A guide on how to set up and run travel plan networks
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- Hertfordshire Business TravelWise
- Ipswich Travel Plan Forum
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- South Gloucestershire Green Commuter Club
- Thames Valley Park
- Winchester Commuter Forum

Prepared by:

AEA Technology plc, Harwell, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 0QJ and

Cleary Hughes Associates, 51 Wood Lane, Hucknall, Nottingham, NG15 6LR with

University of Westminster, Transport Studies Group
About this guide

Travel plan networks are groups of organisations working together to manage and reduce their car use. Travel plan networks are run by: local authorities, chambers of commerce, companies, groups of companies and others whose activities generate large volumes of travel. Although the guide is primarily addressed at workplaces some of the general principles could also be applied to school travel plan networks.

This step-by-step guide will be of particular benefit to those considering setting up a travel plan network, and to those in the earlier stages of establishing one. Nevertheless it is also intended to be of use to co-ordinators of established travel plan networks, for whom it should offer some fresh ideas and information on how other networks are run. The advice given here is based on the experience of co-ordinators of networks across the country.

What are travel plan networks?

It is now widely recognised that we need to reduce the number and distance of journeys made by car to reduce their negative environmental, health, social and other impacts. Work journeys, in particular, offer significant potential for change, as it is during peak commuting times that traffic problems are worst. Employers are therefore being urged to prepare travel plans to encourage employees to use alternatives to single occupancy car journeys for commuting and business trips.

Although an organisation can prepare a travel plan alone, most welcome support and advice, as this is an area in which they have little experience. Without help they risk investing considerable time and effort in working out from the start methods that have already been successfully employed elsewhere. Organisations are usually happy to learn of the experiences of others who have been through the same process and support networks are especially effective in achieving this. A travel plan network brings together, formally or informally, individuals and organisations involved in preparing travel plans, with the aim of facilitating the process.

The role of travel plan networks

Travel plan networks therefore have four key roles:

- the exchange of information, ideas and good practice
- provide encouragement and practical support for those engaged in travel plan development
- make viable the provision of services relating to travel plans on a collective basis
- bring together organisations to generate an effective bargaining force

“An effective travel plan network is one that is greater than the sum of its parts ... that can offer its members the support and services that it would be impossible to provide to individual organisations.”

Heidi Hutton, Co-ordinator, Winchester Commuter Forum

How to use this guide

This guide is not intended to be read cover-to-cover, but rather to be used as a reference source as and when required, and depending on the phase of a network’s development. It is divided into eight sections, which cover the key issues and stages involved in setting up and running a travel plan network.

- **Section 1: Benefits of a travel plan network** (page 4) outlines the advantages of networks for different groups, in particular employers and local authorities.
- **Section 2: Initiating a travel plan network** (page 5) describes who runs networks, and what are the staffing requirements, who should get involved, the first steps in starting out and getting established.
- **Section 3: Developing and expanding the network** (page 9) covers if and how networks should expand, and what might encourage new members to join.
- **Section 4: Funding a travel plan network** (page 10) details how networks are funded, potential sources of revenue for running a network, including membership fees and charging for services.
- **Section 5: Running an effective travel plan network** (page 11) suggests ways to sustain commitment among network members, as well as how to identify and address the reasons why members may lose interest.
- **Section 6: Member services** (page 14) outlines the services typically offered by a travel plan network. These are grouped into three categories – information services, direct assistance to members and negotiating services.
- **Section 7: Publicity** (page 16) explains why and how to publicise the activities of a network.
- **Section 8: Monitoring and evaluation** (page 17) describes the role and importance of measuring the progress of a travel plan network, and gives guidance on how to do it.
I Benefits of travel plan networks

1.1 Benefits of travel plans

Many people benefit from the effective implementation of travel plans:

- employees and the local community enjoy greater travel choice as improvements are implemented
- those that do not own a car benefit from better access to employment opportunities and social / leisure services
- employees enjoy reduced travel costs where a network has secured discount deals from public transport operators
- the whole community benefits from environmental improvements, particularly when travel plans result in an overall reduction in motor traffic

These, however, are benefits deriving from travel plans themselves. The benefit of a travel plan network to the general community, is the concerted action by a group of organisations to make things happen. Travel plans are more likely to be prepared and to be implemented if supported by a network.

Networks provide a forum for meetings and the exchange of information and ideas between groups in the field of travel plan work – local authorities, employers, public transport operators, chambers of commerce, and others. In doing so useful contacts and alliances are forged between interests otherwise unlikely to come together

The collective bargaining power of a network can present more robust arguments when negotiating changes and improvements than for organisations working in isolation. The greater power of a network may influence a local authority, for example, to implement infrastructure improvements. A network representing employers with perhaps several thousand employees in total can present a more convincing case for expanding public transport services than employers working alone. For a local authority, direct access to users of transport-related services makes it easier to determine needs and priorities for investing resources effectively and strengthens the authority’s bargaining power with transport providers. For the public transport operator, a network can provide comprehensive information about market demands – potentially more patronage of services – based on collective consultation

Larger numbers make production of locally-orientated newsletters, web sites, information leaflets and guides economically feasible. Cost may be shared in other fields, too, reducing the burden on individual organisations, for example, network members may take turns in trying out travel plan initiatives, or organise and host meetings and seminars

A network can enhance the relationship and mutual understanding between local authorities and the organisations and businesses in their area. It can contribute towards wider local authority aims and objectives, such as meeting environmental, sustainability, or partnership working policies and targets

If a community is directly involved in the network, residents will have an opportunity to contribute to, and learn about, the direction of local transport developments, and to exchange ideas and information with other network members. Constructive dialogue between local residents, local employers and local authorities can only enhance community cohesion, bringing about a mutual understanding of different needs and aspirations

Members of a network and local authorities also gain more specific benefits, for example:

1.2 Benefits to employers and member organisations

- Members can trade ideas and experience with others who share similar problems, and work on joint initiatives to tackle them
- By showing how plans have worked elsewhere, a network can persuade diffident senior management in member organisations of the benefits of travel plans
Familiarity with local geographical, political, and economic conditions allows network co-ordinators to provide locally-relevant tailored information and assistance.

