

SCHOOL TRAVEL PATHFINDER

1. Introduction

Cabinet at its meeting on 7th March agreed that further work should be undertaken to assess the implications of becoming a Pathfinder Authority. This note sets out the next steps.

2. Summary of Progress

- An expression of interest has been submitted to the DFES.
- The DFES has issued School Travel Guidance and Pathfinder Scheme Prospectus which is available to view on the DFES website. This gives clear guidance on what must be included in a scheme including objectives, targets, plans, consultation, assessing needs, information, funding, partnerships and evaluation.
- It is clear from the guidance that any scheme must support parental preference (nationally 55.3% of secondary school pupils attend a school other than their nearest), must promote sustainable, safe and quality transport services, and introduce a charging policy which is affordable and projects 'protected children' ie safe walking routes, low income and those in receipt of free travel before the introduction of the scheme, September 2009.
- The Officers Working Group has considered the framework for a bid, which could involve joint working with other Authorities, and include the following elements.
 - Innovative methods of collecting the income ie Smartcards
 - Providing additional bus services for those not receiving free travel but over two miles from school.
 - To promote bus travel and offer wider benefits to the community through better integration.
 - Providing independent travel training for young people with special needs.
 - Increasing walking and cycling.

- Introducing a concessionary fare scheme to encourage independence and improve access and possibly reduce contract bus provision.
- Support the 14 – 19 strategy and delivery
- Providing flexible services to meet the needs of the extended school day, especially in rural areas, integrating these with other services such as journeys to health and leisure. Undertake a gap analysis and plan to fill the gaps.
- Using modern technology to promote the services ie real time information.
- Extending the 'school bus behaviour' project including CCTV and securing better and more modern vehicles.

3. **Next Steps**

If we pursue a bid then it must be submitted by 30th November 2007. In order to do so we need to consult widely, especially with schools. We also need to engage support to prepare the bid which may cost in the region of £20k and be at our risk. As previously reported the scheme including charges could secure about £3.5m of funding during the 4 year pilot period; this does not include £200k start up costs.

4. **Conclusions**

The chance to become a Pathfinder Authority opens up many opportunities to improve school travel arrangements for young people attending our schools and to promote independent travel and living. It will give young people the opportunity to choose where and when they wish to travel and to participate in more community activities. Pathfinder will also have wider community benefits in reducing congestion and pollution and offering more travel choices locally.

5. **Way Forward**

Cabinet Committee is invited to recommend that a full Pathfinder bid be prepared for further consultation.

Mark Hudson
Head of Transport Services
Rmhesstp.22

M19C1839b