

Chapter 2

Wider Context

Chapter Overview

This chapter explains how Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan influences, and has been influenced by, other plans and initiatives from within and outside the County Council, and how the delivery of this Plan will contribute towards achieving these plans' objectives.

Economy and Environment

Oxfordshire is a vibrant county in the heart of England where a thriving economy blends successfully with a high quality environment. Oxford is famous the world over as a seat of learning but today the county's fame stretches beyond academic excellence to the pivotal role it plays in international publishing, bio-technology, car manufacture and motor sport. The county has consistently low unemployment and is one of Europe's most prosperous areas.

Although Oxfordshire has a highly qualified workforce and unemployment is low, there are pockets of higher unemployment that coincides with areas of low skills. It has an above average proportion of higher and intermediate managerial/administrative/professionals yet average earnings for full-time workers are lower than those for the South East as a whole.

Over three quarters of firms employ less than ten people, although a third of all employees in Oxfordshire work for the 1% of organisations with over 200 employees: Oxford has the greatest number of large employers; West Oxfordshire the least.

The standard of health in Oxfordshire is generally good; life expectancy is higher than the average for the Thames Valley and England as a whole. Violent crime and burglary levels are both substantially below the national average.

Population Statistics

County population, 2001 - 605,500

Oxfordshire is divided into five local authority areas; their populations in 2001 were as follows:

Cherwell 132,000
Oxford - 134,000
South Oxfordshire - 128,000
Vale of White Horse - 116,000
West Oxfordshire - 95,500

54% of the county's population lived in the 10 towns which had a population of more than 10,000 people:

Oxford	134,000
Banbury	42,000
Abingdon	30,500
Bicester	28,500
Witney	23,000
Didcot	23,000
Kidlington	13,500
Carterton	12,000
Thame	11,000
Henley-on-Thames	11,000

In addition, a further 8% lived in the 7 settlements with a population between 5,000 and 10,000:

Wantage	10,000
Grove	8,000
Wallingford	6,500
Faringdon	6,000
Chipping Norton	6,000
Chinnor	6,000
Cumnor	5,500

Although generally prosperous, there are thirteen areas in Oxfordshire among the 20% most deprived in the country:

- > Northfield Brook, Oxford (2 areas)
- > Rose Hill and Iffley, Oxford (2 areas)
- > Barton & Sandhills, Oxford (2 areas)
- > Ruscote, Banbury (3 areas)
- > Blackbird Leys, Oxford (3 areas)
- > Carfax, Oxford (1 area)

The average house price in Oxfordshire has almost doubled since the start of 1999. House prices are highest in parts of South Oxfordshire, and lowest in the towns of Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney. Wages have not risen at the same rate, and the average price of a semi-detached house in Oxfordshire is now 7.5 times the average wage.

Oxfordshire is South-East England's most rural county with over two-thirds of its area devoted to agriculture and almost 75% of the county designated as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Area of High Landscape Value or Green Belt.

In developing this Local Transport Plan the County Council has sought to provide a transport system that will support the local economy while protecting and enhancing the local environment. It has also had to take into account factors at the national, regional and local level.

National Context

A number of key national policies have guided the development of this Plan. These are outlined below together with how Oxfordshire is taking forward and contributing to these national policy objectives at the local level.

The UK Sustainable Development Strategy

This new strategy sets out the Government's objectives for four key priority areas: sustainable consumption and production; climate change and energy; protecting natural resources and environmental enhancement; and sustainable communities. Transport measures promoted in this Plan will have a positive impact on meeting these priority areas. In particular, cycling, walking, public transport, travel planning and travel information will help reduce air pollution, tackle congestion and improve access to services.

Most relevant to the development of this Plan is the priority to create sustainable communities - places where people want both to live and work, now and in the future. The strategy particularly emphasises an aim to improve the lives of people in deprived communities and socially excluded groups who experience poor quality of life, including poor local environmental quality and poor access to services such as education, healthcare and transport.

Transport has a key role to play in creating sustainable communities, in particular, especially through improving. By shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, design and mix of land uses, planning can help to reduce the length of journeys and make it safer and easier for people to access jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling. As part of this Plan's Accessibility Strategy, areas of the county with communities that have difficulty accessing key services are being identified and a variety of schemes will be developed to ease these difficulties in a sustainable manner.

For many years the County Council has, through its Structure Plan policies, sought to deliver coherent and sustainable communities by directing residential and commercial development to the Country Towns of Banbury, Bicester, Didcot and Witney. This has resulted in considerable sums becoming available for transport improvement through developer contributions that has enabled improvements such as the Banbury Inner Relief Road, the Milton Heights Link Road in Didcot and the Bicester Perimeter Road being provided to serve new developments and improve the overall infrastructure in the local areas.

Transport White Paper: The Future of Transport

This White Paper sets out the Government's overall transport strategy for the period to 2030. It takes forward the strategy originally set out by the Government in 2000 in 'The Ten Year Plan for Transport' and is built around three central themes:

- > Sustained investment over the long term;
- > Improvements in transport management to achieve better value for money;
- > Planning ahead and considering alternatives to road building.

The White Paper promotes a number of key strategies that will help deliver its transport objectives. The following paragraphs provide an overview of how the Plan has been influenced by the White Paper and therefore how it contributes towards achieving its aims and objectives.

More road space for buses

Government has consistently highlighted the important role that the bus plays in our towns and cities. The Bus Strategy shows the County Council's firm commitment to continue making the bus a more attractive travel option. Introducing measures which minimise delays and improve the reliability of bus services are a crucial part of achieving this, for example through the major enhancements that will be made to existing routes including bus priority measures, bus stop and interchange improvements and real time information systems in the Premium Routes programme.

Promoting the use of school travel plans

Travel Plans are a key part of the County Council's approach to delivering the Local Transport Plan objectives. A number of key actions are included in the Council's Travel Plans development strategy - including better public transport, improved conditions for walking and cycling and helping to make better informed travel choices. Travel Plans development will continue to play a prominent role in helping the County Council achieve its Local Transport Objectives.

Improving the quality of local environments

Improving the local environment is an objective of the County's Local Area Agreement, and improving the street environment is an objective of this Plan. Traffic management, high quality design, reduction of clutter and use of appropriate materials all have their part to play.

The Council recognises that transport improvements can have both positive and negative environmental impacts, and the likely environmental effects of all of our proposed approaches and actions have been assessed through the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Demand Management

Congestion charging was considered as a policy measure in the County Council's Transport Networks Review. Only Oxford has the scale of traffic problems that might warrant the introduction of a cordon style charging system. However this was not considered an appropriate measure to pursue at this time for the following reasons:

- > A cordon drawn tightly around the central area would have little effect as this area is already highly restricted to vehicles.
- > A cordon charge for entering inside the ring road would not affect residents of Oxford. Given the high number of residential properties within the Ring Road this would severely limit the traffic reduction benefits of such a scheme.
- > Charging Oxford residents as part of a licence-type scheme (as in London) would not be reasonable at full rates, but applying a discount (again as in London) would have little effect on volumes of residents' traffic.