A network can help its members to apply for funding and grants for initiatives that support travel plan objectives. It can also provide standard travel survey questionnaires and assistance in analysing travel survey results.

Networks enlarge the potential employee pool by offering improved travel prospects for those without access to a car.

Developers and business park managers can use involvement in a travel plan network as a tool in marketing their properties’ locations.

Member organisations gain positive publicity as network achievements begin to show.

### 1.3 Benefits to local authorities

- A network offers a local authority a single contact point for a variety of organisations, potentially representing large numbers of employees. Working with a network can effectively allow wide consultation through a single channel on, for example, local transport plan development.
- Novel ideas relating to travel plan development that might otherwise not have been considered can emerge from the network, and be applied to other networks with which the authority might be involved.
- Contact with a network allows an authority to gauge attitudes towards its own travel initiatives and can offer early warning of problems.
- News of successes, and the fact that collective effort is seen to be being applied to transport and access problems, can benefit the local economy by attracting new businesses to an area, as well as retaining existing businesses.

### 2 Initiating a travel plan network

This section comprises general pointers to the steps involved in developing a travel plan network, based on the experience of existing networks. There is no definitive set of ‘rules’ — what has worked well in one location or set of circumstances is not necessarily appropriate in another. A network has to be tailored to the needs of its existing and potential members.

#### 2.1 Who runs travel plan networks?

Local authorities are often the best placed to run travel plan networks: travel plans relate directly to their remit and responsibilities, and they often have access to funding for this type of activity that is unavailable to the private sector. For this reason, local authorities play a leading role in more than 70% of all networks.

Other bodies who run networks include:

- Chambers of commerce, which may have more direct access to the business community than a local authority.
- Private sector companies (such as land management companies and property developers) or groups of companies who share a location and common problems. An airport authority is one example of a grouping that covers a closely defined location with heavy traffic movements and is well placed to run a network.
- Health authorities and NHS trusts, or universities and colleges, which have common problems relating to significant traffic movements on large sites.

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**South Gloucestershire Green Commuter Club**

Sharing information is a frequently cited benefit of travel plan networks. Members of the South Gloucestershire Green Commuter Club, for example, have worked together to gather, analyse and interpret existing and potential public transport journey information. Employers surveyed their staff, the local authority collated and mapped the results (which are also useful for the local transport plan process), while the public transport operators have used this information to improve services to network member sites, and subsequently increased patronage.
Fig 1 Percentage of networks run by different types of organisation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of commerce</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company/group of companies</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital/NHS Trust</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University / college</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel campaign organiser</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airport authority</td>
<td>3%</td>
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Most travel plan networks are set up as self-contained operations, within the framework of the body – such as the local authority – that ‘owns’ them. Sometimes, however, they may be a sub-group of a larger initiative – for example a ‘commuter travel group’ of a ‘green’ business forum or other body concerned with wider business issues.

Once they reach a certain size, travel plan networks may find it advantageous to set up sub-groups. These sub-groups may represent the interests of organisations based in a particular geographical area, for example, a discrete area of a city, or a business park.

Alternatively, network sub-groups may be set up to represent the interests of particular members with common characteristics or problems, or to deal with particular issues or initiatives, such as home-working, car-sharing, cycling, rail travel and bus services.

Business TravelWise Group, Hertfordshire

The Business TravelWise Group in Hertfordshire has worked on a county level since it began five years ago. Now, it is setting up sub-groups based on towns and business parks in the county to address area-specific issues and problems.

Winchester Commuter Forum

The Winchester Commuter Forum has an education sub-group to deal with the specific travel issues faced by the City’s relatively large higher and further education sector.

2.2 Staff resources

The staff resources available to service a travel plan network may vary significantly, from a team of full-time staff to a single person juggling responsibility for a network with a host of other tasks. As a network develops and grows it is inevitable that demands on staff will increase, and the need for dedicated personnel will become more apparent. The longer established and larger networks all have the equivalent of full-time staff support.

When seeking to justify expenditure on setting-up and running a network, including the appointment of a co-ordinator, point to the potential benefits and cost savings that should result from network activity, such as less congestion, leading to lower demands for new physical infrastructure in the longer term.

2.3 Starting out

- Be clear about the network’s area of responsibility
  - Set out the overall aims and objectives of the network related to relevant local policies – transport, land-use, air quality, health and environmental improvements, etc.

- Secure sufficient start-up resources
  - Try to secure dedicated staff time and a budget, even if only on a modest scale at the outset. Remember that a little can be made to go a long way.
  - However, be prepared for a long process. Don’t underestimate the time and resources required to sustain an effective a travel plan network.
  - Choose a network co-ordinator with excellent communication and interpersonal skills. If possible ensure that a ‘shadow’ co-ordinator knows how the network functions in case of staff changes.

- Form a basic network
  - Decide how potential members are to be identified and attracted. Typically, members will share common or related difficulties and networks set up to tackle these problems might:
    - cover a defined geographical area, perhaps one with a particular access or traffic problems
    - be based on types of organisation whose nature means that they face common problems, such as hospitals or education institutions

Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce

Several years ago Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce produced a guide to travel plans for its members, which included a feedback form. A good proportion of the comments that were fed back to the Chamber suggested that a network of organisations involved in travel plan development be established to share ideas and good practice.
Secure commitment

There should be complete commitment on the part of the organisation co-ordinating the network, and its policies should actively support the concept of travel plans. The organisation should be prepared to lead by example in travel plan activity, as should public sector bodies in general.

Begin with a core group of committed members – their ‘wins’ will attract waverers.

Concentrate initially on larger companies who will have the greatest impact on local travel patterns, and have access to more resources to support involvement in a travel plan network.

