
Broadlands School	Yes	204	26	250	3	300	265	1	8	0	0	1	1,058	99.9	0.1
Chew Valley School	No	18	0	12	2	0	314	2	3	0	1	613	965	36.5	63.5
Culverhay School	No	209	10	52	0	31	12	1	1	0	0	33	349	90.5	9.5
Hayesfield School Technology College	Yes	421	4	167	23	180	66	1	6	3	25	24	920	97.4	2.6
Norton Hill School	Yes	312	0	90	0	28	212	5	0	0	241	259	1,147	77.4	22.6
Oldfield School	Yes	133	1	158	78	83	318	1	1	0	1	17	791	97.9	2.1
Ralph Allen School	Yes	186	31	227	7	229	70	62	15	0	7	41	875	95.3	4.7
Saint Gregory's Catholic College	No	86	6	122	12	103	418	6	20	2	3	29	807	96.4	3.6
Somervale School	Yes	49	3	50	9	4	1	11	1	0	0	417	545	23.5	76.5
St Mark's CofE School	No	52	1	24	1	30	53	0	0	1	0	143	305	53.1	46.9
Wellsway School	No	237	51	91	0	1	37	2	3	0	0	643	1,065	39.6	60.4
Writhlington School	Yes	162	1	106	39	1	667	51	4	0	0	44	1,075	95.9	4.1

	Walk	Cycle	Car/Van	Car Share	Public Service Bus	Dedicated School Bus	Bus (Type Not Known)	Taxi	Train	Other	Unclassified (Not supplied, Missing)	Total number of pupils	Percentage of pupils for whom travel data supplied	Percentage of pupils for whom NO travel data supplied
Figures for Schools without an approved school travel plan in B&NES	604	68	305	15	165	834	11	41	3	4	1470	3520	58%	42%
Figures for schools with an approved school travel plan in B&NES	1787	73	1208	159	1031	1720	133	87	8	274	932	7412	87%	13%

Yellow School bus Commission Report Published 12th September 2008

Results from the Commission's research show that pupils who fail to qualify for free transport are often driven to school because parents see no acceptable alternative for Secondary age pupils.

Key Facts & Recommendations (Secondary Schools extracts only)

1. Secondary School Pupils are much less likely to walk journeys of more than two miles.

Rec: Schools to promote walking and cycling for pupils living within 3 miles of their Secondary School.

2. Secondary age pupils already use public buses in many locations.

Rec: Improve Secondary School buses by incorporating existing bus provision, raising quality standards, enhancing driver training and using technology to promote good on board behaviors.

3. Availability and issues of poor behavior mean that dedicated school buses for Secondary School pupils are necessary in some places.

Rec: Consider providing yellow bus service for distances greater than two miles to Secondary Schools, where there are special circumstances such as poor existing bus services and use, serious challenging behavior of pupils on the public bus network or the potential to link services with suitable primary school provision.

4. The benefits of a full rollout of dedicated Yellow School buses for secondary age pupils are less than those for a primary school operation. Using an appropriate mix of public bus services and dedicated school transport will reduce costs and maintain the majority of the benefits

Rec: Provide additional funding of £100 million for the increased availability and quality of school transport for secondary age pupils. Dedicated yellow buses should be considered where issues of behavior are particularly acute or the public service cannot cater for the demand.

5. Due to the high capital costs involved, long-term investment should be encouraged.

Rec: Long contracts of up to ten years should be introduced.

6. Bus Service Operators Grant (a rebate on fuel duty) is currently unavailable to dedicated school bus services.

Rec: BSOG should be made available to operators and authorities who meet new quality standards matching those of Yellow School buses, as part of the proposed funding requirements.

7. Parents recognize the benefits of Yellow School buses and in a number of cases are already willing to contribute through fares. Under the government's recent Pathfinder programme, local authorities were reluctant to introduce a potentially unpopular charging programme.

Rec: Consider revising entitlement arrangements supported by improved funding, as originally proposed under the Pathfinder programme.

8. Businesses show interest in reducing congestion and freeing their employees from school run duties. There may be some potential to explore financial support for services linked to both promotional and corporate social responsibility programmes.