The present policies of restricting and pricing public parking in central Oxford to encourage the use of buses and Park & Ride services are likely to be at least as effective as congestion charging in reducing unnecessary traffic and improving conditions in the city centre. The County Council is also taking measures to accelerate the implementation of Controlled Parking Zones in Oxford, whilst strengthening the enforcement of access restrictions through the use of cameras.

The introduction of a workplace parking charge could be worth investigating further in the Oxford context as it would target those with private non-residential spaces who are least likely to be deterred by existing travel constraints in Oxford. On the negative side, though, introducing such schemes in individual towns may act to reduce their competitiveness for attracting new employment and the retention of existing businesses undermining the economic vitality of the area. The County Council intends

to monitor developments elsewhere before making any decision on whether to consider introducing such measures.

Transport Innovation Fund (TIF)

The TIF contains two strands of funding:

- > Demand management schemes
- > Productivity schemes

Although the first of these is available for smaller cities like Oxford, it is primarily aimed at packages involving road pricing which the County Council has concluded would not be an appropriate measure for Oxford. Although other forms of demand management, for example based upon the existing strategy of controlling the pricing and availability of parking, or possibly a Workplace Parking Levy could be considered for Oxford, current Government guidance suggests that TIF funding is unlikely to be made available to complement such an approach.

The productivity strand of TIF appears much more promising in relation to Oxfordshire. This is for schemes that, by their scale or nature, make a big contribution to national productivity. Two examples are given of the types of scheme that could be supported:

- > Road and/or rail access to major ports and airports
- > Better inter-urban links which enhance mobility and cut business costs

In the case of Oxfordshire, the A34 corridor serves both of these roles. However, both the County Council and Highways Agency accept that the capacity of this busy trunk road is very unlikely to be increased in Oxfordshire in the next twenty years. TIF funding could therefore provide funding for rail schemes, highway route management and measures to enhance local public transport in this corridor, including:

- > Southampton-Midlands rail gauge enhancement for freight, providing an improved alternative to the A34 for freight between the port of Southampton and the Midlands and North;
- > East-West Rail linking Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford, providing a fast, inter-urban rail service along the line of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, linking centres of potential high tech employment growth and housing growth where the road alternative is largely single carriageway;

- > Oxford station capacity enhancement, which is essential in order to accommodate passenger and freight growth and get best value from the previous two schemes;
- > Introduction of high quality Network Management and Information, for example Variable Message Signing; and
- > Measures to increase the attractiveness of bus-based public transport for local trips which currently use the A34, for example remote Park & Ride and bus priority at key locations.

These schemes fit with the five strategic objectives listed in the TIF Guidance:

- > Increase mobility of people and/or goods to cut business costs;
- > Support agglomeration of business activity;
- > Support the mobility and flexibility of the labour market;
- > Increase international competitiveness;
- > Increase network resilience and choice for business users.

Transport and Social Exclusion

The Social Exclusion Unit of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published *Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion* in February 2003. This report explains how the Government will address transport and accessibility problems that result in social exclusion. It forms part of the Government's programme to build successful and sustainable communities and has therefore had a significant influence on the development of Oxfordshire's Accessibility Strategy. The report highlights that there is a need to understand whether people can get to key services at a reasonable cost, in a reasonable time and with reasonable ease.

Five key barriers to accessing services are identified in the report:

- > Availability and physical accessibility of transport;
- > Cost of transport;
- > Services and activities located in inaccessible places;
- > Safety and security; and
- > Travel horizons (the maximum distance people are prepared to travel to access a particular service).

Oxfordshire is already making progress to remove barriers to key facilities. The Accessibility Strategy provides part of the County Council's response to reducing social exclusion in the county, as will elements of the bus strategy and other supporting strategies.

National Road Safety Strategy

By 2010, the Government wishes to achieve, compared with the average for 1994-98:

- > A 40% reduction in the numbers of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents;
- > A 50% reduction in the numbers of children killed or seriously injured; and
- > A 10% reduction in the slight casualty rate, expressed as the number of people slightly injured per 100 million vehicle kilometres.

Oxfordshire County Council has made casualty reduction its main objective in the design, building, operation and maintenance of its transport assets over the past 15 years. Road safety training and education, speed management, accident monitoring and before and after studies are also key elements of the County Council's strategy to meet the 2010 targets. The success of this strategy has meant that 2010 targets are already close to being met for the first two figures above, resulting in new more stretching targets being set in this Plan.

Trunk Roads

The M40, A34 and A43 are trunk roads managed by the Highways Agency on behalf of the Department for Transport. These routes serve a national function and also form an important part of the county's road network providing access to most of the county's main centres.

The Highways Agency has now produced Route Management Strategies (RMS) for the county's trunk roads. These will form the basis of Route Management Plans that will set out ten-year plans for the management and operation of individual trunk roads by introducing short-term solutions to problems identified through the RMS process.

Proposals in the Plan are designed to take account of RMS commitments and ensure that schemes on other routes are complementary. The County Council works with the Highways Agency on a range of projects, and is keen to continue and develop this partnership. Examples of recent partnership working include:

- > Co-ordination between major planned maintenance work on the Oxford Ring Road and A34 to minimise disruption;
- > Developing improvements to junction 9 of the M40 near Bicester; and
- > Implementing improvements to bridge structures on the A40.

The County Council will continue to ensure that the local function of trunk roads and motorways is taken into account when decisions are made on improvements to these roads. The County Council's Transport Networks Review highlighted a number of current and future issues arising from traffic growth on strategic roads that perform a local function and impact on local communities.

In addition, the County Council recognises, and has developed proposals to address, the particular problems facing a number of strategic roads in the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region, in particular the A34.

Railways

The White Paper - "The Future of Rail" - was published in July 2004, to set out Government proposals to reorganise the railway industry to overcome its identified structural problems. The White Paper acknowledged that railways are an important part of the UK transport system and reiterated that Government rail policy is to concentrate on improving performance and reduce operating costs.

The White Paper proposed a new, streamlined structure with the Government taking direct charge of setting the strategy and expenditure for the railways. These changes came about in 2005, when the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) was abolished, with its strategic role passing to a new Rail Group within the Department for Transport and its operational planning role moving to Network Rail (which was also given clear responsibility for operating a reliable rail network). Regulation of the rail network has been brought together in the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to monitor performance and operating costs and take over the safety role from the Health and Safety Executive.

Financing of the railways is agreed at five-yearly intervals, and during this Plan period, Network Rail and DfT Rail Group will be producing a High Level Output Statement to define the size and scope of the future rail network and allow ORR to determine the cost of providing this after 2009. The process will begin during 2006 with a Regional Planning Assessment and the County Council will ensure it makes the case for Oxfordshire's railways in the ongoing process.