Try to secure senior management support for the work of the network – this is crucial within the co-ordinating organisation, and preferable within member organisations too.

South Gloucestershire Green Commuter Club

Meetings of the South Gloucestershire Green Commuter Club are chaired by the Assistant Director of the unitary authority’s Planning, Transportation and Strategic Environment department. Member organisations value the contact with a senior member of council staff, particularly one in a position to act expediently on the network’s behalf.

Identify and nurture a number of ‘champions’ – particularly enthusiastic organisations or individuals – to support the co-ordinator in achieving the aims of the network.

Identify appropriate, and preferably committed, individuals within member organisations to participate in network activity. Typically, these might be human resources, operations, site services or facilities managers.

Explore the idea of identifying different roles and responsibilities for members, both to share the burden of running the network, and to help sustain commitment.

Consider asking members to sign a pledge to demonstrate their commitment to work towards the aims of the network.

Set objectives and measure progress towards them

Network co-ordinators should work with members at an early stage to identify clear objectives for the group which reflect common interests. These will need to be reviewed, and possibly revised, periodically.

Research and identify a number of common themes or issues around which the founder companies can rally, such as improvements to local bus timetables and routeings, or setting up a car-share database.

Gather some base-line information regarding travel patterns associated with member organisations at the outset. This is useful for measuring the network progress and achievements. Further details on the types of information that should be gather and how are given in Section 8.0 Monitoring and evaluation on p17.

Be publicity-conscious from the very start

If resources permit, launch the network with a high-profile event, likely to attract positive media coverage and appeal to local politicians whose support will be valuable.

Southside Employers network

When the Southside Employers network emerged from the Nottingham Commuter Planners’ Club as a discrete group, each member carried out a staff travel survey using a common questionnaire. This allowed the employers to compare current staff travel patterns and provided valuable base-line data against which progress towards modal shift targets could be measured.

2.4 Identifying potential network members

As a priority, consider targeting the following types of organisation:

Local authorities: county councils, borough councils, district councils, city councils, unitary authorities. These organisations are directly concerned with travel matters and, ultimately, will be responsible for any infrastructure improvements or policy changes. More than 90% of all networks have local authority members.

Hospitals, NHS trusts and health authorities. The activities of these bodies involve very large numbers of journeys on the part of visitors, patients, staff and essential deliveries. More recently it has been accepted that health authorities and trusts have a responsibility to promote ‘healthy’ means of transport.

Further education institutions. These, too, give rise to large numbers of journeys, relating to student and staff movements.

Large employers. Defined here as having over 250 employees. These generate a great deal of travel, both to and from work and in the course of their business activities. More than half of all existing networks include these.

Small and medium employers. Although individually these companies generate less travel than larger ones, collectively their impact may be comparable to large employers.
**Chambers of commerce.** These may be helpful in engaging the business community, who often see them as an ‘honest broker’.

**Government Regional Offices, Regional Development Agencies and other government agencies.** These agencies have influence on regional policy-making and, possibly, funding.

**Public transport operators and Passenger Transport Executives.** These organisations have often been less involved in networks than they should be as they are ultimately the direct providers of any public transport improvements.

Fig 2 Percentage of networks with members from different categories of organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authority</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital / NHS Trust</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University / College</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large employer</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Authority</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Development Agency</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Office</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Because of their potential for traffic generation, the following organisations should be encouraged to join a local travel plan network:

- business parks
- higher education institutions and universities
- airport authorities
- property developers (who may require their tenants to initiate travel plans as a condition of planning agreements imposed on the developer by the local authority)

Other types of organisation to consider include:

- retailers (and retail parks)
- leisure and tourism operators/attractors (including leisure parks)
- business/economic/regeneration groups, voluntary or pressure groups representing relevant interests, local residents’ groups, consultants and individual members of the public – these can bring experience of travel plan work elsewhere, and should bring new ideas and different perspectives to the network

**Nottingham’s Commuter Planners’ Club**

Many networks stress the importance of involving public transport operators. The meetings of Nottingham’s Commuter Planners’ Club are regularly attended by the main public transport providers in the area: Trent and Barton Buses, Nottingham City Transport and Central Trains.

2.5 The next stage

**Engage representatives from key organisations.** Such as public transport operators, local authorities and the government office for the region. These bodies are responsible for making decisions that will affect the aims and objectives of the network.

**Secure funding for continuation of the network and spread the costs.** Share the costs involved in running the network between those members willing, and able, to support it.

Encourage representatives from member organisations to secure sufficient resources and responsibility to act on ideas.

Explore potential sources of funding to support and expand network activity. For further information on how to do this see Section 4.0 Funding a travel plan network on p10.

**Be consistent**

Ensure that different departments and individuals within the co-ordinating organisation present a coherent message to others regarding the aims and objectives of the network. This is particularly important for local authorities, with their broad remit of public responsibilities.

**Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce**

Edinburgh’s Chamber of Commerce, which runs the Edinburgh Employers’ Travel Forum, has found that it has been able to act as an independent ‘honest broker’, negotiating between network members, local authorities and public transport operators.

**Hertfordshire’s Business TravelWise Group**

Hertfordshire’s Business TravelWise Group is run in partnership by the County Council and Herts Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Both partners say the involvement of the other is vital: the council for its control over, and knowledge of, transport issues, and the chamber for its direct link to the business community.
3 Developing and expanding the network

For a few networks expansion may not be possible or desirable. For example, networks based on a tightly defined geographical area, such as a business park or industrial estate, are limited by the number of organisations on the site. For virtually all other networks, expansion is a desirable aim.

