

ENGAGING SCHOOLS IN ACTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL
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1. INTRODUCTION

Two of the major contributors to car trips during the morning and peak periods are the commute to work and the 'school run'. Twice as many children are being driven to school compared to 20 years ago. Not so long ago most children walked to school but for many the 'school run' has now become a way of life.

Our dependence on the car for its door-to-door convenience has contributed to sedentary and inactive children who are much more prone to obesity.

More than half of children in the UK live within walking and cycling distance of their school and there are many reasons why activity on the school journey should be encouraged.

2. REASON TO CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

2.1 HEALTH

Government recommends young people should undertake at least one hour of moderate physical activity a day¹ to keep healthy and prevent serious illness in later life. It is known that 26% of boys and 37% of girls aged 12 – 15 years² do not meet these recommendations. Inactive children have poorer self-esteem, higher stress and anxiety levels, are more obese and more likely to smoke, use alcohol and illegal drugs. Inactivity is known to be a higher risk factor for heart disease than smoking, hypertension or obesity. Physical activity can also be used to overcome and even prevent feelings of depression and anxiety³.

The Scottish Executive's Physical Activity Strategy 'Let's Make Scotland More Active' has set a target for 80% of all children aged 16 and under to meet the minimum recommended level of physical activity by 2020³. A number of recommendations have been made including:

- That all children and young people should take part in at least one hour of physical activity, most days. This physical activity should include physical education, play, sports, exercise, dance, outdoor activities, active travel and support to be active in their daily tasks at home, at school and in the community

Walking and cycling to school are excellent ways to achieve these recommendations as a substantial proportion of school journeys are less than 2 miles, an easily manageable distance.

The encouragement of active lifestyles amongst children and young people can readily help address other health issues such as the achievement of a good fitness level and the maintenance of a healthy weight. It can also help minimise the likelihood of experiencing conditions such as osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, joint problems etc.

Adults who accompany their children in active travel on the school journey also benefit. Encouraging the habit of activity amongst young people from an early age builds good habits for the future. This is especially pertinent in Glasgow given that the health of its population is improving but at a slower rate than the rest of Scotland.

2.2 AIR QUALITY

Asthma has significantly increased amongst children and young people in recent years and vehicle exhaust emissions have been linked to this. Research has indicated that children who live beside busier streets with higher traffic volumes are likely to have a higher prevalence⁴ of asthma. It has also been demonstrated that children in cars moving in slow traffic (rush hour congestion) are exposed to higher levels of exhaust emissions than those walking⁵.

A Californian study⁶ examined children over an eight year period documenting how exposure to air pollutants led to diminished lung capacity. It found that children exposed to more polluted air were five times more likely to have reduced lung capacity by aged 18 than children living in cleaner areas. The study also found other associated health risks occurring later in life.

2.3 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Anecdotally many teachers will comment that children who have walked or cycled to school are more alert and ready to learn than those who have travelled by car. A study⁷ examined the link between physical activity programmes on academic achievement and concluded that the benefits included increased concentration, a reduction in disruptive behaviour and an improvement in mathematic and literacy achievement.

2.4 ACQUIRING ROAD SAFETY SKILLS

The document 'Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone'⁸ targets a 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured on the roads. Rates are falling but at a slower pace than those of our European counterparts. The peak age for child pedestrian accidents is 12 years of age; a time when independence is sought by young people as they make the transition from primary to secondary school. Over a third of primary pupils now travel to school by car and are as a result

losing the opportunity to learn pedestrian skills, risk assessment and the need for self-responsibility in relation to their behaviour within a road context. Parents, in transporting their children about in cars, are denying children the opportunity to experience the 'training ground' that will allow them to attain these life skills.