The rail network through Oxfordshire satisfies several important functions. A Route Utilisation Strategy covering parts of the county was produced by the SRA in 2005, and sets out proposals to maximize use of the existing network for freight and passenger train services up to 2012.

The Regional Assembly (SEERA) has identified three rail schemes within the region that it feels should be regarded as of “national significance”. Two of these are within Oxfordshire. East-West Rail, between Oxford and Bedford, and the upgrading of the railway between Southampton and the Midlands to allow new sized freight containers to be carried by rail rather than by heavy lorries on the A34 trunk road.

The County Council recognises the role it can play in encouraging more use of the rail network in the county to contribute towards delivering the Plan objectives. Working with partners in the rail industry will be essential if the rail network in the county is to be developed in a way which meets the needs of both local and longer-distance travellers.

The County Council has developed a good relationship with the rail industry and works with Network Rail, DfT Rail Group and Train Operating Companies on a range of projects and initiatives:

- > Very active membership of the East-West Rail Consortium, working with DfT Rail Group, the Regional Assembly, Government Office (GOSE), Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and other local authorities on the development of options and a business case for East-West Rail;
- > Engagement with the rail industry on developing options for the expansion of Oxford Rail Station;
- > Founding and playing a leading role in the Cotswolds and Malverns Transport Partnership, which brings together Train Operating Companies, Network Rail, and other local authorities;
- > Negotiated a package of measures to improve the Oxford-Bicester line through developer contributions from the extension of Bicester Village;
- > Having regular meetings with Network Rail and was involved in the 2005 Route Utilisation Strategy and will work with Network Rail on the Thames Valley Regional Planning Assessment;
- > Working with the DfT Rail Group and the Train Operating Companies to develop policies and projects that could be used as ‘showcase’ examples across the United Kingdom; and
- > Working with the Train Operating Companies to bring about improvements at stations and continuing this partnership is a key part of the Rail Strategy.

Regional Context

South East Plan

The South East England Regional Assembly has approved Part One of the draft South East Regional Plan (Core Regional Policies) and passed this to the Government. Section D4 -(Communications and Transport) updates the existing Regional Transport Strategy and as such forms the regional transport context for this Local Transport Plan. The policies in the Regional Plan and their impact on Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan are summarised below.

Policy T1: Manage and Invest

This Local Transport Plan is consistent with the "manage and invest" approach, focusing on making best use of the existing transport network and so achieving value for money. In addressing transport problems, the County Council will always assess these to ensure best value for money in relation to the level of benefits that can be delivered.

This Plan is consistent with the management priorities set out in Policy T1. The Network Strategy includes proposals for addressing key bottlenecks, particularly junctions where there is capacity on adjacent links, in order to make better use of the network. It aims to rebalance the transport system in favour of non-car modes, principally through improved public transport services.

Delivering a network of Premium Bus Routes and remote Park & Ride sites will be key to this. Investment is also essential in order to make best use of the rail network, including East-West Rail. Improving road safety forms one of the County's key priorities and the Council has developed targets, strategies and a framework to monitor progress. Improved highway maintenance is another vital element of the managing the Oxfordshire transport network.

This Plan is also consistent with the priorities for investment set out in Policy T1. These include improving public transport and rail freight alternatives along the international and inter-regional A34 corridor, which is one of the main spokes serving the Oxford transport hub. The emphasis in this Plan on delivering accessibility, particularly into and within Oxford, will help to facilitate urban renewal and renaissance.

Policy T2: Rural Transport

The Bus Strategy already identifies a role for local bus services in rural areas. The Accessibility Strategy will help the County Council to target improvements to bus services in areas of poor accessibility, many of which are likely to be rural.

Policy T3: Regional Hubs

This Plan gives particular priority to tackling congestion and accessibility problems that affect Oxford in order to facilitate urban renewal and renaissance. The County Council is helping to develop proposals for the city's West End including major high-density, mixed-use developments with high levels of accessibility to create a "living centre". An improved interchange at Oxford Station will form an integral part of this project, supported by better bus services (in partnership with operators), enhanced Park & Ride and improved access for pedestrians and cyclists.

Policy T4: Regional Spokes

The County Council recognises the importance of achieving a level of service on the various road and rail spokes serving the Oxford hub to support the city's role as a focus of economic activity. The emphasis on improving access to Oxford in this Plan reflects this by seeking improved journey time reliability through prioritising non-car modes and addressing identified bottlenecks.

Improving public transport and rail freight alternatives along the international and inter-regional A34 corridor, to serve the international gateway of Southampton is also important to support the city's role.

Public transport is particularly important for inter-urban journeys including premium bus routes, the existing and frequent coach services to London and rail services, particularly East-West Rail for access to the rapidly growing Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and High Wycombe areas.

Policy T5: Communications Technology

The County Council has introduced, in partnership with bus operators, a real time information system with bus stop displays and internet access and will be rolling this out, together with the use of Automatic Vehicle Location to provide priority for buses at traffic signals, across the Premium Bus Routes network during the Plan period. The Council also intends to explore with the Highways Agency the potential for joint working to develop a comprehensive "active" signing/route management strategy, using Intelligent Transport Systems.

Policies T6 and T9: Mobility Management, Travel Plans and Advice

This Plan includes active mobility management, particularly the allocation and management of road space (including bus priority) and of parking, particularly in Oxford. The County Council continues to value highly the role that travel plans can play in reducing the number of car trips generated by employers and schools.

Policies T7 and T8: Charging and Parking

High charges for city centre public parking, achieved through effective collaboration with Oxford City Council, have played a crucial role in the success of transport policies in Oxford for many years and the Council is willing to investigate further the role workplace parking charges could play in reinforcing these. Congestion, or any other road user charging, however, would currently not be appropriate for Oxford.

The County Council has removed the parking charge from the Park & Ride sites that it controls to increase the cost advantage of this service over city centre parking and to be simpler for users. The County Council is piloting free parking in the city centre on Sunday's and weekday evenings to encourage visitors then whilst continuing to price weekday parking to deter commuters.

Policy T10: Airports

The Airtrack rail scheme will improve rail access to Heathrow from the Thames Valley. A positive side effect of the scheme will be the re-opening of the rail underpass at Reading. This may allow through trains to operate directly between Oxford and Gatwick.

Policy T11: Ports

This Plan highlights the importance of the A34 corridor in providing access to the port of Southampton for the Midlands and North. The Southampton-Midlands rail gauge upgrade, plus capacity enhancements and re-signalling in the Oxford area, will be essential in providing a better rail alternative for the heavy road freight flows on this busy trunk road. This is all the more important because the Highways Agency has advised that it is very unlikely that the A34 through Oxfordshire will be widened during the next 20 years.

Policies T12-T14: Freight

Part of the rail network in Oxfordshire runs parallel to the A34 and increased local and strategic rail use for freight and passenger movement would reduce the pressure on this congested route. The County Council also considers that improvements are needed to the Cotswold Line and the Bicester Branch Line - the latter linking strongly with the regional aspiration for East-West Rail between Oxford, Bletchley/Milton Keynes and Bedford.