3.1 Why expand?

While many travel plan networks start with just a few keen and committed organisations, there are a number of good reasons why most networks seek to expand their membership in the longer term:

- larger networks offer economies of scale and the ability to spread costs more widely
- representing larger numbers of employers (and employees) strengthens a network’s position in negotiations with policy and decision-making bodies, such as local authorities and public transport operators
- the larger the network, the greater the pool of ‘good practice’ information that members have to share
- the larger the membership, the more viable some services become, such as car-sharing schemes
- the scope for special-interest sub-groups increases with network size
- within the network catchment area, the greater the proportion of organisations that are members of that network, the less the influence of non-members who may be ‘dissenters’

Of the networks already established, around three-quarters started with fewer than 15 members, one in six started with between 15 and 30 members and just one in ten had more than 30 founder members. The longest-established travel plan networks demonstrate how membership usually expands over time. The Nottingham Commuter Planners Club started in 1995 with 10 organisations, and is now 50; while Birmingham Company TravelWise expanded from 23 organisations at its foundation in 1998 to a current membership of 105.

3.2 Attracting new network members

The key to attracting new members is: ‘Do your homework first’. Research an organisation in advance of any formal approach to find out what concerns they have, or what specific problems they face, relating to work travel. Some may have severe parking problems or may be losing valued staff through difficulties getting to work, others may be looking to improve their environmental performance. Knowing which particular benefits of travel plan development are most important to an organisation will help co-ordinators sell their network to potential members.

Travel plan networks can use a variety of means to expand membership:

- Issue a direct invitation to organisations the network would like as members. The initial approach is often by letter to a senior member of staff within the target organisation, followed by a phone call suggesting an exploratory meeting.
- Issue a general invitation to non-member businesses in the catchment area of the network. Try this once a year, in advance of the group AGM, and invite new prospective new members.
- Sell the benefits of collective working and bargaining power which accrue from travel plan networks to small and medium employers.
- Use a variety of means of publicity that set out the benefits to organisations of network involvement. Try newsletters, leaflets, flyers, press releases, seminar and conference presentations, web sites, e-mail lists, together with local radio, television and press.
- Publicise the significant gains for member organisations, such as securing public transport discounts, to attract non-members.
- Set up a travel plan award scheme. Through the scheme, reward organisations that are not necessarily members with accreditation, good publicity, or prizes for their efforts. Encourage participants to join the travel plan network – let involvement in the network count towards the award.
- Enlist the support of other relevant groups and individuals. For example, use chambers of commerce and town centre managers to press the advantages of network involvement on the organisations with whom they have contact.
Local authorities may use the land-use planning process to require organisations to develop travel plan initiatives as a condition of planning permission. These organisations are then pointed in the direction of a travel plan network as a means of assisting them to meet the requirement.

Draw in the neighbours of existing network members who may share area-specific problems. These organisations may already be more familiar with the advantages of involvement in a network, having seen the positive gains obtained by those close by.

Do not be discouraged if an organisation declines to be involved in a travel plan network. Encouraging new, particularly diffident, organisations to get involved can be a time-intensive task for network co-ordinators. In particular, there may be difficulty in engaging smaller companies with more limited resources, and for which travel problems may seem less acute. Continuous, gentle encouragement, and perhaps a change in company personnel or policy, can lead to organisations eventually realising the benefits of network involvement.

Once they have joined, be aware that new members can feel intimidated by the progress achieved by the longer-standing members, but that the latter may feel frustrated if old ground is covered too frequently for the benefit of new recruits. It may, therefore, be appropriate, particularly for large and longer-established networks, to hold occasional meetings for new and recent members. These could be timed to follow on from a recruitment drive.

Organisations are often very willing to join a network if they have secured planning permission for development which has travel plan-related conditions attached. Such organisations are often in a position where they are required to act on an issue about which they have little knowledge.

4 Funding a travel plan network

4.1 Who pays for travel plan networks?

Seek funding from a mix of sources: you are unlikely to find a single source big enough to support the whole network. In addition there are advantages in having several stakeholders in the network, in both nurturing shared interest in, and ownership of, the network, and in spreading risk. If one source dries up, there should be other sources available to sustain the network while replacement funding is found.

Although existing networks receive a good deal of often undisclosed support in kind from network co-ordinators’ organisations and network members (for example by devoting staff time or accommodation to help manage the network, hosting e-mail lists, providing publicity and supplying premises for meetings and seminars, etc.) this will not on its own be sufficient to keep the network going.

To date, the most common sources of funding to support network activity have been local authorities, followed by chambers of commerce and health authorities. Organisations that do not traditionally have a role in travel plan development, may find it more difficult to lever funds for this type of activity.

If necessary, consider charging a membership fee. At the moment, very few existing travel plan networks do charge, although a number of the longer-established initiatives are considering introducing one. In the longer term, members should be aware of the benefits of travel plan network membership. The level of any fee should be pitched so that:

- the value of the network’s activities to an organisation at least matches any membership fee: i.e. members should be – and perceive they are – getting value for money
- the fee structure does not unfairly ‘penalise’ larger organisations, since this might discourage their (valued) involvement in a network
- it takes into account the other ways in which an organisation contributes to running the network, such as organising and hosting meetings. It might be appropriate to offer reductions to organisations that provide significant contributions in kind.
Other possible sources include:

- Grants and European Union funding: these may be available only to certain types of organisation, or only over a limited period. From time to time new initiatives bring further opportunities for funding from these sources.
- Management charges for members of a business group, for example, fees paid to a land or estate management company
- Business sponsorship
- Car parking charges among network members
- Public transport operators
- Charitable grants to voluntary organisations
- Regeneration investment
- Property developers

**Bristol Green Commuter Club**

The Bristol Green Commuter Club won sponsorship from NatWest to help run its first annual conference and to produce a resource pack on developing travel plans.

**Cambridge Travel for Work project**

In the mid-1990s a partnership in Cambridge involving local authorities, employers and sustainable travel campaign groups secured grant funding under the DTLR’s ‘Cycle Challenge’ programme to encourage wider take-up of cycling for commuter journeys. The success of this initiative led to the establishment of the Cambridge Travel for Work project, which has attracted further grant funding enabling the employment of full-time staff, and which encompasses the full range of alternatives to drive-alone car journeys for commuting.

