

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA): NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

WEST YORKSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2006-11

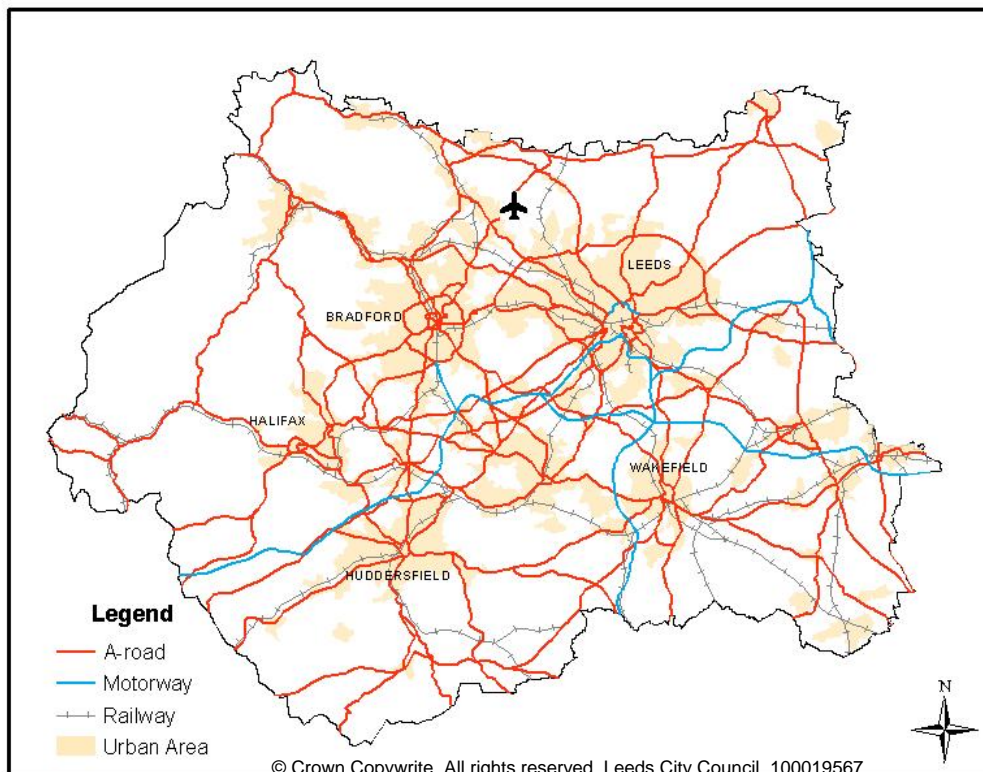
The West Yorkshire Sub-Region.

West Yorkshire is a sub-region of the Yorkshire and Humberside region, covering an area of 2000 km² and with a population of over two million. The sub-region is split into five local authority districts: Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. West Yorkshire is a highly urbanised area with several densely populated towns and cities, the largest being Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax and Wakefield. In contrast there are also extensive rural areas in West Yorkshire, some of which are quite isolated whilst others experience development pressures due to their close proximity to urban areas.

The West Yorkshire Transport System.

West Yorkshire is well connected to the strategic transport network. By road the A1, M1 and A1(M) connect the sub-region to the north and the south, and the M62 and A63 provide links to the east and the west. By rail, the East coast Mainline links West Yorkshire to the north and south, and the Trans-Pennine and Caldervale lines run through the sub-region from east to west. The primary transport network in West Yorkshire is shown in figure 1. Leeds Bradford International Airport is located within West Yorkshire, and Manchester Airport and Robin Hood Sheffield-Doncaster Airport are both within reasonable travelling distance.

Figure 1: Primary road and rail networks in West Yorkshire



The local transport network in West Yorkshire is complex, largely as a result of the polycentric pattern of urban development that has occurred. The topography of the area has also influenced development of the transport network – particularly to the west where roads and railways characteristically share the same narrow valleys.