Regional Economic Strategy

The draft Regional Economic Strategy for the South East sets out the key challenges facing the South East:

- > Global competition
- > Smart growth
- > Sustainability

It sets out a vision of a world-class region achieving sustainable prosperity. Key elements of the strategy for achieving this are:

- > Investing in excellence, including infrastructure and new ways of working
- > Harnessing quality of life as a source of competitive advantage

For Oxfordshire this vision is taken forward through the Economic Development Strategy for Oxfordshire (EDSO) which is currently being reviewed by the Oxfordshire Economic Partnership.

This Local Transport Plan promotes the economic ambitions of both the regional and county strategies. It places emphasis on access to Oxford and on improving the street environment, all of which are crucial to the urban economy, in the city of Oxford and the county's other main towns. The redevelopment of Oxford's West End provides a significant opportunity for economic renewal in this area, with possible implications across the county and beyond. Other key tasks are improving cross-regional, national and international transport links. Although the Plan's access to Oxford measures will help, the scale of investment needed in, for example, the A34 corridor is beyond the scope of the Plan.

Sub-Regional Development Areas

Central Oxfordshire

The draft South East Plan includes ten sub-regional areas, including the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region (COSR). The COSR extends to Bicester in the north, Wallingford, Didcot and Wantage in the south, and Witney in the west.

The South-East Plan endorses a 'hub-and-spoke' approach to movement. Central Oxford is identified as a Regional Hub with spokes connecting it to West Midlands, Milton Keynes, London, Reading and Swindon - the County Council also considers that the A40 between Oxford, Cheltenham/Gloucester and South Wales to be an important inter-regional route. Maintaining access to central Oxford is seen in the Plan as crucial not just at the local level but on a regional level.

The County Council considers that transport poses a potential constraint to the sub-region's economy and to further growth. It recognises, access improvements are required, particularly by public transport, as are measures to reduce congestion, especially on the A34 and A40 corridors. There is also a need to improve rail links, particularly with other regional

hubs, by for example East-West Rail, and to provide sufficient future capacity for freight and passenger trains by the expansion of Oxford station. Park & Ride schemes will be promoted where they form part of a wider transport strategy for the sub-region, with proposals for such schemes being developed through the Local Transport Plan.

Western Corridor/Blackwater Valley

The Western Corridor/Blackwater Valley Sub-Region borders Oxfordshire to the south. The growth of Heathrow Airport will have a major impact on transport within the sub-region and is likely to add to general congestion. The preferred spatial option for growth is (i) a focus on urban areas and re-use of existing sites; and (ii) greenfield releases on the periphery of urban areas identified as key transport hubs in the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), taking account of constraints imposed by environmental designations and green belt.

Further growth in and around the Reading urban area could have implications for the transport network in southern Oxfordshire, particularly on routes leading to river crossings. The County Council continues to work with the Berkshire transport authorities to develop a coherent strategy for cross-Thames movements in this area. Oxfordshire County Council strongly supports proposals to enhance Reading Station, which will benefit services between Oxfordshire and London, including the re-opening of the rail underpass which would allow direct rail services between Oxfordshire, the Blackwater Valley and Gatwick Airport.

South Midlands/Milton Keynes/Aylesbury

The Milton Keynes/Aylesbury sub-region adjoins the COSR to the northeast. A Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy has been prepared for the designated growth area up to 2021. Following an Examination in Public, the Secretary of State's proposed changes were published in October 2004. Milton Keynes would accommodate 44,900 dwellings with a further 15,000 in Aylesbury.

The sub-regional study indicates that improved east-west links are needed and specifically identifies the western section of East-West Rail (between Oxford and Bedford). A land use and transport study for the Oxford to Milton Keynes/Bedford corridor, funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and a supplementary report funded by the East-West Rail Consortium, were both completed in early 2006, and were supported by the County Council. Further work involving regional stakeholders along with Government delivery agencies will take this strategic project towards implementation during this Local Transport Plan period.

Neighbouring Areas

Buckinghamshire

Amongst its boundary authorities, cross-boundary issues with Buckinghamshire probably have greatest significance for Oxfordshire, owing to:

- > The common strategic network issues and proposals common to both authorities - East-West Rail and the M40 in particular - in the context of the South East Plan development proposals for Central Oxfordshire, Aylesbury and Milton Keynes;
- > The need to further develop links between respective Regional Spokes - Oxford, Aylesbury and High Wycombe, especially by public transport - recognising for example that the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area extends into Buckinghamshire;
- > Greatest opportunities for common working and efficiency savings across 'borders', for example through Network Management, Highway Maintenance and Travel/Accessibility Planning.

In recognition of this, Oxfordshire County Council and Buckinghamshire County Council have developed and agreed a Joint Transport Policy Statement, initially to cover the 2006-11 Plan period. The statement covers the following key strategic issues, work areas and projects:

- > **Strategic Highway Network** - covering liaison with the Highways Agency on the M40; network development and maintenance on key cross-border routes such as the A34/A41 and A418 and HGV routing;
- > **Network Management** - Looking at joint working to meet the challenges of the Traffic Management Act, deal with key congestion problems and maximise opportunities for joint policy development, scheduling of works and procurement, e.g. on Urban Traffic Management and Control projects;
- > **Road Safety** - developing existing work on cross-border route action plans, speed management and complementary education initiatives;
- > **Accessibility Planning and Promotion/Development of 'Smarter Choices'** - strengthening partnership links and joint working in key areas (for example on Access to Healthcare, including detailed local accessibility modelling), cross boundary travel planning, strategies and proposals for cycling/walking;
- > **Public Transport** - Promotion of the East-West Rail Project; Development of the Oxford-Aylesbury bus route (including Real

Time Information) as an extension of the Thornhill to Thame Premium Route; and regional coach services and interchanges linking into key hubs at Oxford and High Wycombe.

The commitments in the statement are being taken forward through existing and strengthened liaison procedures, including a greater sharing of best practice.

Gloucestershire

The routing of the major road connections between Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, particularly for HGVs, has been subject of discussions for the last 10 years. The A44 is currently the Primary Route between Oxford and Evesham, passing through Gloucestershire, but there are significant problems caused by traffic in settlements along this route. There are difficulties in resolving these problems due to the problems on the alternative routes, especially the A40, onto which this traffic will be diverted. The County Council will continue to work with Gloucestershire to develop short and long term strategies for reducing these problems.

The Cotswold rail line runs between Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. Both county council's play a role in the Cotswolds and Malverns Transport Partnership, which also brings together Train Operating Companies and Network Rail.

West Oxfordshire shares a long border with Gloucestershire and has a number of accessibility issues in common. Many people in West Oxfordshire look towards the centres in Gloucestershire to provide goods and services that they need, particularly higher value goods and services rather than those in Oxfordshire, as well as healthcare and employment opportunities. Similarly many in Cotswold district in Gloucestershire look towards services in Oxfordshire. However, any movement between the two counties is solely reliant on the private car as there are only minimal public transport services operating between the two counties. This is an issue that the County Councils of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire hope to investigate jointly over the lifetime of the Plan.

