

WEST YORKSHIRE WALKING STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

1. Walking has always played a key role in local transport. It is so much a part of people's daily routine that it is often taken for granted. More and more people, however, are using their cars rather than walking for relatively short journeys; but more road traffic makes walking unpleasant and unsafe, leading to a vicious circle of decline. The dispersal of land uses, employment trends and fears about personal security have also contributed to the decline. This trend needs to be tackled if problems of traffic congestion and pollution are to be avoided. Encouraging people to walk and use public transport rather than travel by car will make an important contribution to managing travel demand and have wider benefits to the community, the environment and the health of the people of West Yorkshire.

2. This document sets out the West Yorkshire Authorities' Walking Strategy. The Strategy sits within the overall framework of transport policies for West Yorkshire provided by the Local Transport Plan and complements the findings of the West Yorkshire Public Transport Accessibility Study completed in early 1997. The policies set out in this Strategy and the Plan have been developed within the principles provided by the DETR advice on encouraging walking, Unitary Development Plans and other local policies for regeneration, the environment, health and education.

3. The Strategy seeks to maintain, encourage and develop the role of walking to reduce dependence on the private car and increase opportunities for independent mobility by children and people with disabilities. Through this Strategy and the proposed local action plans for each district area, steps will be taken to provide more practical support for pedestrians for both utility and recreational walking purposes.

4. Whilst highway footways are probably the most prominent part of the pedestrian route network, footpaths, bridleways, the canal towpath and other public rights of way are also considered an essential element of this network. West Yorkshire has a large rural hinterland and these routes have special value in providing links within and between outlying settlements. As such, existing and future Milestones Statements for the management and development of these rights of way are an integral part of the West Yorkshire local authorities' walking policies. With canal tow paths, especially in urban areas, there is the potential to connect into the existing footpath and the public transport networks because these towpaths connect well with some train and bus routes and can be accessible from stations and the main roads.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

5. Walking is a popular mode of transport in Great Britain. The Government's National Travel Survey (NTS 1993/95) shows that it accounts for nearly one third (29%) of all journeys, including 82% of journeys less than a mile; and in mileage terms 3% of distance travelled. The NTS also show that walking declined from 35% of all journeys made in 1975/76 to 29% in 1994/96; the average distance walked, per person, has fallen by 20%. Walking has declined as car availability has increased. Comparison of the West Yorkshire Household Travel Surveys, carried out in 1981 and 1991, shows an increase of 13% in car trips. The main proportion of this increase has been at the expense of walking, where there has been a decrease of 11% (from 37% to 26%).

6. Walking has obvious limitations for replacing longer journeys but research has shown that most journeys are very short and ideal for walking. The NTS (1989/91) shows that almost a third of all journeys under 2 miles are made by car and even for the shortest journeys (those under half a kilometre) 6% were made by car. This shows there is potential for increasing journeys made on foot by converting these short distance car journeys to walking journeys.

7. Walking is environmentally friendly and healthy, but can be inconvenient and not well catered for. There are a number of deterrents, which need to be addressed if people are to be encouraged to make more journeys on foot:

- road safety, especially the risk of injury to children;
- personal security, particularly for women, children and older people;
- inadequate facilities, especially for people with impaired mobility;
- linkages to public transport, which are often perceived as being poor;
- inadequate provision of local facilities and services;
- heavy and fast moving traffic;
- poor roadside environments, often suffering from noise and air pollution.

8. A higher priority for walking in the transport system will assist in addressing these problems. It is essential to plan positively for pedestrians to create conditions most likely to produce a shift in attitudes and travel patterns. The importance of walking needs to be recognised by investing more in safe and pleasant walking routes to enable people to walk without feeling threatened or overwhelmed by traffic. Increased safety and convenience will allow walking to be promoted as a healthy and environmentally friendly alternative way of travelling for short journeys.

9. The lack of adequate physical exercise by a large proportion of the population is a serious cause for concern for health providers, and may lead to a greater call on health service resources in the future. Walking is a healthy mode of travel and walking can be an important form of physical exercise.

OBJECTIVES

10. The objectives of the West Yorkshire Walking Strategy are to:

- **increase the proportion of journeys undertaken on foot** especially by achieving a transfer from private car use;
- **emphasise the role of walking as part of journeys by public transport;**
- **improve the walking environment** to make walking more attractive by enhancing safety, security and environmental quality;
- **promote walking** as a practical mode of travel with benefits to health, the environment and the community;
- **make it possible for more journeys to be made on foot by people with impaired or reduced mobility;**
- **ensure that actions to encourage walking and cycling complement one another** to realise opportunities for achieving more sustainable local travel patterns.

TARGETS

11. To measure progress in implementing the strategy and the achievement of its objectives, the following targets are proposed:

- Target 1** to increase the pedestrian's share of journeys to work from 11% to 15% by 2006;
- Target 2** to increase the pedestrian's share of journeys to school by 5% by 2006;
- Target 3** to achieve a reduction of 50% in the numbers of pedestrians killed and seriously injured by 2010; with early attention, we aim to achieve a reduction of 40% by 2005. Our overall intention is to continue to reduce all injuries to pedestrians including slight injuries;
- Target 4** to achieve a network of footways and pedestrian facilities that is accessible to disabled people and meets pedestrian journey needs by the most direct routes;
- Target 5** to increase the number and range of services and facilities located within convenient walking distance of the home or workplace (typically a journey of 15 minutes duration or 1km in distance).