Modal split across West Yorkshire predominantly favours car use. Recent economic regeneration across the sub-region has led to an increase in the number and length of journeys made at peak times. This trend is expected to continue as a result of regional economic and housing strategies.

The Local Transport Plan

The Transport Act 2000 requires the development and implementation of Local Transport Plans. In metropolitan areas such as West Yorkshire this must be done jointly between the district councils and the public transport authority (Metro). The West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan is a statutory requirement and is used by the Department for Transport (DfT) to help in allocating national capital funding for transport improvements.

The objectives for the second Local Transport Plan (also referred to as LTP2) are built on the aims of a longer term strategy for the region and are structured around central and local government's shared priorities for transport: accessibility, safety, reducing congestion, air quality and asset management.

The SEA Directive.

European legislation known as the 'SEA Directive' was formally adopted by UK law on July 20th 2004. The SEA Directive aims "to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to ensure the integration of environmental considerations, when developing new Plans or Programmes", helping to promote sustainable development through decision making. The Directive applies to certain Plans or Programmes, whose formal preparation or adoption began before July 21st 2006. The West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2) was the first sub-regional or District plan to require a mandatory SEA in West Yorkshire.

Purpose of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

The aim of SEA is to assess the likely impact of strategic level plans and programmes on the environment and to inform decision making throughout the development of the LTP2. The SEA procedure should help to identify any significant adverse environmental effects likely to arise from implementation of the proposed plan. The SEA Directive states that these effects should include "*secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects*". The process should highlight appropriate alternative strategies or themes within the LTP2 in order to reduce or mitigate the significant adverse environmental effects. The SEA also indicates where potential beneficial environmental effects can be further enhanced.

In order to comply with the SEA Directive, the following environmental themes must be incorporated :- biodiversity, flora & fauna, population effects, human health, soil, water & air quality, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape and any interactions of the above factors. However, additional local environmental issues can be included if they are considered to be of local importance.

Other Relevant Plans, Programmes and Policies.

The influence of the LTP2 is not restricted only to local transport issues, but will affect and be affected by a number of other strategic plans at the local, regional, national and international level. A review of relevant policies, plans, programmes and statutory requirements has been undertaken as part of the LTP2 SEA. This review helped to ensure that any objectives set for the SEA did not conflict with other strategic objectives.

SEA Objectives.

A set of SEA objectives were developed to assess the impact of the developing LTP2 on the environment. The objectives cover the requirements of both the SEA Directive and the New Approach to Appraisal (NATA), with an additional objective relating to waste minimisation and reuse/recycling of materials. The LTP2 SEA objectives are as follows:

1. To reduce transport-related impacts on local/regional noise climate.
2. Improve local/regional air quality and mitigate transport-related AQMAs.
3. Reduce transport-related emissions of greenhouse gases.
4. Improve the ability of transport systems to adapt to climate change.
5. To protect and enhance landscape and townscape diversity.
6. Avoid loss or damage to historic buildings, land, structures, Conservation Areas and historical areas or their setting.
7. To help protect and enhance habitats and species of local, European or international importance.
8. Reduce the detrimental impact of transport on water quality.
9. To secure improvements to health.
10. Reduce the number of vehicular, pedestrian, and other transport-user casualties.
11. Reduce the risk and fear of crime for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users.
12. Reduce community severance and fragmentation to aid community cohesion.
13. Improve access to education, jobs, leisure (including sustainable tourism), community services and the countryside.
14. To support employment, economic competitiveness and the revival of priority regeneration areas.
15. To protect and retain soil quality.
16. Maximise the efficient and effective use of materials and minimise the amount of waste generated.

The Environmental Baseline

The environmental baseline describes the current and likely future environment in West Yorkshire and provides the basis for forecasting and monitoring the environmental effects of the LTP2. The baseline is structured around the sixteen SEA objectives and describes the relationship of these topics to local transport. Recent transport trends in the sub-region are also described.