Thames Valley (Reading and Wokingham)

The Thames Valley Multi-Modal Study reported in January 2003 and the Government issued its response in July 2003. Local transport recommendations accepted by the Secretary of State included the development of a 'hub and spoke' transport system, including new inter-urban bus/coach services on corridors not well served by public transport and the promotion of measures to reduce travel demand and encourage more sustainable transport choices.

As a result of the Secretary of State's recommendations for the affected authorities to further explore the issue of cross Thames travel in the Reading area a Cross Thames Steering Group was formed. This comprises Oxfordshire County Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Wokingham Council and Reading Borough Council. The Group has set out to consider the strategic issue of cross-river travel, its impact on local communities and potential options to alleviate the existing bottlenecks.

An initial study was commissioned to explore, at a broad level, the implications of a range of options on traffic flows in the area. The study also considered the implications of a variety of locations for an additional Thames crossing should that option ever form part of a wider strategy. Agreement has been reached that options for public transport enhancements, potential Park & Ride sites and future rapid transit opportunities should be investigated further. These may or may not include the need for an additional bridge.

Reading station serves a large area of southern Oxfordshire as well as providing a connection to the wider rail network for the county's rail services. The County Council supports proposals to increase the capacity of the station.

Swindon and Wiltshire

The growth of Swindon as a Principal Urban Area could have significant impacts on traffic and travel in Oxfordshire. A large proportion of the Vale of White Horse looks to Swindon for goods and services and therefore continued good links are essential. The A420 forms the direct link between Oxford and Swindon. While this is generally of a reasonable standard there are some sections that are approaching capacity and have road safety concerns. The precise location of the development within Swindon is likely to influence the effects that it has on Oxfordshire in general and the A420 in particular. The County Council will continue to be closely involved in the process for determining how Swindon should respond to its development demands.

There is currently no direct rail services between Oxford and Swindon, the County Council continue to press the railway industry for the re-introduction of this service.

Warwickshire & Northamptonshire

The southern areas of both of these counties look towards Banbury as their main shopping and service centre. It is therefore essential that the accessibility strategies of the three counties are co-ordinated to ensure that boundaries do not become a barrier to these important movements.

Local Context

The implementation of the Local Transport Plan can support a range of other economic, social and environmental plans produced by the County Council and the District Councils in Oxfordshire. This section outlines the main non-transport plans and strategies that the Plan, as part of the Council's long-term local transport strategy, has been designed to support, and explains what steps the County Council has taken to ensure that the aims and objectives of these plans are supported by Plan strategies and actions wherever possible.

The County Council recognises that the links between transport planning and other local government functions only begin with the preparation of a Plan that is consistent with a range of other objectives. The County Council therefore intends to ensure that links between transport planning and other County and District Council activities are maintained over the next five years and beyond. For example, many County and District Council plans were written in advance of this document but will be reviewed over the coming years. Opportunities will arise to ensure these plans help to support the objectives of this Plan wherever possible and the County Council will endeavour to take advantage of such opportunities.

To ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to transport and spatial planning the County Council is creating a programme board to oversee its input into local development frameworks and to ensure that there is an integrated project team and leader for each of the major development sites in the county. This is building on the approach currently being taken for the West End of Oxford.

Spatial Planning & Housing

Oxfordshire Structure Plan

The County Council has adopted its Structure Plan for the period to 2016. The new Structure Plan has the following overall objectives to:

- > Protect and enhance the environment and character of Oxfordshire;
- > to encourage the efficient use of land, energy and natural resources;
- > Support progress towards a better quality of life for all Oxfordshire's people; and
- > Sustain prosperity by supporting sustainable and appropriate economic development.

The County Council has developed a table of working assumptions about the locations of housing growth for the four Local Transport Plan periods 2006-2026. It should be stressed that these are approximate and may be subject to change. They illustrate the additional pressures that will arise on the A40 and A34 corridors, particularly during the first decade (2006-2016). This in turn will have a strong, adverse impact on access to Oxford, which is why Access to Oxford is a priority in the Local Transport Plan.

Location	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	2021-26	20 year total
Oxford	1750	1750	1750	1750	7000
Bicester	1075	1075	1075	1075	4300
Kidlington	250	250	250	250	1000
Other Cherwell (central)	125	125	125	125	500
Banbury	1250	1250	1250	1250	5000
Other Cherwell (rest of)	250	250	250	250	1000
Witney	1000	1000	350	350	2700
Other West (central)	125	125	125	125	500
Carterton	1000	1000	500	500	3000
Other West (rest of)	125	125	125	125	500
Didcot (Vale and South)	2150	2150	1500	1500	7300
Other South (central)	675	675	675	675	2700
Other South (rest)	675	675	675	675	2700
Wantage & Grove	1000	1000	700	700	3400
Abingdon	450	450	450	450	1800
Other Vale (central)	650	650	750	750	2800
Other Vale (rest of)	250	250	250	250	1000

In the main towns an appropriate provision will be made for employment development to achieve a balance between the number and types of jobs and the size and skills of the workforce and to support the development of science-based or other important business clusters. The precise locations and form of the development will be decided in the relevant local plans or local development frameworks.

To ensure consistency between the Structure Plan and the Local Transport Plan, the County Council has:

- > Incorporated land use planning considerations in the early stages of Plan policy and strategy development, and consulted colleagues on every published draft of the document;
- > Incorporated specific actions related to land use planning into its approaches to tackling congestion, delivering accessibility, and improving road safety and air quality.

District Local Plans/Local Development Frameworks

To ensure consistency between District Council Local Plans and the Local Transport Plan, the County Council has taken a number of general steps:

- > Consulted land use planners at each district during the early stages of Plan policy and strategy development, as well as on all published drafts of the document;
- > Considered Local Plan policies when developing transport strategies and actions for each district; and
- > Identified specific pressures on the road network in each district that might arise from Local Plan policies and, in some cases, identified measures to address those pressures.

This approach will continue in relation to Local Development Frameworks together with consideration of the key objectives from District Councils' Corporate Plans and Community Strategies that are of particular relevance to transport.

New housing developments will be located and designed to provide good accessibility to employment and other facilities, particularly by non-car modes. This objective will be supported by the other objectives - safer roads, air quality and the street environment - which are all crucial aspects of good design and help to make walking, cycling and using bus services more attractive options. Nevertheless, new housing development will inevitably put more pressure on the county's transport network, particularly in the A40 and A34 corridors approaching Oxford, where tackling congestion will be crucially important if the planned housing growth is to be accommodated. Evidence of this is through the County Council's recent decision to provide less new housing in Witney due to the current congestion problems experienced on the A40 between Witney and Oxford.