STRATEGY

12. Walking is not simply a transport issue; there is a considerable overlap with other issues, notably health and policing, which have an important bearing on walking policy. A co-ordinated approach is essential and the West Yorkshire local authorities will build on existing links with the appropriate agencies through the implementation of Local Action Plans. The measures that form the basis for implementing this Strategy and delivering its Objectives are divided into the areas of: planning; engineering; encouragement and education; and enforcement.

Planning and Development

13. Effective planning of the transport system and of development and land use patterns is instrumental to realising the objectives of this Strategy. These twin processes will ensure that infrastructure improvements complement land use planning policies, to encourage forms of development that are readily accessible by pedestrians and overcome barriers to walking.

- **Manage and improve the existing network of footways and public rights of way to achieve continuous walking links throughout urban areas.**

The existing public highway meets the majority of walking journey requirements within urban areas. However there are deficiencies which may deter people from walking. The aim is to meet pedestrian expectations by upgrading sub-standard footways and lighting systems to meet modern standards, providing missing network links where necessary. Maintaining footpaths and other public rights of way is an important aspect of this process.

- **Maximise the use of the most attractive walking routes by the development and implementation of effective signing strategies.**

Most journeys are made in local areas, familiar to the user, where signing is unnecessary. However, where routes are unattractive, perhaps due to a poor roadside environment, there is scope for developing and signing alternative pedestrian routes away from busy roads. Signing is especially advantageous in visitor and tourist areas such as town centres. Direct and attractive footways can be used to create routes between key locations, with links to public transport services.

- **Use the planning process to stimulate a growth in walking and ensure that pedestrian access is a primary consideration in developments.**

Reducing the need to travel, especially long journeys, is emphasised in national planning guidance and in the future a greater variety in the character and scale of urban development is likely. Better conditions for pedestrians, when linked to locational policies which promote local activity, could encourage more people to walk. In considering development proposals, the issues associated with pedestrian access and links to public transport will continue to be taken into account. Further details of how we will use the planning process to encourage walking are provided in the separate Local Transport Plan Land Use Planning Annex.

- **Take a co-ordinated approach to tackling issues of community safety especially where personal security is a deterrent to walking.**

Where fears about safety and security are identified as a deterrent to walking. Solutions which restore public confidence will be sought in conjunction with the community. Similarly, personal security issues will be a major consideration in the design of new developments.

Engineering

14. Highway and traffic engineering measures are central to the provision of facilities to improve the safety of pedestrians and cater for their travel needs. We will use the “Hierarchy of Consideration” contained within the main Local Transport Plan to ensure that the needs of people walking are considered first as part of the design process.

- **Provide measures to aid pedestrians when crossing roads wherever the volume of pedestrians and conflict with traffic justifies it.**

There are established techniques for aiding pedestrians and mitigating conflicts with motor traffic and cyclists by providing crossings, refuge islands, road narrowing etc. These measures are likely to remain among the most practical ways of facilitating the safe movement of pedestrians across roads. More attention needs to be placed on reducing traffic related delays to pedestrians and increasing their precedence over traffic.

- **Continue implementing Local Safety Schemes to reduce injuries and improve the general road safety of pedestrians.**

The introduction of measures to reduce road accident injuries to pedestrians is a priority. This action is co-ordinated through district council Road Safety Plans, with particular emphasis on reducing injuries to children. These measures will make pedestrian journeys safer by addressing the key issue of exposure to accident risks.

- **Introduce measures to reduce the speed and volume of traffic to reflect local pedestrian needs and activity.**

Pedestrianisation and traffic management schemes are being widely used in the town centres of West Yorkshire to remove or reduce traffic and create pedestrian dominated environments. In residential areas traffic calming techniques are being extensively used to reduce the impact of traffic speeds and flows on road safety and pedestrians. Further development of these techniques may offer opportunities for creating pedestrian priority areas on new and existing residential roads.

- **Establish Safer Routes to Schools projects to encourage children to walk or cycle to school by improving the road environment and their road user skills.**

There is significant ongoing transfer of school journeys from walking to car travel. If this continues there are serious adverse implications for children's health and personal independence. In order to reverse this trend, measures to improve the safety of roads on routes to schools for pedestrians and cyclists are proposed, in conjunction with programmes to improve individual road user skills.

- **Ensure the highest standards of design are observed in the provision of facilities which should be accessible to all pedestrians.**

The principles of good design for pedestrians, especially those with reduced mobility, are well established. The appropriate technical guidelines will be applied to ensure new facilities and improvements are of a high quality, which meets the needs of disabled people.

- **Ensure that best practice is observed in the care and maintenance of the footway and pedestrian route network.**

Footways and pedestrian facilities need to be well maintained in accordance with the local authorities code of practice. During construction works inconvenience to pedestrians will be minimised by ensuring that the relevant guidelines are correctly applied in the planning and execution of the works.