Although efforts were made to ensure the data provided was the most relevant to the West Yorkshire, in some cases this data may not have been collected or was not available at the most appropriate scale. The baseline information will be reviewed annually as part of the SEA monitoring framework to allow any changes in the environment to be identified and for any potential predicted (or unforeseen) effects of the LTP2 to be identified. The full baseline review can be found in chapter 3 of the Environmental Report.

Assessment of Alternative LTP2 Options

A matrix system was used to assess five alternative options initially developed for the LTP2. Sets of policy instruments were devised by the LTP transport planners for each alternative, each with emphasis on a different policy area. The alternatives considered were:

- **Option One:** is the existing situation that can be treated as a “do-minimum” or background situation. For the purposes of the hypothetical situations that follow, it can be assumed that the development / investment in the policy instruments here would be maintained with no further growth.
- **Option Two:** an alternative consisting of Option One (existing) plus policy instruments skewed towards constraining the strong demand for car travel.
- **Option Three:** an alternative consisting of Option One (existing) plus policy instruments skewed towards sustainable transport modes.
- **Option Four:** an alternative consisting of Option One (existing) plus policy instruments skewed towards unconstrained demand for car travel.
- **Option Five:** an alternative consisting of Option One (existing) plus policy instruments skewed towards targeted improvements to roads together with some improvements for walking, cycling and public transport.

This scoping exercise was structured so that each policy instrument was assessed against each SEA objective. By taking this approach it proved possible to establish not only which of the alternatives provided the best environmental performance as a whole, but also to identify particular aspects of those alternatives that were likely to be beneficial/detrimental to different environmental aspects. This allows decision makers to adopt the most suitable package of measures in the Plan as it develops.

In the case of the emerging LTP2, the option providing the best environmental performance was option 2 – policy instruments skewed towards car use constrained through demand management.

Selection of the Preferred LTP2 Option

In addition to the findings of the scoping exercise, other decision-making tools, including public/stakeholder consultation and modelling of the alternative options using the Strategic Transport Model, provided an important role in identifying the best overall performing LTP2 strategy. All of these methods highlighted option two as the best strategy for achieving the local transport objectives for West Yorkshire. This preferred option was further scrutinised by the West Yorkshire LTP2 Steering Group (consisting of high level officers and politicians from all of the District local authorities and from Metro), and it was decided that option two could be improved further through additional funding and resources being invested in public transport in West Yorkshire. This modified version of 'option two' was the framework adopted for the development of the LTP2.

Priority Strategies Addressed in the LTP2

Following an assessment of the options for the LTP2, a provisional plan was developed. The approach chosen for the LTP2 involved high public transport investment together with demand management measures, and was structured around the following strategic priorities set out in Department for Transport guidance: tackling congestion; delivering accessibility; safer roads; better air quality; and effective asset management.

Assessment of Environmental Effects

The Provisional LTP2 comprises two broad components. Firstly, a number of 'strategy approaches' were developed to set the policy framework for LTP2 and secondly, categories of capital schemes were established. As the Provisional LTP2 lists a large amount of individual schemes it would be impracticable to assess each of these at a strategic level. Instead, a more generic assessment was made of the types of impact that could be incurred for each scheme category.

The baseline review provided the SEA assessment team with an understanding of the key issues affecting West Yorkshire's environment. Modelled information from the Strategic Transport Model (a multi-modal modelling tool designed to assist Town and Transport planners) also provided useful information, particularly regarding air quality and carbon dioxide emissions. Another key feature of the assessment was the formation of a number of specialist assessment groups. Experts on all of the environmental topics from around West Yorkshire were invited to a number of assessment workshops to provide as broad an expert opinion as possible where subjective opinion had to be relied for the assessment.

The culmination of the assessment is a number of recommendations for how the LTP2 could either mitigate against potential negative effects brought about by implementation of the Plan or highlighting opportunities by which the Plan could actively enhance the environment. Recommendations for improvement were provided for both strategic policies and scheme design issues.