This Local Transport Plan focuses on tackling congestion and improving accessibility in and around Oxford. During the next twenty years, 7000 new homes are planned for Oxford, a scale of development matched only by Didcot within the Central Oxfordshire Sub-Region. Oxford is the focal point for the premium bus route network which links the City to neighbouring towns where significant housing growth has already occurred and where more is planned. It is also the focal point of the most congested part of the Oxfordshire road network as identified in the Transport Networks Review (TNR).

Since resources are limited, and there is a backlog of transport investment following housing growth in recent decades, this Plan focuses on the most significant current transport problems. While this is essential in order to accommodate housing growth in Central Oxfordshire, it is by no means sufficient. This is why the County Council's submission to SEERA on the South East Plan sets out initial proposals on the transport investment that will be required.

Economic Development Strategy for Oxfordshire (EDSO)

The EDSO highlights the importance of promoting a clear "Oxfordshire brand" with two linked themes:

- > High tech and high value businesses, including tourism, supported by
- > An attractive environment, natural and built, including heritage and culture

Traffic growth and congestion represent significant threats, both to the efficient operation of businesses and to the environment that attracts them to Oxfordshire. This Local Transport Plan therefore has a crucial role to play in protecting and enhancing the Oxfordshire economy, which is itself a crucial element in the regional and UK economies. This is the reason for the Plan's emphasis on access to Oxford, as the hub of Central Oxfordshire.

Education Services

Publicly funded education services in Oxfordshire are provided and co-ordinated by the Children, Young People & Families Directorate of the County Council. The key objectives of the directorate, as set out in the Directorate Plan are:

- > Providing access to opportunities that will give people in Oxfordshire the chance to enrich their lives and so promote the well being of individuals, families and communities in the county;
- > Engaging with and promoting understanding of wide cultural diversity and ensuring that those whose voices may not usually be heard can participate on equal terms with pride and confidence; and
- > Enabling people in Oxfordshire to fulfil their personal potential through access to learning and participation.

Access to education is clearly a key theme in the County Council's approach to the provision of education services, and well-planned transport can contribute significantly to ensuring as many people as possible have access to learning opportunities.

In preparing its Local Transport Plan, the County Council has considered access to education to be an essential part of its transport strategy, and this is reflected in a number of ways:

- > The Education Service has been actively involved in producing the Accessibility Strategy assessment of journeys to schools and colleges;
- > The County Council will continue to develop its school travel plan programme to ensure safe, sustainable and inclusive access is provided to schools.

Social and Community Services

Social & Community Services (including health care) are provided by the County Council's Social & Community Services Directorate, which works with individuals, families, groups and communities to:

- > Promote independence;
- > Prevent dependence;
- > Protect children and vulnerable adults from harm and harming others;
- > Understand what local people want and need;
- > Manage our affairs well; and
- > Promote partnerships to deliver better outcomes for service users and carers.

The County Council recognises that transport planning, and effective accessibility planning in particular, are an essential part of maximising individuals' independence and freedom. In preparing the Local Transport Plan, the Council has taken specific steps to ensure that the objective of promoting independence has influenced its approaches and strategies - for example the Council's Accessibility Strategy has been prepared in consultation with the Social & Community Services Directorate and this co-operation will continue through the development of Local Accessibility Action Plans.

Best Value Review of Funded Transport Services

As part of the County Council's response to the national School Travel Action Plan initiative, the County Council is undertaking a Best Value Review of Funded Transport Services to determine how different service areas contribute to all aspects of how children travel to school. This includes aspirations for children and young people to be healthy and enjoy a healthy lifestyle, to attend and enjoy school, and to make a positive contribution to the community through their relationships with others. This Review will identify the full range of OCC policies and legal requirements bearing on

funded transport, and consider and prioritise options for addressing any problems found. It is a joint initiative between the Environment & Economy (for transport planning), Children, Young People & Families (education services including dedicated school transport) and Social & Community Services (special transport services) Directorates.

The Review will:

- > Contain a current state review for each area of funded transport in scope. This would involve Special Transport Services, Schools Transport & Public Transport;
- > Identify County Council and Government policies and objectives which are relevant to the provision of transport, highlight gaps or points of conflict between them, assess the extent to which each area currently complies, and include policies under consideration for the future;
- > Present a range of costed strategic options for the future direction and performance of each area examined, with recommendations;
- > Identify fast track improvement opportunities;
- > Identify the potential for greater integration in providing funded transport services, including with other OCC partners; and
- > Contribute to the County Council's efficiency target.

The review is considering possible arrangements in rural areas with poor access whereby the County Council could give school minibuses for use both in home to school transport and wider community access.

Countryside & Rights of Way

The County Council's Countryside Service is responsible for maintaining and developing the rights of way network in Oxfordshire, and promoting access to the county's extensive countryside.

The Countryside Service is committed to:

- > Safeguarding, maintaining and enhancing the quality of Oxfordshire's countryside; and
- > Enhancing enjoyment and understanding of the countryside through management and improvement of public access and information.

The Local Transport Plan has been developed to support these objectives through joint schemes and initiatives. In particular:

- > The County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which sets out plans for improvements to Oxfordshire's rights of way network;
- > The Council's Active Travel Strategy takes advantage of existing rights of way wherever possible, as improvements to such routes can represent a cost-effective way of developing pedestrian and cycle links; and
- > The Council's Accessibility Strategy takes into account the potential for improvements to the rights of way network to provide new or improved links to key services or to public transport for communities whose access is limited.

All approaches, actions and strategies in the Local Transport Plan have been subject to a pre-scheme Strategic Environmental Assessment, which assesses the positive and negative impacts of various approaches to tackling transport problems on landscape and biodiversity. This assessment process is ongoing, and will allow the County Council to systematically ensure that transport schemes do not cause undue harm to the county's countryside and enhance it wherever possible.

Equestrians

With the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Government has set out its aim of better provision for equestrians, especially in light of the contribution that better rights of way can make to sustainable transport, tourism, recreation and health. The County Council is required to set out its plans for improvements of the rights of way network through the County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. The Council's Countryside Service intends using the newly completed Definitive Map of the county to undertake an assessment of the whole network to include access for equestrians.

Tourism and Leisure

Transport can impact positively on tourism and leisure by improving access to tourist destinations and leisure facilities, and negatively by reducing the attractiveness of urban and rural areas. Effective transport planning can therefore present a range of opportunities to develop tourism and leisure in Oxfordshire. The County Council has developed these opportunities in a number of ways in this document - for example:

- > The Council has made 'Improving the Street Environment' a key objective of this Plan. A number of areas, primarily in Oxfordshire's town centres, where enhancements have great potential to add to the vibrancy of streets have been identified in this Plan.

- > The Council has given particular priority to congestion and accessibility problems that affect access to Oxford, which is by far the largest provider of leisure attractions in the county.

There are three designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in Oxfordshire - the North Wessex Downs, the Chilterns and the Cotswolds - all of which are attractive destinations for tourists. The County Council will work with AONB management boards and neighbouring authorities where required to ensure transport schemes are planned and implemented in a way that helps to support AONB management plans and conserve and enhance the county's AONBs wherever possible.

