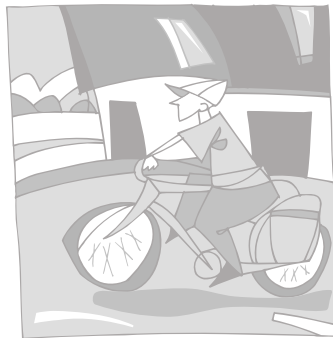


Theme 9: Transport

A Sustainable Future
for the South West



**The Regional Sustainable Development Framework
for the South West of England**



Theme 9: Transport

Headline Indicator:
Traffic volumes

Setting the Scene

For most of us, most of the time, transport is a means to an end. We don't choose to travel just because we like it, we travel because we want to get to something - to our place of work or education, to visit places where we may enjoy our leisure time, to see friends or relatives, to shop or to meet other essential needs such as healthcare. It is important to distinguish between access - the purpose of travel - and movement. The goal of sustainable transport must be to ensure that everyone has a fair and reasonable degree of access while cutting down on the amount of movement needed to achieve it.

It is movement that imposes costs, both on the person doing the travelling and on the rest of society. "Costs" may include impacts on health, on the economy, and on the environment. Examples are congestion, air pollution, noise, and the emission of climate changing gases. They may often fall unequally on different groups of people. A major issue that sustainable transport policies need to tackle is that many such costs of movement are not borne, or perceived, by the transport user. The transport policies and investments of recent decades have tended to make movement easier and relatively cheaper, especially for cars and road freight, at the costs of environmental quality, standards of public transport provision, and access.

A key challenge will be to ensure that any national measures to bring the user costs of transport more into line with its true costs do not add to the economic disadvantage suffered by the more remote areas of the South West peninsula and the Region's rural areas.

What are the opportunities to improve sustainability in the SW?

In rural areas, to improve quality of access for those presently excluded because they do not have full time access to a car; to increase access to goods and services without dependence on the car, and to widen travel choice. The emphasis must be on inclusive solutions. They have to work for everyone, not just for those households who have a car or for those members of the household who have access to it and can use it.

There is scope for significant improvements in public transport provision centred on market towns, which would strengthen their standing as "sustainable communities". In more remote rural areas, long journeys and a widely dispersed population lead to a greater degree of car dependency, and different sustainable transport solutions may well be required. A combination of conventional services, demand responsive services or similar, and specialist services (including community buses) could go a long way to delivering a rural sustainable transport network. Schemes such as the pioneering Wigglybus in the Vale of Pewsey demonstrate that a good service frequency is possible. The present reality is that the car is much the most important means of transport for remote rural areas. While the car will always have much to offer, choice can be widened and dependency reduced. The search for alternative solutions should not be hampered by a deeply embedded assumption that this can never be achieved.

Better integration is needed so that, for example, car, cycle, or bus and train can all be easily and reliably combined in a single journey.

For public transport to become more attractive, travellers need easy access to reliable information about services and to be able to plan all stages of their journey. Travel awareness and marketing campaigns are useful tools. Many journeys are made for which a car is not essential, but it still ends up being used for lack of knowledge about the alternatives.

Overall, sustainable transport strategies should result in fewer journeys being made by car, but the emphasis should be on reducing the need to travel and on providing good alternatives so that in the end all travellers, motorists included, benefit from a better quality of journey.

Public transport provision suffers from fragmentation, with many different operators each pursuing their own commercial interests, all within a complex regulatory framework. The Region needs to ensure that these all work, so far as possible, to the wider benefit of its travellers, communities and businesses. There is scope for better coordination of services across Local Authority boundaries, including matters such as concessionary fares.

Theme 9: Transport

In urban areas, to reduce the dominance of the private car. The impacts of traffic are often felt most heavily in urban areas and the key opportunities here are to reduce the need to travel and to invest so as to favour the use of the "green modes" of walking, cycling and public transport. An important goal is a better quality of urban living so that towns and cities become more attractive places to live.