Any effects considered to have either a 'moderate' or 'major' effect on the environment were deemed to be 'significant'. Table 1 provides a summary of the effects of the provisional LTP2 on the environment, predicted by the SEA.

Table 1: Summary findings of the environmental effects assessment.

SEA OBJECTIVE	SIGNIFICANCE OF STRATEGIC EFFECTS	OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT
Reduce transport related impacts on local / regional noise climate.	Minor Beneficial	Minor
Improve local/regional air quality and mitigate transport related AQMAs.	Minor Beneficial	Major *
Reduce transport-related emissions of greenhouse gases	Minor Beneficial	Major *
Improve the ability of transport systems to adapt to climate change.	Moderate Beneficial	Moderate
To protect and enhance landscape and townscape diversity	Minor Beneficial	Minor
Avoid loss or damage to historic buildings, land, structures, Conservation Areas and archaeological areas or their setting.	Uncertain	Minor
To help protect and enhance habitats and species of local, European or international importance.	Minor Beneficial	Minor
Reduce the detrimental impact of transport on water quality	Minor Beneficial	Minor
To secure improvements to health	Moderate Beneficial	Minor
Reduce the number of vehicular, pedestrian, and other transport-user casualties	Major Beneficial	Minor
Reduce the risk and fear of crime for pedestrians and public transport users	Moderate Beneficial	Minor
Reduce community severance and fragmentation to aid community cohesion	Minor Beneficial	Minor
Improve access to education, jobs, leisure (including sustainable tourism), community services and the countryside	Uncertain	Moderate
To support employment, economic competitiveness and the revival of priority regeneration areas.	Uncertain	Minor
To protect and retain soil quality	Minor Adverse	Minor
Maximise the efficient and effective use of materials and minimise the amount of waste generated	Minor Beneficial	Minor

* Limited influence of Local Authorities over the strategic motorway network.

 = Significant effect.

Influence on the Final LTP2

The SEA is an iterative process that has taken place during the development of the LTP2, and will continue to influence the Plan throughout its implementation. A number of modifications to the Provisional LTP2 have been incorporated into the final version of the Plan as a result of the SEA. These include:

- **Improved noise climate:** more effective use of “low noise surfacing”.
- **Climate change adaptation:** reducing the vulnerability of the transport infrastructure to climate change through effective asset management (including measures designed to cope with changes to rainfall intensity and distribution, effects of thermal and wind stress).
- **Improved biodiversity and water quality:** promoting suitable sustainable drainage systems e.g. granular drains, balancing ponds, storm tanks.
- **Re-use of natural and highway materials:** encourage greater use of re-cycled materials e.g. highway plantings, glass, stone sets and kerbs.
- **West Yorkshire Transport Emissions Group (WYTEG):** a group set up to help conduct the SEA consisting of experts from each West Yorkshire District, in the field of transport planning, sustainability and environmental health. The WYTEG has agreed to continue meeting on a regular basis and will provide relevant advice to transport planners on issues relating to noise mapping, low noise surfacing, air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.

Monitoring Future Progress

The SEA Directive requires a monitoring framework to be established to monitor any predicted significant effects and to identify any unforeseen significant effects arising from implementation of the LTP2.

For the potentially significant effects identified by the SEA, an annual monitoring framework will be incorporated into the Local Transport Plan’s Annual Progress Report. This will review the appropriate baseline data and monitor trends. In addition to monitoring of significant effects, an annual review will be undertaken to update all baseline data described in the Environmental Report. If any changes in the condition of the environment relating to transport impacts become apparent over time these may be added to the list of ‘significant impacts’ and included in future LTP Annual Progress Reports. Monitoring reviews will be made available on the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan Partnership web site (www.wyltp.com), in the LTP APR or from LTP Core Group representatives (full contact details are provided in the LTP).