Social Inclusion

According to the most up to date measure, the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, Oxfordshire has 13 areas in the most deprived 20% of all areas in England. This means that nearly 4% of Oxfordshire's local areas can be described as 'pockets' of deprivation. People living within these areas may experience a number of disadvantages such as low income, unemployment, poor health or disability, poor educational attainment, barriers to services, poor housing and crime.

The County Council has recently completed a review of social inclusion issues in Oxfordshire and the conclusions of this review have influenced the development of the Council's Accessibility Strategy. Priority will be given to developing accessibility action plans to reduce any identified accessibility problems in areas where there are also identified problems of social deprivation.

Oxford's ethnic minority communities have specific needs for local transport. This information can be used as a starting point to see if transport needs of ethnic minority communities are being met. Religious buildings may have specific times of day or year when high volumes of people want to travel to them. Community centres, and faith schools need to be appropriately linked to the communities they serve.

Women form a significant number of the 'hidden unemployed' that includes those who are seeking work but are not formally registered as unemployed; those who have taken early retirement; and those who are carers. Mothers with small children often face some of the same barriers to physical access faced by some disabled people when using local transport. Transport services need to support those who manage the home during the day.

Partnership Working

Health Services

Providing health services that are of a consistently high quality and responsive to the needs of the patient lies at the heart of the Government's vision of a modern and dependable health service. The location or provision of health services can affect how or whether people access the healthcare that they need, and reinforce social exclusion affecting disadvantaged groups disproportionately.

On the whole, general health is good across the county, although there are some concentrations of poor health in the main urban areas. It is crucial to good health to ensure that people can access health services when they need them.

The County Council recognises that transport planning, and effective accessibility planning in particular, are an essential part of maximising individuals' independence and choice. In preparing the Local Transport Plan, the County Council has taken specific steps to ensure that the objective of promoting independence has influenced its approaches and strategies. Access to healthcare has also been designated as one of the County Council's accessibility priorities.

Like other areas of the country, the county has an ageing population that creates increasing challenges for health provision. In recent years there has been a centralisation of hospitals in the county, in particular to sites in the Headington area. Engaging successfully with partners in the health sector will be key to ensuring that issues relating to access to health facilities are addressed through the development of this Strategy.

Thames Valley Police

The County Council, in particular through the Road Safety Team, has a well-established and close liaison with Thames Valley Police that is especially strong at an operational level and covers road safety engineering and educational matters in addition to traffic management, scheme appraisal and speed management. The latter is covered primarily through the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership, and the recently announced changes to funding arrangements for camera partnerships are being carefully considered by all partners to ensure that partnership working is continued and the success in reducing casualties is maintained. The County Council and Thames Valley Police currently undertake joint visits to all fatal accident sites and in the course of the countywide speed limit review visited around 250 communities together.

Good Practice in Partnership: The Headington and Marston Area

Background and Strategy Development

Two key issues have led to partnership work on development of transport measures in the Headington and Marston area. Firstly, there are major plans for further development which will lead to approximately 3000 extra staff being located in the area. This is especially the case for the hospitals, with the NHS consolidating their hospital sites within this area, including re-location of services from the Radcliffe Infirmary site, in the city centre. Oxford Brookes University also has plans for further growth at its development sites. Secondly, it is recognised that measures within the Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS), including the key city centre measures introduced in 1999, focused on transport access to the city centre. There is strong pressure to address transport issues in other areas of the city in a comparable way, including ensuring that consequential effects of the OTS measures are mitigated.

The NHS 'Headington Strategy' recognised that healthcare benefits could result from this approach, but that transport improvements would be needed at these sites, and restraint of on and off-street parking was also required. The need for further work on transport policy development for Headington was also indicated within the 2001 - 2006 County Council Local Transport Plan.

The City and County Council jointly commissioned a transport study for Headington and Marston in 2000. In line with transport policy priorities the study recommendations placed a particular emphasis on improving bus access to the area, including from the main Oxford Park & Ride sites to the existing and expanding employment sites. This was to be supported with development of parking control measures, both on residential streets and at the main employment sites. It was further recommended to develop Travel Plan measures at the main employment sites, and pedestrian and cycle routes linking into these employment sites. The main recommendations of this study formed the basis of the Headington and Marston Area Transport Strategy (HAMATS), endorsed by the County Council in 2002.

Strategy Progress

In order to further develop partnership working in the Headington and Marston area, a 'HAMATS Stakeholder Forum' working group was set up, with officers and members from the County and City Councils, and representatives from the main hospital and university sites and the bus companies. The Forum has allowed for the discussion and better co-ordination of measures, allowing for a number of transport improvements to be developed in the strategy area.

Travel plan measures are being progressed at the main employment sites to discourage car commuting and ensure that patronage for enhanced bus services was maintained to secure their long-term viability. Several of these sites, especially the major hospital sites at the John Radcliffe and Churchill, were also tied into planning agreements associated with their development. These agreements required these sites to develop travel plans, and contribute funding for enhanced bus services and other transport measures. Travel Plan developments include the development of bus ticket discounts for staff at hospital sites, and increases in the cost of staff parking permits.

Public transport improvements include a new bus service from Thornhill Park & Ride to two of the major hospital sites, and enhancements to the bus service from the northern area of Oxford to/from the main hospital sites.

Two Controlled Parking Zones have been introduced in the area, three have been approved for implementation and six more zones are planned to be developed and implemented by 2009. Pedestrian and cycle routes have also been improved, especially through the introduction of new road crossings in the area.

Current Strategy Work

There is currently a particular focus on planning for the expansion of the hospital facilities in Headington, especially the John Radcliffe Hospital, with 1200 staff transferring to this site in early 2007. This has required close partnership working with the Oxford Radcliffe Hospital Trust to ensure that measures are put in place so that staff, patients and visitors can continue to travel to the hospital site whilst constraining the levels of car traffic accessing the hospital sites.

For the John Radcliffe Hospital site, work has been carried out on planning for enhancements to public transport. Two new bus links are being constructed by the hospital to allow better bus access into the hospital site, and it is planned that these will allow for higher frequency services to the city centre and other residential areas of the city. Planning for changes to services is being carried out by the County Council and Hospital Trust in association with the bus companies. The hospital is also enhancing the stopping facilities on its site, with the County Council planning to install Real Time Passenger Displays here.

The development of a number of new Controlled Parking Zones around the hospital site by the County Council will ensure that overflow commuter parking from the hospital site is constrained. It will also support the hospital travel plan, which encourages staff to use public transport, walk and cycle to work and prioritises available on-site parking to those who do not have an appropriate alternative to driving their car to work. Better cycle and pedestrian links are being built across the hospital site, and from the site to the city centre and other residential areas.

Future strategy and partnership work

It is recognised that there is a need to continue to work in partnership to ensure that improvements to transport access to their sites is maintained and enhanced. This relates to ensuring support for bus services throughout the day, and to encouraging a greater spread of general traffic travelling to and from the hospitals throughout the day and hence helping to mitigate congestion. A review of appointment times may also help improve accessibility to healthcare.