4.2 Charging for services – existing and planned

Most existing travel plan networks do not charge directly for the services they currently offer their members, although many network members do effectively pay ‘in kind’. Nevertheless, do not ignore the possibility of charging for at least some services, mainly because future demands from members may exceed the resources available. A network offers an outlet for expressing needs but where the resources or structures are not in place to meet them, there is a risk of losing the support of members.

Charges may not be appropriate at the outset but can be considered once the network is well established and in a position to offer additional services for members who are willing and able to pay for them – and once member organisations are convinced of the value of the network. Examples of services for which charges could be considered are:

- site-specific public transport maps
- survey work
- attendance at seminars and conferences (but not network business meetings)
- services for non-members that members get free or at a reduced rate
- participation in car-share schemes
- access to a network’s directory of members

5 Running an effective travel plan network

5.1 Sustaining interest and commitment

Sustaining the interest of network members and maintaining a broad base of involvement are important for the success and effectiveness of travel plan networks. Co-ordinators should anticipate possible reasons why organisations might start to lose interest in a network, and tackle them before membership starts to wane. Organisations may cease to be involved in a network for a number of reasons:

- **Personnel changes.** This is the most common reason why networks lose members. The original, committed individual may leave the organisation, be unable to attend meetings regularly or move to a new position which has no responsibility for travel plan issues.
To help keep organisations involved, encourage their representatives to nominate a deputy should they be unable to attend meetings or to be involved in the network at all. If the network holds meetings, conferences or seminars, advise members of the dates well in advance to enable them to plan it into their business commitments.

**Difficulty retaining contact at senior level.**
Network co-ordinators may find it difficult initially to contact the right person with sufficient seniority among prospective network members. Once organisations have signed up it is not uncommon, following initial interest by senior management, for network contact to be delegated to more junior staff. This can lead to problems and delays in getting initiatives implemented as junior staff often lack the authority or resources to effect rapid change. If senior representatives do represent organisations within travel plan networks, they tend to be very busy people anyway. Also, network meetings can become ‘unbalanced’ when some organisations are represented by senior management, while others are represented by more junior staff.

Where possible, an initial meeting between the co-ordinator and the organisation should involve personnel whose remit is relevant to travel plan issues, from whom a key, preferably senior, contact may be identified. If network liaison is subsequently delegated to more junior staff, effort should be made by the coordinator to retain at least informal contact with the senior figure.

**Lack of perceived relevance.** When organisations – usually mistakenly – feel they have little or nothing to gain from network involvement. To counter this perception, emphasise the relevance of the network to individual organisations – this is likely to mean emphasising different benefits to different organisations. Organisations that consider they currently have no particular problem with site access or parking should be encouraged to view the broader and longer-term picture.

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**Manchester Airport’s Service Partner Commuting Forum**

Based within offices at the airport, the co-ordinator of Manchester Airport’s Service Partner Commuting Forum has both first-hand knowledge of the practical problems associated with travel to the site and is presented with many informal opportunities to communicate with network members (in addition to formal business meetings). She is also able to observe the effectiveness of practical travel plan initiatives.

**Perceived conflicts of interest.** Where organisations find the objectives of a network sit uncomfortably with their normal practices. One existing network, for example, found that solicitors and accountants who relied extensively on cars to visit clients fell away fairly rapidly from involvement in the group.

Try to avoid alienating organisations that currently rely heavily on car travel. Encourage them to take small, easy steps to start with and to set achievable targets; these can then be built on.
False impression that the task is complete. When organisations – again often mistakenly – feel they have accomplished all that was expected of them in joining a network, such as having drawn up and implemented a travel plan, it is not uncommon for them to question the value of their continued involvement in the network.

Emphasise that travel plan work is a continuing activity: travel plans should be continually under review and evolving. Developing and implementing a travel plan are no more than the first steps, which need to be followed up by monitoring, evaluation and review – and improvements where necessary. Remind organisations that traffic volumes in general are growing, and forecast to keep on growing.

Resources to support involvement in the network are no longer available. This may be due to changes in organisation policy or company fortunes.

Stress the business advantages of network involvement to the private sector. Be prepared to accept that most commercial organisations are motivated primarily by profits and target persuasive arguments accordingly. Even if companies do not at present see the development of a travel plan as a priority, most should be able to achieve some savings but it may take time to realise them.

5.2 Other means of keeping existing members interested

Even if existing members are not showing signs of drifting away it is useful to keep them actively engaged.

Consult and share experience. An important role of many travel plan networks is the sharing of information and good practice. Create opportunities for this, such as members’ meetings and e-mail information exchange.

Keep up the publicity. Give member organisations regular opportunities to show off their achievements, through site visits, presentations, network newsletter articles, and coverage in the wider press. Organisations greatly value positive publicity.

Encourage an element of friendly competition between members and reward good practice and success with some form of acknowledgement at the least.

Keep it varied. Vary the meeting format and the topics covered to sustain interest. Try to ensure that formal presentations are accurate, informed and topical. Consider inviting guest speakers from outside the network area to add variety and a different perspective.

Nottingham Commuter Planners’ Club

To help ensure that network meetings are effective, the Nottingham Commuter Planners’ Club now tries to tailor its invitations to individuals within member organisations who are likely to be most interested in the topic under discussion. For example, fleet managers are invited to attend when there are presentations on alternative fuels and vehicles, while human resources personnel are asked if the discussion is on flexible working arrangements.

Be realistic and avoid overload. Set challenging but realistic, achievable targets relating to travel plans, both for the network as a whole and for individual members. Base targets on robust information.

When presenting ideas, don’t overload organisations with too much information. A simple summary with an opportunity to request further information often works best.

Where possible include where possible local examples and case studies in any guidance or information produced for members, with contact details to enable those interested to follow them up.

Be careful not to place too great a demand on members’ time – even very enthusiastic members have their breaking point!

Prepare to evolve. Ensure that the network evolves from a forum for information exchange to an effective movement for changing travel patterns. Members’ eagerness to maintain interest in the future and to commit resources to a network will usually depend on their seeing tangible results.