In 1998, the UK Government set up a School Travel Advisory Group (STAG) to find ways to encourage walking, cycling or using public transport on the school journey and to disseminate best practice and identify practical means of influencing behaviour. In recognition of Scotland's unique circumstances the Scottish School Travel Advisory Group (SSTAG) was established in 2000 and published its report⁹ 3 years later detailing the following recommendations:

- School based School Travel Teams must produce school travel plans
- The School Travel Plan provides an important learning opportunity in the school, affording the opportunity for practical learning over a range of subjects and should be threaded throughout the curriculum
- A higher profile must be given to school travel issues and to the effects on health and the environment of different modal choices
- A new role of school travel co-ordinator should be set up in each local authority with three main strands:
 - promoting best practice
 - facilitating across departments and organisations
 - Co-ordinating efforts of school travel teams to work within existing local initiatives

2.5 SOCIAL INCLUSION

Walking is the most popular recreational activity in Scotland¹⁰ and has been described as the 'nearest activity to perfect exercise'.

In the document 'A Walking Strategy for Scotland' two targets are identified – in the short term to halt the decline in the number of journeys made on foot and in the long term to achieve an increase in the number of journeys per person made on foot by 2012. A strong focus in relation to these targets is given to the role of functional walking i.e. journeys work, the shops and school.

An active school journey provides the ideal opportunity for children to share time with friends, parents and other adults thereby allowing them to build their independence and self-confidence and practice their social skills.

The Scottish Executive is committed to maximising individuals' ability to participate in all aspects of society. The Social Inclusion strategy aims to promote opportunities, tackle barriers to inclusion, and promote

inclusion amongst children and to build stronger communities. Walking, as part of an integrated transport policy, has the potential to contribute to these objectives by making education, employment and the other services including leisure more accessible to all.

Car ownership levels¹¹ in Glasgow and surrounds is growing at a faster rate than the rest of Scotland, increasing by 92% between 1984 and 2004 from a very low base level. However the proportion of Glasgow families who have access to a car at 45% is still lower than the Scottish (67%) and UK (73%) averages, resulting in many people in Glasgow relying predominantly on public transport and walking to access jobs and services. The Local Transport Strategy stresses the aim of Glasgow to promote social inclusion and tackle poverty by seeking to ensure that transport is accessible to all sectors of the community and provides good links to employment, health care, education and leisure facilities.

3. THE SCHOOLS

Glasgow City Council aims to maximise the learning potential of all its young people, to provide education and support of the highest quality to all, and to do so in a spirit of partnership and consultation. The key priorities for education include:

- improving educational standards and raising achievement
- promoting social inclusion
- encouraging lifelong learning skills
- developing core skills and ensuring equality of opportunities and access to education for all

There are currently 29 secondary schools and 172 primary schools comprising over 69,000 pupils. Currently, over 27,000 pupils receive free school meals and over 36,000 pupils are in receipt of a clothing grant¹².

The Council is undertaking substantial investment through the Pre 12 Strategy Project, using £128 million to modernise the school estate with the provision of sixteen new campuses throughout the city.

4. ENGAGING WITH THE AUDIENCE

In order to facilitate the concept of school travel plans it is necessary to firstly engage with and inform the relevant people of their purpose and benefits. This has to be delivered in a manner that is interesting, non judgemental and leaves the audience with the mindset that it is achievable. The adage of 'think global act local' can help in maintaining an audiences perspective on what is achievable and within their remit. Consideration has to be given to the type of language and terminology used in relation to the audience.

A substantial part of the School Travel Plan Co-ordinator's (STPC) role centres on the work to change people's attitudes and behaviour through education and encouragement. This involves facilitating between agencies to achieve a range of projects from soft measures through to engineering works that will enable active journeys to be undertaken.

Without initial engagement none of these outcomes can be achieved. The emphasis in dealing with others is engagement, encouragement, consultation, education and action.

A wide variety of groups can play a positive role in the development of school travel plans but they will have differing levels of knowledge. The STPC has to take on the role of educationalist to such groups as local authority engineers, health development officers, active schools co-ordinators, teachers, school staff, parents, the wider community and elected Members. The list can be endless and recurring and serves to highlight the evangelical role a STPC has to play in spreading the message.