- **Implement audit procedures to ensure that good practice is applied to the design and implementation of pedestrian measures.**

Audit procedures are a valuable and effective means of ensuring the consistent application of best practice in the design and implementation of pedestrian measures which are safe and accessible. At the same time scheme audits provide a check that proposals are meeting policy objectives and achieving the desired intentions.

Education and Encouragement

15. Over 60% of households in West Yorkshire have one or more cars and many individuals and families are now accustomed to car orientated lifestyles. Therefore a vital part of the walking policy process is involvement with local communities in the provision of education and information about the advantages of walking. This is especially relevant to children whose lifestyle is shaped by their parents' habits.

- **Work with health services to raise awareness about the benefits to health and lifestyle that can be gained from walking.**

The personal and community benefits of walking need to be widely promoted. As well as being healthy it is an environmentally benign mode of travel which can enhance personal and community life. Increasing the pedestrian use of streets will foster

greater social interaction, thereby helping to relieve fears of isolation and insecurity, which will encourage more people to walk. Future initiatives will include practical support for changes to travel through initiatives such as Walk to School Week and TravelWise. Walking is also an important source of physical exercise in which most people can take part. Increased levels of exercise can have a major impact on public health.

- **Develop targeted initiatives to encourage walking most especially by young people.**

Encouraging sustainable travel habits among young people is a key issue. For young people the most frequent journey is to school or college and this is being targeted through Safer Routes to School projects which combine both education and engineering measures. Projects which facilitate children's independent mobility, and encourage young adults to continue to walk or cycle rather than aspire to own their own car will continue to be developed.

- **Use the opportunities presented by road safety education to positively influence attitudes of other road users towards pedestrians and walking.**

Our commitment to publicising road safety issues and training and educating road users is very well established. These responsibilities will be further developed and integrated with actions to encourage the environmentally benign travel modes of walking and cycling.

Enforcement

16. Pedestrians are concerned about driver behaviour and standards. Road traffic and highway laws and regulations provide a strong legislative framework protecting pedestrian interests. Compliance with legislation benefits all road users and can be accomplished by effective enforcement by the Police and local authorities.

- **Support the Police in their enforcement to address bad driving which deters walking and is hazardous to pedestrians.**

Aggressive driving and a disregard for the safety of other road users is of serious concern to pedestrians. The Police are responsible for road traffic law enforcement. The local authorities can assist with measures which ease this task by providing good signing, together with traffic calming and camera facilities where necessary.

- **Work with the relevant agencies to ensure that footways and pedestrian facilities are free of parking and other hazards.**

The obstruction of footways by parking, unauthorised street furniture or poorly planned road works causes special difficulties, especially for people with impaired vision, in wheelchairs or with pushchairs. The local authorities will continue to enforce the regulations and support intervention by the Police.

IMPLEMENTATION

17. This Strategy sets out the basic principles of policy agreed by the district councils in West Yorkshire. The process of implementing the Strategy will be set out in the specific local **Action Plans** to be prepared by each authority. These Plans will be

reviewed every three years and will outline a programme of local pedestrian measures and initiatives, some of which are already in process. The Plans will also identify appropriate links with local communities and pedestrian groups and with the agencies who can play a role in encouraging walking and supporting pedestrians.

Resources

18. There are a number of funding sources available for implementing this Strategy. For infrastructure related measures the main source of capital funding is the Local Transport Plan bidding process. Complementary capital funding will be determined locally by individual authorities within the framework of their Action Plans, as will revenue expenditure for education, publicity, and travel awareness initiatives.

19. Local Transport Plan funds will be used principally to develop schemes that take an integrated approach to meeting travel needs. Due regard will be given to making provision for pedestrians within all transport schemes and, within the resources allocated, a portion of the overall budget will be made available for specifically pedestrian related measures.

20. In the future, a larger allocation of funding for the Plan will be sought in order to expedite the implementation of this Strategy. The development of flexible funding mechanisms capable of covering all aspects of the sustainable transport process will be supported. For example through such mechanisms we will be seeking to develop an integrated approach to the financing of the engineering, training and publicity aspects of projects such as Safer Routes to School and the introduction and operation of speed and red light cameras.

21. Where appropriate other potential sources of external funding will be pursued. In particular, where new developments are proposed, steps will be taken to maximise potential contributions to the cost of new and improved pedestrian routes.

Monitoring

22. Steps are being taken within the overall transport monitoring process to establish consistent baseline data with which to measure progress. In the future further work to collect more detailed information about personal travel preferences and attitudes will take place within this framework.

23. Expanding and developing data collection and analysis will provide the opportunity for a closer examination of the aspects of travel behaviour related to walking. This will allow more meaningful analysis of the data, which can be used to inform the development of future projects to encourage walking.

24. Progress will be presented to the Government as part of the process of reporting local transport policies and expenditure plans, through the Local Transport Plan and future Annual Progress Reports. In addition the local authorities will also work to ensure that relevant information is available locally.