Encourage members to take the initiative in developing and piloting ideas. Be open to new ideas, but prepared to deal with slow progress as well as some failures.

Negotiations with service providers, in particular, can be protracted. Learn from mistakes and failures, and – where you can – share lessons with network members.

Winchester Commuter Forum

Different members of the Winchester Commuter Forum try out different travel plan initiatives and share the results, both good and bad, with the rest of the group. In this way members can spread the burden of researching viable solutions and determining best practice.
6 Member services

Networks offer services to their members in three main areas, which overlap to some extent:

- providing information and forums for exchange of information
- direct help to members with site-specific advice or research, such as travel surveys and their interpretation, or in answering specific queries
- negotiating with outside bodies on behalf of members’ interests

Typical services that a network should consider offering within the three areas are detailed below.

All network services have a cost implication, but if there is no dedicated budget, these costs may often be shared between members. The cost of individual services can vary considerably, for example, a newsletter could be two photocopied pages or a full-colour glossy production. Initial lack of funding should not be a deterrent to introducing a service on a modest scale – more resources may well follow as the benefits of the initiative become apparent.

6.1 Information services

Fig 3 Percentage of networks offering various information services to members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-mail information exchange</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular member meetings</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissemination of other information</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars/conferences</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic newsletter</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed newsletter</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Arrange business meetings**, mainly for discussion among network members, but perhaps with visiting speakers who contribute to part of the meeting. Most existing networks hold such meetings, usually every two or three months. Longer intervals can lead to loss of momentum and lack of communication.

- **Organise seminars and conferences**, with a variety of presentations from both network members and outside specialists. Most existing networks hold these annually or biannually, and make them open to non-members who may be interested in joining the network.

- **Encourage e-mail list and information exchange.** Circulating information by e-mail has proved very efficient and cost-effective.

- **Disseminate relevant information and guidance from other sources**, such as TransportEnergy BestPractice, local authorities, public transport operators, etc.

- **Offer a library service of literature relating to travel plans**; resource packs or fact sheets featuring case studies and good practice examples. For example, produce topic information sheets for members, perhaps with advice on workplace cycle-parking.

- **Print newsletters.** Most existing networks do this no more frequently than quarterly. The network’s news may be disseminated as part of a broader newsletter, such as that for a business area or for an umbrella group.

- **Generate an electronic newsletter.** This appears to be a very efficient and relatively inexpensive method of keeping organisations in touch and one likely to become more widespread.

- **Create a web site.** About 40% of networks already have a web site. A sizable number of other existing networks plan to set up a web site.

Co-ordinators of longer-established networks agree that, while there is no set format for a successful network meeting, those that attract good participation tend to include the following ‘ingredients’: an opportunity for members to share information and report back on progress; a ‘key note’ speaker or presentation on a topical issue; dissemination of information on forthcoming events, new publications, or other relevant initiatives of interest to members; and an opportunity for informal discussion and networking among members – perhaps over lunch or refreshments.
Hertfordshire's Business TravelWise Group

Hertfordshire’s Business TravelWise Group organised a teleworking seminar that attracted an audience from a wide area – well beyond the network boundaries. The group did not object to providing this ‘free’ service to non members, not least since much of the traffic on the county’s roads is just passing through, so a broadening of the network’s message and objectives is welcomed.

South Gloucestershire’s Green Commuter Club

South Gloucestershire’s Green Commuter Club has produced a guide for its members, in a loose-leaf format to enable expansion and updating. Initially a summary of the guide is mailed out to organisations, so as not to overwhelm them with information. The summary includes a prepaid request form for ordering the full pack, which is comprehensively illustrated with local examples.

6.2 Direct assistance to members

- **Offer general support** and encouragement for organisations to help sustain their interest in developing their travel plans.
- **Provide assistance** in persuading senior staff within an organisation of the benefits of travel plans. Also offer assistance in running seminars for employees to raise their awareness about sustainable commuting practices.
- **Set up a telephone helpline.**
- **Arrange site visits** by the network coordinator and/or other travel plan experts to examine and discuss site-specific issues with a network member.
- **Arrange site visits by groups of network members,** either to examine problems and solutions at a member’s site or other site where innovative work is being carried out on travel plan issues.
- **Set up displays,** ‘help desks’ and/or ‘surgeries’ based at member sites. These need only be set up for a short period, to generate interest in travel plans among employees.
- **Organise events** to coincide with wider campaigns, such as ‘Green Transport Week’, National Car-free Day etc.
- **Provide assistance** for members conducting their own research relating to travel plans.
- **Provide advice** on elements to include in a travel plan, and also issues to be examined in ‘greening’ commuting patterns.

- **Get modelling.** Sort out model staff travel surveys, model facilities audit, model travel plan, templates or models for activities associated with travel plans such as a cycle loan scheme or car-sharing system, that are suitable for adapting to specific circumstances.
- **Provide map-based profiles** of commuting patterns to work-sites; site- or area-specific public transport or cycle route maps.
- **Offer valuations** of car-parking space in relation to development potential.
- **Provide funding** for infrastructure to support travel plan objectives, such as cycle parking or bus stops.
- **Conduct surveys/research** for individual network members, the entire network or a sub-group – this needs more staff resources than assisting members to carry out their own surveys and research, and could be a service for which a specific charge is made to cover staff costs.

Fig 4 Percentage of networks offering direct assistance to members in specific fields.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assisting members with their research</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site visits</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research on behalf of members</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone helpline</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Sort out participation** in an area-wide car-sharing scheme.
- **Create sub-groups of members** facing similar issues and problems, or at least putting them in contact with each other.
- **Co-ordinate a bicycle user group.** This is usually only appropriate for networks in a very tightly-defined geographical area such as a business park.