Rec: The Commission considers that (subject to local consultation) local authorities and schools should explore private sector business sponsorship as an additional support mechanism for local Yellow School bus operations.

9. Recommendation: Integrated Transport Units offer the best mechanism for procurement. Where this is not possible due to local government structure, the partnership and understanding between District Council and transport authority should be developed to realize and share the subsequent benefits.

10. The public bus network is often the best solution for secondary age pupils, but some services will need additional capacity. There is an opportunity to improve relationships and develop respect between staff and users, particularly as school pupils are potential public transport customers of the future.

Rec: Operators and authorities should work in partnership to secure higher quality in service, vehicle standards and driver training for all public bus routes serving schools.

11. Inter- peak school work can increase utilization of dedicated vehicles

Rec: School bus contracts should include regular inter-peak school work, whilst other off-peak work carrying school pupils should also be sought.

12. Changes in school transport provision should actively avoid damaging the recent growth in walking and cycling. The rollout of improved school transport should be conducted in parallel with continued capital funding for initiatives to improve walking and cycling, coupled with targets to maintain and improve share of all sustainable modes.

Who runs Yellow School bus initiatives?

Large and small Yellow School bus initiatives are in operation across the UK. Here are just three examples:

1. **First Student (FirstGroup plc)**- In 2002 First introduced a pilot US-style Yellow School bus scheme in Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire in partnership with Metro, the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive.

Today, First operates 18 Yellow School bus initiative across the UK. Each day over 70 buses carry over 4,500 pupils to schools and colleges in Aberdeen, Basingstoke, Berkshire, Cardiff, Carmarthen, Chelmsford, Colchester, Dumbarton, Dunbartonshire, Hampshire, Ingatestone, Liverpool, Medway, Northampton, Runnymede, Worcester, Wrexham and West Yorkshire.

The key concerns and problems with the current transport from Home to Secondary School highlighted by local parents and pupils

Ref	Concern or Issue	Key Concerns	Examples
1	Cost of transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport becomes unaffordable when you have more than one child so families are forced to drive children to school. The cost is expensive for trains and buses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One parent reported that as a recent post-grad student they could take public transport for significantly cheaper than their children's: £6.80 week adult student £14.50 school student
2	Unreliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When the bus is consistently late it affects a child's attendance record There are also many reports of children leaving home very early in the morning to catch the bus to get to school; consequently children are waiting around before school starts and after. 	
3	Overcrowding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are concerned about the safety of children travelling on school buses that are overcrowded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children are reportedly standing all the way home on some buses and there are often three children to a double seat which is dangerous.
4	Bus Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are concerned regarding the manner and behaviour of drivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not allowing children on bus with sports equipment or musical instruments. Rude and uncaring attitude towards children Driving too fast Smoking on bus Not turning up or driving off Going the wrong way
5	Behaviour on buses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents are concerned of the extent of bullying on local school buses which puts others in danger Concern that there is no adult supervision on buses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "My child did not feel safe on the bus. Low level bullying, hair pulling and poking. One of her friends was hit on the head by a mobile phone being thrown". (local parent comment)
6	Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many parents would like their children to be provided with seatbelts on the bus and made to wear them 	
7	After-school activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerns regarding children getting to and from after school activities. Parents feel that the unreliability of buses for children after 	

		school, limits the ability for children to take advantage of opportunities open to them.	
8	Traffic Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel that an increase in traffic congestion is caused by the price of school transport and the poor service that is provided which forces parents to drive their children to school. 	
9	Discrimination of travel provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel that you are more likely to be offered subsidised travel if you choose to send your child to a school based on their faith. 	
10	Bus Tickets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No provision of easy to use or easy to renew weekly ticket. 	

The new Proposed Paulton School Bus Timetable (782)

Proposed 782 timetable serving Paulton to Somervale School.