The purpose of developing a School Travel Plan is to effect a modal change to more active, sustainable travel. In the short term it is as much about changing a mind set that ultimately will lead to a change in behaviour. It is important to raise awareness of the associated issues with pupils, teaching staff and also with parents as they are the primary decision makers when it comes to choosing how their children travel to school.

4.1 SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN PACK

In order to make the concept of school travel planning accessible a School Travel Plan Information Wallet Pack was developed and distributed to the Head Teachers of all mainstream primary, secondary and independent schools in Glasgow. It was also sent to all sitting School Boards. It is available to any member of the public on request.

The external cover of the wallet pack comprises an illustration of Glasgow in a map format, highlighting iconic buildings and using sustainable travel slogans as mock street names.

The wallet pack is written in non-complex language and is formatted into sections that can be divided amongst groups for ease of reading and cross-referencing and comprises of:

- An information booklet explaining the process of a developing a school travel plan
- Useful Resources including taster sheets highlighting linked topics and other agencies that may provide further information and/or resources. These sheets are titled:

- School travel issues and activities
- Examples of surveys
- Health benefits off active travel to school
- Environmental benefits of active travel to school
- School travel and the 5 - 14 curriculum (to be updated)
- Additional Resources and references
- Examples of School Travel Plans
- ABC School Travel Plan
- School Travel Plan Template
- Inclusions
 - Sustrans Transport and Figures Scotland
 - Sustrans Scotland Newsletter
 - Sustrans Resource List - Scotland

4.2 FIRST STEPS TO A SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN LEAFLET

A short leaflet aimed at parents and the wider community has been developed featuring key messages regarding the development of a school travel plan. This has been published in Urdu and French in order to provide support to those areas of the community where English is a secondary language. Glasgow has a significant Asian population and hosts displaced people currently seeking asylum.

4.3 SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN DISPLAY BOARDS

Portable permanent display boards have been developed echoing the information contained in the School Travel Plan Leaflet. These are available to schools on request, free of charge, to enhance displays being undertaken by pupils, eco committees, school travel teams and are particularly popular at parents' evenings, schools assemblies and health weeks.

4.4 DVD DEVELOPMENT

A DVD resource is currently under development and will be used to engage schools in developing a school travel plan or to broaden the scope of an existing school travel plan. The format will link into curricular topics and use 'live' examples from schools to highlight successes that are transferable to others. It is hoped it will prove both inspirational and educational. This was initially explored by Glasgow's School Travel Plan Team in conjunction with Ishbel MacLeod, an expert in children's educational television. It was agreed that as a resource it would have national appeal and as such the geographical boundaries for consideration should be expanded. Funding has been secured from the Scottish Executive and in partnership with Sustrans this resource is now being taken forward incorporating four geographically and socially diverse areas of Scotland.

5 SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING IN SCHOOLS

The way to a teacher's heart is through the curriculum. The perceived level of initiatives they are asked to embrace on a regular basis exhausts schools. 'Initiative' in this context can be considered a 'dirty' word - a short-term fix, which will fade once funding ceases. This perception within the education sector has led to challenges the STPC has had to overcome in order to get the 'foot in the door'. This requires persistence, tenacity, ingenuity, engaging in partnership approaches and a substantial sense of humour. However rather than dwell on the challenges this paper will discuss some of the opportunities that can be utilised to raise the profile of school travel plans, the process and the hoped for outcomes.

The Curriculum for Excellence¹³ summarises the purposes of education in Scotland to enable all young people to become:

- *Successful learners with*
 - Enthusiasm and motivation for learning
 - Determination to reach high standards of achievement
 - Openness to new thinking and ideas

Able to:

 - Use literacy, communication and numeracy skills
 - Use technology for learning
 - Think creatively and independently
 - Learn independently and as part of a group
 - Make reasoned evaluation
 - Link and apply different kinds of learning in new situations

- *Confident individuals with*
 - Self respect
 - A sense of physical, mental and emotional well being
 - Secure values and beliefs
 - Ambition

