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**Soft Transport Planning Measures
and how to monitor their effects**

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The Basic Propositions

Transport is not the only source of pollution – but it is an important one – and the only sector where growth in demand threatens to outpace technical improvement.

Research and experience proves we cannot improve the environment by expanding road capacity to keep pace with traffic growth. Air quality (and congestion, and economic efficiency) requires reduction in traffic.

BUT

Traffic keeps on growing.

So how to reduce traffic?

Ban or restrict car use? Road Pricing? Better public transport for all? Land-use planning? Exhortation? Live closer to work?...

OR is there a 'soft' way?

Can we 'attract' people to use their cars less, by choice, rather than by compulsion or price or restrictions?

Because *if* we can, we have a responsibility to try.

So interest in what came to be known as the 'soft factors'. (For good and bad reasons...)

THE SOFT FACTORS

Travel Plans (Workplace and School)

Better information (Personalised Travel Planning, Public Transport Information, Travel Awareness Campaigns)

New Ways of organising activities (Home shopping, Teleworking, Video-conferencing)

New patterns of car use (Car-sharing, Car Clubs)

A warning – don't say 'soft'

Making Smarter Choices Work Foreword



We call these measures 'smarter choices' and they are becoming an increasingly important area for the Department for Transport.

Smarter choices include local programmes to encourage school, workplace and individualised travel planning; improving public transport information and marketing services; setting up web sites for car share schemes and supporting car clubs; and encouraging teleworking and teleconferencing.

This guide has been written for local authorities – both members and officers – and explains what we know about smarter choice measures, based on the latest research. It explains how local authorities can use them to improve traffic flows and make life more pleasant for local people.

The research on which this document is based was carried out during 2003-04 and looked at the impact that these measures can have on traffic. The final report, *Smarter Choices - Changing the Way We Travel* was published in July this year in parallel with the Department's White Paper 'The Future of Transport'. It provides firm evidence of the impact of smarter choices on traffic, particularly where local authorities have promoted them vigorously.

The challenge now for local authorities is to recognise the potential benefits of smarter choice measures so that they make them an integral part of their transport strategies. Not only can they reduce congestion, but they give people genuine travel choices. They also contribute cost-effectively to other Government priorities, such as improving accessibility and social inclusion, encouraging regeneration, reducing pollution and carbon emissions and helping to increase levels of physical activity.

Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP
Secretary of State for Transport

■ Alistair Darling –

“We call these measures **‘smarter choices’** and they are becoming an increasingly important area for the Department of Transport.”

Background to the UK policy debate

Government Advice 2002-3

“...assume that soft measures could get you into a position where you had reduced travel overall by some 5%...” (D. MacMillan, DfT, to Transport Select Committee)

and the various Multi-Modal Studies assumed between 1% and 10%...

BUT MEANWHILE...

New Evidence

- Other reviews suggested higher figures
- Results of Workplace Travel Plans
- Towns possibly more scope than national average
- Some measures targeted on peak periods

So DfT commissioned another review of all the evidence, literature and case studies

A New DfT Study – ‘Smarter Choices’

...by Cairns, Sloman, Newson, Anable, Kirkbride and Goodwin, July 2004

Evidence: mostly before and after case studies, using **wide variety** of surveys, operational data, and counts, backed up by qualitative interviews, calculations (but not much modelling)

...and it concluded:

The scope is much greater than had been assumed

- Taken together, these policies could reduce traffic nationwide by about 11%, by active implementation over ten years
 - and by over 20% in peak period, urban traffic
 - at a cost of about 1.5pence per vehicle kilometre taken off the road – and a benefit of ten times as much
 - (BUT only if ‘high intensity’ implementation)
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The Problems

- Professional Credibility – do we believe that it is so easy to have such big effects?
 - Policy Consistency – what else is necessary?
 - Political Will – is there national and local commitment for the ‘high intensity’ approach?
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Professional credibility:

Six Other Reviews

- WS Atkins (1999)
 - Halcrow Group (2001-2)
 - James/SW Round Table (2002)
 - Sloman (2003)
 - Steer Davies Gleave (2003)
 - Transport for London (2003)
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Scope of the Six Reviews