The partnership working undertaken so far with the Health sector has focused on the Headington area because of the high concentration of health facilities in that area. The County Council, acting as transport authority and social services authority, hopes to build on the principles of joint working being established in this area to look more widely at access to health throughout the county, and to develop joint policies on location of, transport to, and information about social and healthcare facilities.

Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

Road Safety staff are increasingly working with colleagues from the Fire and Rescue Service including training crews to undertake road safety education campaigns. A strategic objective of the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service is to aim to further reduce road casualties in the county by:

- > Working in partnership with internal and external agencies to assist in reducing road casualties. These partners include: Thames Valley Police, OCC Environment and Economy, Trading Standards, Primary Care Trusts, Health Authorities, District Councils, Highways Agency.
- > Engaging with the public to provide road safety education
- > Training vulnerable groups in road safety activities
- > Publicising road safety information

Oxfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust

Although resource levels in the Oxfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust have severely restricted co-operation to date the County Council is now currently in discussion with the Trust to develop practices that aid casualty reduction. All the emergency services are involved in developing the County Council's road safety strategy to ensure it is realistic and sustainable.

Consultation and Strategy Development

The County Council has made considerable efforts to ensure that as wide a range of local partners - including other authorities, businesses, the public, and stakeholders - have been involved in the development of the Local Transport Plan. This section outlines the main ways in which the County Council has engaged local partners during the preparation of the Plan.

Local People

The Council has made consultation with members of the public a high priority during the development of the Local Transport Plan. The Plan's public engagement strategy has been underpinned by a desire to reach as many people as possible, but particularly those who do not usually get involved with local government consultations.

The table opposite shows the consultation processes that have been undertaken to finalise the Transport Networks Review (for the Local Transport Strategy) and the Local Transport Plan.

Local Businesses

The County Council has consulted with local businesses on the Local Transport Plan in a number of ways:

- > Both the *Transaction* brochures were distributed to a number of local employers and business groups to inform the early stages of strategy development and the development of the final Plan and Plan spending programme;
- > A consultation draft of the Local Transport Plan was sent to representatives of key local business organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, as well to the Oxfordshire Community Partnership Steering Group, which includes a number of local business representatives; and
- > Meetings of the Oxfordshire Transport Ambition Group, made up of representatives of local business organisations, Councillors, County Council Officers and a range of other stakeholders have been used to discuss transport issues and have helped to inform the Council's strategies - particularly for promoting public transport and tackling congestion problems in and around Oxford.

LTP Public Engagement Strategy

Focus Groups

In October 2004, the County Council commissioned a local market research company to conduct in-depth focus groups to probe local public opinion on a range of transport issues. Membership of the groups was randomly selected, and the sessions themselves lead by independent facilitators. The discussions focused on the four aspects of the transport shared priority, and have helped to inform the development of priorities, policies and strategies for the Local Transport Plan.

Transaction – stage 1 (Autumn 2004 - Spring 2005)

In September 2004, the County Council commissioned a local marketing company to produce a brand name and image for consultation materials associated with the Local Transport Plan. A brochure and website were produced, focused on the four aspects of the transport shared priority - congestion, accessibility, road safety and air quality. This campaign was designed to encourage as many people as possible to get involved in the Local Transport Plan and influence its development. Over 600 responses were received in total in response to the brochure and website, which have helped to guide the development of the Plan.

Transaction – stage 2 (November 2005 – January 2006)

This second stage of public consultation was carried out to inform members of the public and stakeholders about the County Council's emerging Plan spending programme and give them an opportunity to comment on the Provisional Plan. A brochure summarising the Council's proposed policies and spending plans was circulated widely through supermarkets, schools, doctors' and dentists' surgeries and a range of other outlets. A website version of the brochure was also produced. As with the first consultation, advertising was used to raise public awareness of all the consultation materials available. Around 250 responses were received from district and parish councils, stakeholders and members of the public, all of which have helped to shape this final version of the Plan.

Transport Networks Review	Date	Local Transport Plan
Stage 1 Workshops (5) - <i>Identifying Problems</i> with neighbouring transport authorities, District & Parish Councils plus other stakeholders	Oct 2002	
Freight workshop - with freight operators, business organisations etc	Jan 2003	
Stage 2 Workshops (5) - <i>Identifying Potential Solutions</i> with neighbouring transport authorities, District & Parish Councils plus other stakeholders	May 2003	
Establishment of Freight Quality Partnership - organisation of transport professionals and local interest groups to investigate freight and delivery issues (met at least quarterly since)	July 2003	
Stage 3 Exhibitions (5) - <i>Towards a Draft Strategy</i> public exhibitions with leaflet distributed at libraries, council offices etc	Feb 2004	
	Apr - July 2004	Transport Strategy Group - 5 seminars on selected issues with invited stakeholders Transport Reference Groups - identify problems and issues with invited stakeholders
	July 2004	Liaison with district planning officers on LTP related issues
Consideration of draft strategy by County Council Executive	Sept 04	Transport Ambition Group - quarterly liaison on transport policy development with Community Partnership Focus Groups (10) - discussion groups of residents from across the county to establish transport issues and priorities "transaction" leaflet distributed through libraries/council offices
	Oct 2004	Workshops on accessibility issues (food, health, education, employment) with relevant stakeholders "transaction" website launched with wide local publicity
	Nov 2004	Consultation with statutory bodies on Scoping Report for Strategic Environmental Assessment
Consultation leaflet on TNR strategy with local councils	Jan 2005	
	April 2005	Draft Plan to neighbouring transport authorities, District & Parish Councils plus other stakeholders 2 nd Health Accessibility workshop
	May 2005	MORI survey of 1000 households on transport issues including relative importance of priority objectives.
Public consultation on final strategy	Nov 2005 - Jan 2006	Public and stakeholder consultation on final Plan.

Stakeholders and Other Service Providers

The County Council has made particular efforts to engage stakeholders on the Local Transport Plan:

- > Stakeholders have been consulted on every published document associated with the Local Transport Plan. A full Stakeholder Draft of the Plan was published in April 2005, and around 100 responses to it were received from Parish, Town and District Councils, local interest groups, businesses and others;
- > Submissions from all the district councils and many town and parish councils were also received in response to the consultation on the draft final Plan which ended in January 2006;
- > The county's Local Strategic Partnerships have been involved in the development of the Plan - in particular the Oxfordshire Community Partnership. The Oxfordshire Transport Ambition Group (a sub-group of the Oxfordshire Community Partnership) has discussed the development of the Local Transport Plan in detail at several meetings between September 2004 and May 2005, and input from the group has been extremely valuable in the development of Plan's strategies and policies - in particular the approach to the Central Oxfordshire Transport Area; and
- > For certain policy areas, specific meetings and seminars have been held with interest groups to inform them about the Local Transport Plan process and discuss particular policy areas in more detail.