Able to

 - Relate to others and manage themselves
 - Pursue a healthy and active lifestyle
 - Be self aware
 - Develop and communicate their own beliefs and view of the world
 - Live as independently as they can
 - Assess risk and make informed decisions
 - Achieve success in different areas of activity

- *Responsible citizens with*
 - Respect for others
 - Commitment to participate responsibly in political, social and cultural life

Able to

- Develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it
 - Understand different beliefs and cultures
 - Make informed choices and decisions
 - Evaluate environmental, scientific and technological issues
 - Develop informed, ethical views of complex issues
- o Effective contributors *with*
 - An enterprising attitude
 - Resilience
 - Self-reliance
- Able to*
- Communicate in different ways and in different settings
 - Work in partnerships and in teams
 - Take the initiative and lead
 - Apply critical thinking in new contexts
 - Create and develop
 - Solve problems

The areas highlighted by Curriculum for Excellence are those that can be readily touched upon by teachers and pupils in the development of a School Travel Plan.

Key subject areas that developing a school travel plan can touch on are the expressive arts, health and wellbeing, language, mathematics, science, social science, technologies and citizenship. In all of these topics there are elements of a plans development that can engage pupils in an experience with a readily identifiable and practical outcome.

The list above is not prescriptive but indicates where links can be readily made.

Many of the initiatives schools are asked to embrace follow a similar format whether it be as a Health Promoting School, Enterprising School, Eco School, Active School etc. It is a STPC's job to enable schools to see that by addressing their school travel issues and putting in worthwhile and meaningful aims and goals as part of their action plan, by addressing this one issue it will help them achieve the others. A win - win situation.

6. MAKING IT HAPPEN

6.1 WALK TO SCHOOL WEEK

In 2001, Glasgow schools first took part in Walk to School Week, a national campaign held in May of each year to promote the benefits of walking on the school journey. The focus of this week was very much road safety orientated and over 18,000 pupils took part.

In 2004, the School Travel Plan Team took over the 'ownership' of this event and expanded the perception of Walk to School Week to encompass a wider breadth of subjects. The emphasis changed from road safety to include topics as the environment, impact of travel choices, socialability of walking with friends, and community awareness of surroundings. Sam and Mac, two of Glasgow City Council's Clydesdale horses promoted the campaign titled 'Hoofin' It' - participation rose to just under 25,000 pupils.

In 2005, the theme became local and global citizenship linking Walk to School Week with our own innovative secondary campaign titled 'Save our Shoes'. Cast members from the West End production of 'Thoroughly Modern Millie!' kicked off the event. Working in partnership with Environmental Protection Services (EPS) and local business, schools were invited to collect old shoes for onward transportation to third world countries where they could be either recycled or refurbished to provide employment to local people. This raised the awareness amongst pupils of the impact poverty can play on many children in poorer countries and the difficulties they may have in accessing education. On a local level it also served to highlight the issue of recycling and unnecessary use of landfill sites. Over 200 sacks of shoes were collected and over 30,000 pupils took part in Walk to School Week.

Partnership working with Active School Co-ordinators (ASC) helped to support the work in 2006. ASCs challenged schools to engage in practical and innovative mini projects at ground level. Pedometers were used to engage pupils in virtual journeys with the school achieving the highest uptake being rewarded with an activity day out. Others effectively used 'greening the tree' to make an impact linking the reward to a nature walk with a Park Ranger. To encourage inclusiveness arrangements were made for those children unable to walk to school, to participate in playground walking at lunchtime. Participation levels rose to over 32,000 pupils, 80% of the mainstream primary population.

Every year promotional items for participants have been provided free of charge. Each school is also provided with coloured pie chart information for display recording their school's performance against that of all other Glasgow schools.

In 2007 further partnership working is planned with ASCs with a view to expanding the work already undertaken. EPS Officers have also been helpful in providing interesting facts and figures relating in particular to this years theme of air quality.