Manchester Airport’s Service Partner Commuting Forum

A number of organisations based at Manchester Airport who are involved in the Service Partner Commuter Forum, have shared investment in physical measures on the site to encourage sustainable travel patterns, such as showers and changing facilities for cyclists. They provide travel plan information for members on accessing the site other than by car. Employers at the airport find this of great value in recruiting and retaining staff.
When BAe joined the Hertfordshire Business TravelWise Group, it was guided by existing members towards a number of valuable resources, which saved the company time and money. These included a scheme through which a fleet of renovated bikes was given to the company for employees to use for short local journeys during the day and to try cycle commuting. It was also alerted to the University of Hertfordshire's practice of placing students with local companies to help them research and prepare a travel plan at minimal cost!

### 6.3 Negotiating services

Around one third of networks negotiate on behalf of members’ collective interests. The principal groups with which a network is likely to negotiate are:

- local authorities: for example, to secure new and improved pedestrian and cycle routes
- public transport operators: for example, to improve routing, make the case for additional services, and secure discounts for the employees of network members
- central government departments: for example, in lobbying for changes to taxation to favour travel plan activity
- government regional offices: for example, in evolving land-use and transport policy to support travel plan objectives

Collective bargaining can be undermined if external organisations begin to negotiate directly with individual network members.

Other bodies with which a network might negotiate include:

- business organisations: for example, to encourage the development of products and services that support travel plan activity
- the local community: for example, to foster understanding and appreciation of what businesses are trying to do to reduce the impact of car commuting

Rolls Royce is co-ordinating the development of a car-share database for a group of neighbouring employers in the north Bristol fringe. The idea was initiated when the employers met through the South Gloucestershire Green Commuter Club, and realised that an area-wide approach would yield a larger and so more viable database.

- national organisations with similar objectives, such as the Association of Commuter Transport, National TravelWise, Transport 2000, the Pedestrians’ Association, the Cyclists’ Touring Club and Sustrans
- higher and further education bodies: for example, to encourage research relevant to travel plans

### 7 Publicity

Marketing the benefits of a network is essential to win support for new services and to increase take-up of existing ones. Travel plan network co-ordinators should publicise the network’s existence, its activities and – in particular – its successes as a means of raising its profile. This will help to attract new members, retain established ones and potentially win extra resources. All of these should help the network increase its influence and effectiveness. There are many ways to publicise the network and its activities:

- Keep members informed through newsletters, either a dedicated network newsletter, or those of other relevant organisations, such as the ‘parent’ business partnership
- Circulate reports and briefings from network meetings and make suitable sections available to non-members
- Organise well-publicised conference and seminar presentations, competitions, award ceremonies, network launches and re-launches. Enhance the newsworthiness of all these by inviting high-profile individuals to attend or open them
- Place information on a web site. This may be the network’s own or sites of other relevant organisations. These must be updated frequently if they are to remain topical
- Print leaflets and flyers
- Send out press releases to local print and broadcast when there is something newsworthy to report, and secure local radio and television coverage
Never underestimate the power of word of mouth. A recommendation of the network by a satisfied member which can be seen as unbiased can be more potent than any advertising.

Fig 5 Percentage of networks using different means of publicity

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Press release</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaflets / flyers</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences / seminars</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own website</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisation's website</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Monitoring and evaluation

While the underlying aim of most networks is to reduce car dependency, individual networks will usually develop their own detailed aims and objectives in consultation with their members. It is essential that these aims and objectives are clearly defined as far as possible from the outset. Any targets set should be realistic and attainable but should become more challenging as the network finds its feet. Some targets may already have been set by the local transport plan which covers the network area.

Although progress should be measurable, during the early stages of a network qualitative assessments may be more appropriate than quantitative ones. It is likely to be difficult to find the resources to collect a lot of robust data early on. In addition, visible progress towards some targets will take time. It is, however, highly desirable to have base-line information on the travel patterns associated with network members before the network really gets under way, so that later progress can be evaluated quantitatively.

Assessing the progress and effectiveness of a travel plan network is important to ensure that it is delivering both what its members require and – in the longer term – showing tangible advance towards more sustainable travel patterns. This involves monitoring both the working of the network itself and the overall effectiveness of the travel plans that come from it. However, responsibility for the latter plans should rest largely with individual network members. While a network co-ordinator may assist in advising the co-ordinators of individual plans in assessing their own performance care should be taken to avoid detracting from an individual coordinator’s own initiative. If individuals lose the feeling of ‘ownership’ of their plan, they may lose interest in it all together.

Ideally, carry out network monitoring and evaluation on a reasonably frequent basis – at least once a year. Be aware from the outset that resources will be needed to carry out this important task. Regular monitoring will enable any shortcomings to be identified and addressed quickly, and any ‘success stories’ to be publicised to help sustain commitment to the network. It is as important to weed out initiatives that are failing, as it is to applaud successes.

Cambridge Travel for Work

The Cambridge Travel for Work co-ordinator carries out an annual staff travel survey for its member organisations. Employers receive a copy of their individual ‘results’, while the TfW coordinator is able to monitor the overall picture.

Information which will help the monitoring process may be derived from:

- questionnaires or evaluation forms distributed to network members
- feedback opportunities at network meetings
- comments invited through the network’s web site
- contributions made to the network newsletter
- evaluations carried out as a requirement of a research project, or funding commitment
- informal, ad-hoc dialogue with network members
There are several ‘yardsticks’ against which co-ordinators may assess the effectiveness and success of their travel plan networks:

- growth in membership of the network since inception
- proportion of member companies developing and actively implementing a travel plan
- extent of modal shift for work journeys among employees of member organisations (though this is also a test of the effectiveness of travel plans per se)
- attendance at network meetings, seminars and conferences
- degree of positive media interest in the network
- interest in the network from others exploring the idea of setting up a similar initiative
- level of resources members are prepared to commit to sustaining the network
- level of interest and involvement in network activity among senior staff within member organisations
- number of spontaneous requests from organisations to become involved in the network
- growth in the number of ‘hits’ on a network web site
- progress towards achieving Local Transport Plan targets relating to network objectives
- progression of the network from a forum for information exchange to an effective agent for change

Swindon Business Travel Forum

“Our strength? That major companies – nationals and multinationals – are significant participants. There is a spirit of co-operation and a willingness to help each other and learn from others’ experiences. Our main achievement is probably just getting them to recognise that they aren’t alone – and that there are solutions. And my advice to anyone just starting out? Have a chat with some of the others who have already done it.”