	SD only
Paulton, Downsway	08:10
Paulton, Somerfield	08:15
Paulton, Specklemead	08:17
Paulton, Plumtree Road	08:20
Paulton, Hospital	08:25
Somervale School	08:35

Somervale School	15:25
Paulton, Hospital	15:35
Paulton, Plumtree Road	15:37
Paulton, Specklemead	15:39
Paulton, Somerfield	15:41
Paulton, Downsway	15:45

Route ; Downsway, Farrington Road, Church Street, High Street, Park Road, Specklemead, Tennis Court Road, Plumtree Road, Rudgeway Road, Winterfield Park, Salisbury Road, Phillis Hill, to Somervale School.

Note: The afternoon journey will commence from Radstock Tynning at 15:05

Good behaviour is essential - swearing will not be tolerated.

Concerns within specific areas of Home To School travel routes within B&NES			
Ref	Concern or Issue	Key Concerns	Examples
1	Ralph Allen School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost: Charges are not consistent and are expensive • Not enough buses for children travelling to Ralph Allen school • Not enough seats on buses provided • Driver, drives very fast • Cycling not an option for some as its all up hill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travelling from Lower Weston to RA involves catching two buses which is expensive to the parents • London Road to RA is unreliable, and overpriced and the drivers are often stressed • Cost of transport is expensive from Bearflat to RA • One parents was paying £1500 per year for the cost of three children travelling to RA
2	Beechen Cliff School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns regarding the distance that some children take to travel from Newbridge and Weston to Beechen Cliff School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distance from home to school for those children travelling from Weston is too far too walk, but the cost is too expensive to travel by bus so parents feel that they are forced to drive their children to BC. • If late finishing school there is often no bus available to get home from BC
3	Hayesfield School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns regarding the cost of travel from Bathford to Hayesfield school when you have more than one child • Concern regarding the behaviour of bus driver 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One parent is currently paying £168 per month in bus fares for children.
4	Broadlands School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are concerned about the possible effects of closing Broadlands School and the impact that this may have on transport to Wellsway. • The Cancellation of the Euro taxi 636 to get to and from Whitchurch village to Keynsham has meant that parents now drive to take their children to school from the Whitchurch area. 	
5	Writhlington School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no direct bus route from the Paulton area to Writhlington School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Paulton school bus was removed due to the cost so parents have to either drive to the next village to drop children to bus stop and pick up an expensive and unreliable bus or take children to school through busy traffic around the Norton Hill and Midsomer Norton area due to an increase in parents taking their children to school by car.

Bibliography

Legislation & Guidance Documents

- Education Inspection Bill 2007 (www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/educationandinspectionsact)
- DfT White Paper (July 2004) – The Future of Transport: a network for 2030 (www.dft.gov.uk/about/Strategy/whitepapers/fot)
- Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone (2000) (www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/roadsafety/Strategytargetsperformance)
- Department for Transport: School travel strategies and plans: a best practice guide for local authorities (published 2000/updated 05) (www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/schooltravel/localauthorities/schooltravelstrategiesandpla5745)
- Home to School travel and transport Guidance. Sustainable School Travel. (www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)
- Choosing Health: Making Healthy Choices Easier (Nov 2004) http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4094550
- National Healthy Schools Programme (www.healthyschools.gov.uk/)
- National Framework for sustainable Schools (www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainable/schools/framework/framework_detail.cfm)
- School Travel Plan (The essential Guide) (www.schooltravelplans.org/walking.asp)

Local Strategic Plans, agreements and initiatives for home to school transport in B&NES

- The West of England Partnership (www.westofengland.org/site/TheBathPackage_2967.asp)

Best Practice including part subsidised schemes

- York YOzone card (<http://www.york.gov.uk/news/newsarchive/2007/july/229736>)
- Youth Parliament 'Fares Fair Campaign': (www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/faresfair)
- Yellow Bus Scheme (www.firstgroup.com/YSB/schemes/index)
- Green Bus Scheme (www.thegreenbus.co.uk)
- Kent Travel Card (<http://kent.gov.uk/Council-and-democracy/about-the-Council/Council-performance/annual-plan/ap07moving.htm>)
- RidePegasus (www.surreycc.gov.uk/ridepegasus)