6.2 THEATRE IN EDUCATION

As part of the support provided for Walk to School Week 2006, the School Travel Team funded 24 performances of Quantum Theatre for Science Theatre Company's play 'What if it Rains? A fun filled and exciting play focussing on the active school journey particularly Inking to the effect on the respiratory system, the environmental impact, air quality and global warming.

This year, in partnership with Education Services Eco School's Co-ordinator the School Travel Plan Team will be funding 24 performances of Hopscotch Theatre's 'What we did when the Oil ran out!' during this years Walk to School Week. The schools invited to receive a performance have been selected due to their participation in developing a school travel plan and being registered as an Eco school.

It is also useful to note that a number of schools when launching their own School Travel Plan to a full school assembly have opted to perform a play instead of the more conventional presentation, highlighting some of the issues raised. This has proved to be an effective way of conveying a message and raising awareness.

6.3 HANDS UP TRAVEL TALLY

In 2004, as part of European Mobility Week (EMW) a 'Hands Up for Glasgow' School Travel Tally was introduced; firstly to gain information on the school journey and secondly to raise awareness amongst schools that the school journey needed to be considered.

On a specified day during EMW all mainstream schools, including Independents, are invited to participate in this event, returning their information to the School travel Plan Team for collation and comparison. To date the average return level has been 53% of the school population.

The survey has demonstrated that there is considerable work to be done amongst all schools, particularly in the Secondary and Independent sector. It is a useful measure, although subject to the vagaries of the weather and participation levels.

It is a labour intensive undertaking that would benefit from being streamlined and web-based; albeit reservations exist about maintaining participation levels if it became purely web-based.

6.4 ACTIVE TRAVEL BANNER

Primary 5 and 6 classes were invited to design a new all weather banner promoting the variety of active and sustainable transport choices available on the school journey. The winning class was invited

to make a presentation to the Roads and Lighting Committee on the theme they had chosen. Key areas the classes were to consider included health and fitness, environmental impact, quality social time with adults/friends, community awareness and citizenship. Some 48 schools participated and 100 banners have been distributed to schools and can be seen adorning school fences throughout Glasgow.

6.5 WORK SHEETS

Work sheets for class activities including mapping exercises, code breakers and word searches have been developed taking full cognisance of the varied abilities and ages of children. These have been particularly popular as a resource during Heath Weeks and for more general class work.

6.6 CYCLING AND POETRY

As Glasgow was fortunate to host the start of the 'Tour of Britain' the opportunity was taken to invite Primary 5 and 6 pupils to use their imagination and creative skills to compose a poem, in no more than 100 words titled 'Cycling is fun!'. The winner received a unique VIP package incorporating a first stage winner shirt, helping to start the race and getting the chance to meet competitors prior to the race.

6.7 CYCLING AND MARKETING

First, second and third year pupils were asked to create a slogan to promote cycling to all. The slogan was to be short, snappy, imaginative and no longer than 10 words. The winner received the same package as described at 6.6 and had the winning slogan incorporated into an all weather display banner used at city cycling events.

6.8 TRANSITION TRAVEL

Engagement of Secondary schools has to date proved challenging, but these schools now find they have incoming pupils from Primary 7 with considerable knowledge of Travel Plans. This work at an early stage and incorporates the creation of forums to compare and contrast the perceptions and experiences of pupils making the transition. This work can then be carried forward by first/second years devising a strategy to ease these challenges for their feeder primary schools.

6.9 ACTION DAYS

This approach is exemplified by the launch of the Parkview Primary School Travel Plan as part of European Mobility Week 2006. This very successfully employed multi-agency partnership working to engage the pupils, parents and staff in raising awareness of the associated health and environmental impacts of their travel choices in a fun and

interesting manner. A temporary Traffic Regulation Order was used to close the street outside the school and artificial turf was laid for the day. The school car park was declared a car free zone and any staff driving required to find alternative parking arrangements.