Lorna Bell, coordinator Swindon Business Travel Forum

9 Sources of information

Travel plan guides

There are many guides available on how to implement a travel plan. The following resources give an excellent overview of travel planning:

- ‘A travel plan resource pack for employers’. A comprehensive handbook with detailed information on all aspects of developing and implementing a travel plan. Available as a soft back and CD-ROM
- ‘Travel Plan News’. A regular newsletter to keep you up to date with issues related to travel planning
- ‘Travel Plans – new business opportunities for service providers to cyclists and walkers’. Describes the scope of travel plans and provides suggestions about potential business opportunities that arise from their introduction
- ‘Travel Plans – business opportunities for bus & coach operators’. This highlights the business opportunities available to public transport operators as a result of other organisations introducing travel plans
- ‘Travel Plans – the role of human resources staff and trade union representatives in supporting travel plans’ This highlights the crucial role that human resource professionals can play in helping to develop and implement effective travel plans
- ‘Travel Plans – new business opportunities for information technology providers’. This will be of value to suppliers of computing and video conferencing equipment as well as travel information products
- ‘A guide on travel plans for developers’. A guide to help organisations involved in existing or new developments to understand the implications of the growing number of travel plans being introduced
- ‘Do travel plans have a place in retail?’ This is designed to help the retail sector understand the relevance of travel plans to their business and identify the benefits of managing travel to retail sites, particularly encouraging the use of alternatives to the private car

These are available free through the TransportEnergy Hotline on 0845 602 1425 or via the website at www.transportenergy.org.uk
General advice on travel plans

Several organisations can offer general advice on setting up and running travel plans. The ones listed here may be able to help you directly, or may refer you to other local or more detailed sources, depending on the nature of your enquiry.

**TransportEnergy BestPractice**
Hotline: 0845 602 1425  
E-mail: transportenergy@est.org.uk  
Website: www.transportenergy.org.uk

For further information on any of the issues covered in this guide or free, independent information and advice on travel plans, contact the hotline.

**Department for Transport (DfT)**
Zone 3/15  
Great Minster House  
76 Marsham House  
London SW1P 4DR  
Contact: Jeremy Ketley  
Tel: 020 7944 4904  
E-mail: jeremy.ketley@dft.gsi.gov.uk  
Website: www.dft.gov.uk

The DfT website covers all areas of the Department’s work including local and integrated transport and a section on travel plans.

**The Association for Commuter Transport (ACT)**
1 Vernon Mews  
Vernon Street  
London W14 0RL  
Tel: 0207 348 1987  
E-mail: mail@act-uk.com  
Website: www.act-uk.com

This association is dedicated to the promotion of sustainable transport, improved air quality and reduced car dependency through the encouragement of commuter travel planning and travel plans.

**The National TravelWise Association**
Contact: Patrick Allcorn  
Tel: 0207 941 4747  
E-mail: patrick.allcorn@tfl.gov.uk  
Website: www.travelwise.org.uk

The National TravelWise Association is a partnership of local authorities and other organisations working together to promote sustainable transport.

**Transport 2000**
Contact: Carey Newson / Camilla Swiderska  
Tel: 0207 613 0743  
E-mail: carey@transport2000.org.uk  
Website: www.transport2000.org.uk

Transport 2000 is an independent organisation concerned with sustainable transport. It seeks answers to transport problems and aims to reduce the environmental and social impact of transport by encourage less use of cars and more use of public transport, walking and cycling.

Alternatively, you may wish to contact your Government Office or Devolved Administration – please see the contact details below.

**East of England**
Eastbrook, Shaftesbury Road,  
Cambridge, CB2 2DF  
Tel: 01223 372500  
Fax: 01223 372501

**East Midlands**
Zone D,The Belgrave Centre, Stanley Place  
Talbot Street, Nottingham, NG1 5GG  
Tel: 0115 971 9971  
Fax: 0115 971 2404

**West Midlands**
5 St Philip’s Place, Birmingham,  
B3 2PW  
Tel: 0121 352 5050  
Fax: 0121 352 1010

**London**
Riverwalk House, 9th Floor  
157-161 Millbank, London, SW1P 4RR  
Tel: 020 7217 3328  
Fax: 020 7217 3450

**North East**
Citygate, Gallowgate  
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4WH  
Tel: 0191 201 3300  
Fax: 0191 202 3998

**North-West**
City Tower, Piccadilly Plaza  
Manchester, M1 4BE  
Tel: 0161 952 4000  
Fax: 0161 952 4099
Other information

The following references will be helpful in terms of policy background and travel plans.

- ‘Developing an effective travel plan: advice for Government departments’. Provides advice and information on how to develop a successful travel plan.
  
  This is available from the Department for Transport’s free literature line on 0870 1226 236 or can be downloaded from the DfT web site at www.dft.gov.uk

- ‘The Healthy Transport Toolkit’. This is a practical guide for hospitals and other health bodies on how to reduce the number of car trips made by staff, patients and visitors.
  
  This is available from Transport 2000 web site at www.transport2000.org.uk
TransportEnergy is a division of the Energy Saving Trust, a non-profit organisation established by the Government to help the UK reduce its impacts on climate change and to improve air quality in our cities and towns. It provides authoritative, independent information and advice to help implement sustainable transport initiatives.

For advice and support about travel plans, call our Hotline on 0845 602 1425. Alternatively, visit our website at www.transportenergy.org.uk and click on ‘Want to develop a travel plan?’


Printed on paper containing 75% post-consumer waste and 25% elemental chlorine-free pulp.