Local transport authorities should set traffic reduction targets for urban areas. These can be achieved by positive measures to improve the quality and safety of journeys on foot and by cycle, by investment in public transport infrastructure and better services, and by the restraint of car use through managing road space, parking policies and road user charging. In the medium to longer term, land use planning policies can promote mixed use development at high densities so that journeys are shorter. At the detailed level, new development should be designed to encourage safe and easy access by walking, cycling and public transport and not put car access above everything else.

Reduce impacts of transport on the environment. Further improvements in vehicle technology can contribute to lower emissions and reduced noise, but growth in traffic must not be allowed to undermine these gains.

Transport infrastructure developments will need to be planned and carried out more sensitively to reduce their impact on biodiversity and cultural assets, and in particular to prevent the loss of irreplaceable environmental assets such as designated sites and landscapes.

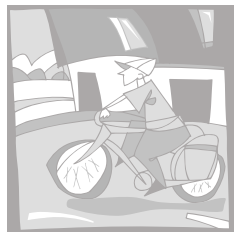
Communities throughout the Region suffer from the impacts of traffic and need comprehensive plans for its control and management, for example to reduce the speed and volume of traffic flows or the number of heavy goods vehicles. Bypasses to remove traffic from an area may be part of the solution but will not be possible for all affected communities and should not simply create more road space which rapidly fills up and adds to problems of congestion and blight elsewhere. Modal shift, from road freight to rail or sea for example, can bring about substantial environmental gains because it entails a more energy efficient form of transport.

For the South West economy, to lessen the dependence on the intensive use of fossil fuels. The efficient movement of people and goods is clearly vital to a functioning economy, but simply providing more infrastructure cannot be the whole solution, and may indeed sometimes make matters worse by encouraging more and longer journeys. Making the best use of existing infrastructure, and reducing the need to travel, are more viable and sustainable solutions.

The Regional Strategy (SW RDA, 1999) notes that: "It is more intelligent and more strategic to prepare the South West for future changes as soon as possible... By being proactive, the Region's economy and businesses will have a competitive edge". Reducing reliance on fossil fuel use is a prime example of this intelligent positioning for future change. Over time, it will deliver economic, social and environmental gains. The development of local markets and supply chains, to reduce journeys, will help achieve this, as will actively seeking opportunities to shift to more sustainable transport modes such as rail and sea freight; and to use alternative fuels and more fuel-efficient vehicles. These should help maintain the competitive position of South West businesses as transport costs become more critical.

Green Travel Plans. Businesses and service providers which depend on the daily movement of large numbers of people have considerable scope for the introduction of green travel plans, and may indeed find that their continued efficient operation and growth depends on such initiatives. Travel for education, particularly "the school run", is another area with great potential for action to change habits. There is scope for Information & Communications Technology to reduce the need for physical travel.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is to the tourism industry, currently one of the largest generators of unsustainable peak traffic flows. (See Theme 14 Tourism).



Theme 9: Transport

What are the objectives for improving sustainability in the South West?

Objective	Examples of how it might be achieved	Links to potential partners and processes
Reduce the need for travel	1 Ensure better integration of employment and residential development	Local authorities, developers. Business. Links with Local Transport Plans, development plans, RPG, RES, sub-regional economic strategies
	2 Improved service provision in rural areas, eg local pub also serving as the local shop/post office	Countryside Agency
Promote fuel efficient transport systems accessible to all	1 Encourage walking and cycling for local journeys	Local authorities, business. Links to LTPs, LA21 strategies, Green Travel Plans
	2 Promote greater availability and use of affordable public transport	Local authorities, central government, transport companies
	3 Discourage unnecessary use of the private car	Local authorities, central government
	4 Support community transport initiatives	Local authorities
	5 Greater use of ICT to provide integration information on different transport modes	Transport companies, ICT providers
	6 Transfer freight from road to rail & sea	Freight companies, railway companies, ports, shipping companies and businesses
Improve air quality for all	1 Reduce overall levels of travel	Local authorities
	2 Reduce congestion	Local authorities
	3 Improvements in vehicle technology to lower emissions	Car manufacturers
Provide a safe environment for all	1 Provision of home zones, 20mph zones, quiet lanes	Local authorities
	2 Safer journeys to school	Schools, education authorities



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