<i>Study</i>	WS Atkins (1999)	Halcrow (2001, 2002)	James (2002)	Sloman (2003)	Steer Davies Gleave (2003)	Transport for London (2003)
<i>Factors included</i>	Workplace and school travel plans, improvements to public transport and walking facilities, public transport fares, parking restraint, reallocation of road capacity, road user charging, highway and traffic control improvements, land use policies.	Workplace and school travel plans, visitor travel plans, bus quality partnerships, improved public transport interchange, general public transport marketing, public transport fares and ticketing, individualised marketing, car clubs, teleworking, video-conferencing, home shopping, measures to increase walking and cycling, land-use policies, local sourcing of goods, oil supplies and new automotive technology.	Workplace and school travel plans, bus quality partnerships, public transport interchange, public transport marketing and ticketing, public transport information, car clubs, teleworking, videoconferencing, internet shopping, cycling, promotion of walking, land use effects.	Workplace and school travel plans, bus quality partnerships, local rail improvements, individual marketing, car clubs, teleworking, promotion of walking and cycling.	Workplace and school travel plans, bus quality partnerships. (Visitor travel plans, rail improvements, parking restraint considered but impacts not estimated. Individual travel planning estimated but largely discounted to avoid double counting.)	Workplace and school travel plans, individualised marketing, car clubs, car sharing, teleworking, videoconferencing, E-shopping, promoting cycling, promoting walking, travel awareness campaigns.
<i>Maximum combined potential of all included measures</i>						
National Best Local	-15% to -20% -25% to -32%	-5% not estimated	-15% to -20% not estimated	-4% to -9% -12% to -26%	not estimated -15% to -19%	-8% to -17% London-wide
<i>Maximum potential of work and school travel plans only (common to all studies)</i>						
National Best Local	-4% -9%	-1% not estimated	-3.7% not estimated	-1% to -3% -3% to -8%	not estimated -12% to -15%	-2% to -4% London-wide
Bold figures as stated explicitly in sources, others inferred. Sloman's figures as in source but recalculated as % of total traffic.						

Maximum Combined Potential Traffic Reduction

	Atkins	Halcrow	James	Sloman	SDG	TfL
National	15% - 20%	5%	15% - 20%	4% - 9%	N.A	8% - 17%
Best Local	25% - 32%	N.A.	N.A.	12% - 26%	15% - 19%	

Maximum Combined Potential Traffic Reduction Work and School Travel Plans Only

	Atkins	Halcrow	James	Sloman	SDG	TfL
National	4%	1%	3.7%	1% - 3%	N.A.	2% - 4%
Best Local	9%	N.A.	N.A.	3% - 8%	12% - 15%	

our own estimate of maximum
potential impact...

...is within the range of other assessments
and our estimate of 'low intensity' effect is close
to the earlier DfT multi-modal studies advice.

But even so – the high intensity does *seem*
large...

And that's because our methodologies do not
help us understand how behaviour *changes*

The thesis of **changing travel behaviour** (www.cts.ucl.ac.uk/tsu)

- Individual behaviour is much more volatile than is usually assumed, and travel choices are much more variable. This happens anyway all the time, for reasons other than transport policy, but is not captured in conventional travel surveys.
 - When this is factored in, bigger effects of transport policies are not so surprising: the problem is in our heads, not the world.

 - BUT
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This is a double-edged sword

- it means in turn that induced traffic can offset these effects – ie other people's choices can undermine the impact.
 - Induced traffic is just as big a problem for soft methods of reducing traffic as for new construction or traffic engineering aimed at increasing capacity
 - Which means that
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The fundamental problem of monitoring and forecasting

- Very substantial effects on travel choices at the level of the individual or small groups...
 - potentially offset by induced traffic by other individuals and small groups, so
 - Tendency of surveys based on participants to find bigger effects than measured on the ground
 - THIS IS A POLICY PROBLEM NOT A TECHNICAL ONE
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Synergy

- Some soft measures support others (eg information and new opportunities)
- Some soft measures need support from hard measures (eg travel plans and parking)
- All soft measures need support to prevent induced traffic

- And beware of double counting as we approach the limits (a long way off?)

Implications of the evidence

Soft measures can contribute greater traffic reduction than assumed

But only if they are supported by 'hard' measures - certainly PT quality, parking; possibly pricing or restraint.

Dominant theme in case studies: soft measures must be part of a coherent package applied over a large area.

‘Soft’ doesn’t mean ‘Easy’

The soft measures are in themselves popular, encouraging choices by individuals, and therefore making other policies – parking restraint, pricing, reallocation of road capacity, priority measures etc – more acceptable. But they need those other measures in order to fulfil their potential. ‘Soft measures alone’ is not an effective strategy.

Political Will?

- National lead, but local implementation. Scope for passing the buck?
- Bursaries – useful transition, but soft measures will not be successful unless local authorities see these staff being **at least** as important as traditional ‘mainstream’ staff – and reflect this in pay, contracts, career expectations, seniority.
- AND spend to match the value for money!

Conclusion

- A necessary, but not sufficient, instrument of transport policy
- Better value for money than almost any other way of spending. (Only road pricing, which raises money rather than spending it, performs better).
- No natural opposition: everybody in favour.
- But very little effect unless backed up with consistent other policies

And the paradox of monitoring

- Monitoring is vital

BUT

problematic because EITHER there will appear to be very small effects if not backed up by other policies

OR there will be large effects but difficult to attribute to specific elements

(The gap between aggregate and disaggregate monitoring is the crucial indicator).