A rolling programme of activities was provided including a full school assembly with power point presentation by the School Travel Team and Certificate presentation and tree planting from Bailie Allan Stewart. Other activities included visits from mounted and cycling Police Officers talking about the benefits of their modes of travel, talks from Park Rangers on the effect of climate change on wildlife, EPS Officers demonstrating emissions testing on vehicles, Road Safety Officers with 'Safer Routes Pursuit' a very interactive full size team game, ASCs co-ordinating playground games, rugby and tennis taster sessions. Scottish Cycling provided cycling skills workshop and a local mental health project gave basic cycle maintenance classes and provided novelty bikes for the children to try. Asda provided taster sessions of fruits and vegetables. One of Glasgow City Council's Clydesdale Dray horse also visited in show regalia.

6.10 SCHOOL BICYCLE LOAN SCHEME

The 'School Bicycle Loan Scheme' was developed with the objective of engaging high school pupils in cycling as a means of transport and as a leisure activity. This innovative and exciting project in partnership with Strathclyde Police was initially introduced to St Mungo's Academy, a large school in the east end of Glasgow. It has subsequently been extended to a further four schools in the city.

Each school is provided with 30 mountain bicycles, 30 helmets, 30 adjustable Sam Browne belts and 30 locks. This allows the school to set up a cycling club.

In four of the five schools a School based Police Officer provides support for the cycling club. The officers are based within the schools taking a full and active role in supporting staff and pupils and are tasked with breaking down barriers restricting interaction between the community as victims of or witnesses to crimes. Historically there is some reluctance for some sections of the community to come forward to the Police when help is needed. This project whilst primarily being about engaging young people in cycling also highlights a positive Police role in developing relationships with young people as well as helping to address issues relating to sectarianism and territorialism.

The pilot school was evaluated after three months to assess progress. Some interesting results included:

- 136 pupils applied to participate in the club
- 70% of the pupils were in second or third year

- 86% of applicants were male
- all cycle club members used the bicycles for leisure activities as well as the school journey
- 41 pupils undertook the Scottish Cycle Training Scheme (SCTS) (11 using their own bicycles);
- 47 pupils attended cycle maintenance training
- A further 20 - 35 children (depending on weather conditions) started to use their own bicycles for the school journey; and
- Anecdotally, PE staff reported that several pupils involved in the scheme who previously avoided PE are now active participants

7. INFRASTRUCTURE

In order to receive cycle parking, schools now have to commit to developing a School Travel Plan. Through engagement in this process over 40 schools will have received cycle parking by the end of this financial year.

The development of engineered 'Safer routes to School' has also evolved from this process with a full level of real, meaningful and worthwhile engagement and consultation being undertaken with pupils, parents, staff and the wider community. This has resulted in seven schemes having been delivered in the past two years with a further eight identified as potentials for design investigation.

8. CONCLUSION

Glasgow has worked hard and continues to do so in order to engage as many partners as possible in the delivery of School Travel Plans. School Travel Plans remain rightfully within the ownership of the schools themselves and it is they alone that can carry them forward. The role of the STPC is to provide the support and sign posting to make the aims and goals realistic and achievable.

To consider the delivery of a School Travel Plan as purely a transport matter is, in my opinion somewhat naïve and although the SSTAG report did clearly allude to the need for a holistic approach to be embraced to achieve that end, I do believe the theory can fall considerably short of the practical application.

Should School Travel Plans be compulsory? Would that in fact waylay schools in focussing on the process and not the outcomes? Perhaps we are unrealistic to expect huge changes in modal shift outcomes to manifest themselves until we take more drastic action alongside the softer actions.

Only a few years ago it was socially acceptable, aspirational to be a smoker. I would contend that is clearly not the case now. The Scottish Executive have steered a clear and purposeful course in achieving this outcome.

It would be of great benefit to have the same drive, purpose and focus to be directed towards the long-term health benefits of active travel for generations to come.

To steal from one of the most successful advertising slogans developed in living memory. I would advise all that can contribute positively in supporting a School Travel Plan and its outcomes - *Just do it.....*

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Glasgow City Council.

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