

Station travel plans: the way forward

The Government's recent strategy document, *Delivering a Sustainable Railway*, supports the concept of Station Travel Plans as a means of managing access to stations and suggests a dozen pilots to test them out. This paper suggests how this might be taken forward.

Travel Plans: A background

Travel plans have increasingly been used to manage travel demand for various journey types. They involve those generating the journeys – employers, schools, hospitals, housing developers – gaining baseline data of current travel patterns and developing strategies to manage travel, usually with objectives and targets for reducing car use and increasing the use of other modes. Travel plans are now in fact mandatory in the planning system for larger developments and this is pushing developers and businesses to look more closely at the travel they generate.

The Government has set a target of having a travel plan for every school in England by 2010 and is funding school travel plan posts in every local transport authority to ensure this happens. It has also required hospitals to produce travel plans and has set up a National Business Travel Network (which Campaign for Better Transport hosts) to encourage employers to develop travel plans. It has also promoted residential travel plans for new housing developments and promoted good practice on this. Local authorities are also involved in travel planning to varying degrees, and some authorities have whole teams working on them liaising with employers, schools and others.

The rationale behind these is that by working with travel generators it is possible to change travel behaviour through carrots (improved alternatives to car use) and sticks (usually managing or even charging for car parking) and that this will have benefits in terms of congestion (in alliance with other transport measures) and pollution. There are also benefits for those doing the plans (for example employers may improve staff recruitment and retention and use office space more efficiently; schools may be able to improve attendance rates).

Travel plans form part of a wider suite of transport measures which are collectively known as “smarter choices” – others include individualised travel marketing, car clubs and teleworking – and are showing potential to change travel behaviour significantly. In a pilot of three “sustainable travel towns”- Darlington, Worcester and Peterborough – where with Government funding these measures have been applied on a town-wide basis, car use has fallen by 12% over two years.

At Campaign for Better Transport we have been involved in promoting travel plans and smarter choices for many years. We set up the predecessor to the National Business Travel Network and have published good practice guides and undertaken research projects on all of these plans. We has also set up a Car-Free Leisure Network to promote visitor travel plans, and this is in the process of being revived with support from Natural England.

Station Travel Plans

Stations are major generators of travel and in some cases their impact on the surrounding road network can be large. However, there has been little attention paid to this except on a case-specific basis. There is also a strong emphasis in the rail industry on catering for car trips to stations through increasing station car parking and in some cases through parkway stations. There is clearly a problem with over-emphasis on driving to the station, for three reasons:

- **Increasing congestion around stations:** Significant growth is predicted in rail use, but these extra users will have to access stations and constraints on the road network around most stations mean that it will simply not be possible for this access to be predominantly by car
- **Parking constraints at stations:** Research by Steer Davies Gleave for Passenger Focus suggests that there are significant actual and perceived problems with parking at stations and that this leads to illegal and informal parking around stations and in some cases makes people use alternative stations or even avoid rail use altogether. Clearly in many situations there will be limits on how much car parking can be physically provided at stations
- **Sustainability concerns:** The Government and the rail industry are placing increasing emphasis on maintaining and improving rail's environmental and sustainability advantages over other modes. An approach to station access which prioritises car use runs counter to this.

Station travel plans in practice

Following the DfT's support in the Rail White Paper (paras 10.58-10.64), we suggest that travel plans should have the following characteristics:

- A baseline of current station access against which change can be measured and targets set
- A projection for future access demands based on current trends
- Identification of barriers to passengers using non-car modes or car sharing to access stations and measures to overcome those barriers
- Targets and strategies for increasing use of non-car modes for station access and reducing/managing different types of car use (drop-off, single-occupancy etc) to stations

Plans might also include an assessment of current and future impacts from station travel, including CO2 emissions, so as to capture door-to-door environmental impacts rather than just station-to-station. This would help inform rail industry sustainability work.

The kinds of measures that travel plans might include:

- Secure cycle storage and cycle hire
- Better pedestrian and cycle access to stations
- Better signing, information and waiting areas for buses and taxis
- New or improved bus services
- Car sharing and car clubs, with reserved and priority parking spaces
- Shared taxis
- Better managed station car parking to give priority to car sharing and where appropriate short-term drop-off parking rather than all-day parking

The process for producing plans is critical. Barriers to using non-car modes often relate to highway and other issues outside railway property, so it is vital that local transport and planning authorities are fully engaged in and are indeed joint sponsors of the plan. In most cases we would expect that some of the actions required to implement the travel plan and meet the targets will be for local authorities rather than rail industry to take forward. Examples include reshaping a junction or roundabout outside a station so as give priority to cyclists and buses, improving and increasing actual and perceived security on footpaths leading to stations, introducing controlled parking zones in residential areas around stations, and upgrading bus links. Some –

for example new access points for stations to improve pedestrian links to surrounding areas – will be joint responsibilities between Network Rail, train operators and local authorities.

It is particularly important to involve planning authorities where development is planned at or near stations, so that synergies between the station access and surrounding development (for example through shared funding for bus services or a joint car-share scheme) can be identified and also developer funding can be used to implement plans (and other station improvements).

As noted in the rail strategy, it will be important to involve local bus and taxi companies, representatives of rail users and other users such as cycling groups, and local residents from areas around stations.

Taking station travel plans forward

Since Campaign for Better Transport first suggested the idea of station of travel plans, we have met an enthusiastic reception from many parts of the rail industry and several operators and local authorities have expressed interest in piloting them. The DfT proposes “about a dozen pilot projects to test the concept at different types of stations”. These pilots could happen in various ways: there could be a free-for-all in which operators and councils that want to do station travel plans do so, with a little co-ordination by the rail industry through ATOC or Network Rail. However we think that a more structured approach will improve the quality of the pilots and of subsequent plans. This would involve:

- **A bidding process**, whereby bids to be one of the dozen pilots would need to come from both relevant rail industry bodies (TOCs, Network Rail zone managers) and local authorities (district and county/PTE where appropriate). This would ensure full buy-in from relevant parties for reasons explained above. In particular, we think that the first plans need to take place where there is full commitment and understanding from the relevant local TOC and local authorities: in our view, some local transport authorities have little knowledge or enthusiasm about travel plans, while others devote significant staff and funding to them. It is also clear that some TOCs would find station travel plans a distraction from the task of improving performance. A bidding process would allow the best pilots to be recognised and agreed
- **A commitment by those involved** in the pilots to at least the broad outlines of the processes and measures listed above, so there is a shared understanding by all those involved
- **A steering group** which would run this bidding process and bring together the national bodies with an interest in this. Members might include DfT, Network Rail, ATOC, Campaign for Better Transport, Sustrans, CTA, Confederation of Passenger Transport, CTC and local authority groups like IHT and the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers
- **A network**, meeting 2-3 times a year, where those undertaking the pilots can discuss progress and learn from each other. This would maximise the value for money being put into this. Part of the requirement for being involved in pilots would be to participate in this network. We envisage meetings of the network being hosted by members, so that members can see pilots first hand

We think it will be worth employing a consultant to work with the pilots and to develop guidelines from them as good practice for others. The DfT has adopted this approach with other kinds of travel plans. We think this structure, including the steering group and network, will need to be funded and suggest DfT do this and lead the process. This is because of the need to involve a wide range of groups at national level, and also to draw on experience inside and outside the DfT on other kinds of travel plans.