

4. POLICY CONTEXT



A series of national, regional and local documents were reviewed to inform Nottinghamshire's accessibility planning work, and to understand the wider policy and research context. The national document review focused on strategies of key organisations from other sectors, to understand the links between their forward plans and improving accessibility. Regional documents considered and referred to elsewhere included the Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Transport Strategy, and regional sectoral plans and briefings. This chapter focuses on regional and local policy and strategies and explains how they impact on accessibility, and how accessibility planning can shape them.

4.1 COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

All principal local authorities are required to have a Community Strategy to promote the economic, environmental and social well-being of their area. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and local authorities have worked together to develop and implement their strategy, and they therefore contain much useful information relating to accessibility problems in their areas. The strategies for Nottinghamshire County, and Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood Districts were reviewed and problems identified in them were summarised, providing an invaluable local perspective on more strategic issues identified through other means.

Nottinghamshire's Community Strategy "All Together Better" 2005-2009	
Topic	Accessibility Issue
Safer and Stronger: enriching the lives of people and communities	Promote inclusion.
Healthier: improving our health and wellbeing	Local and accessible health facilities, improve green spaces and rights of way. Widen access to sport and active recreation.
Learning and earning: helping us all reach our potential	Rollout children's centres across the County. Develop extended services in and around schools. Reduce barriers to people gaining employment
Cleaner and Greener: protecting and improving our environment	Improve the environment in our towns, villages and countryside.

Nottinghamshire's Community Strategy "All Together Better" 2005-2009	
Travel and access: helping us all travel safely and easily; helping us all access the services we need and enjoy.	Roads, public transport, footpaths, cycleways, and rights of way to be safe and easy for all to use. More local services, by their proximity and means of access by all users. Affordable transport services.

Ashfield's Community Strategy "A Community Strategy for Ashfield – 2001-2006"	
<i>The partners are currently beginning the process of identifying the priorities for the new Community Strategy which will cover the period 2006 – 2021</i>	
Economic Regeneration	Improve dialogue between key players about sites and transport issues at all levels
Quality of Life	Move care out of the hospital and into the local community
Environment	Encourage access to facilities, services and goods and other people in ways which minimise the impact on the environment
Social Inclusion	Tackle social exclusion

Bassetlaw's Community Strategy "Community Strategy 2003-2007. Getting the best for Bassetlaw"	
Transport	'Rural Schemes Budget'
Accessing job opportunities in new areas and siting of new businesses	Develop new transport links – roads, cycle links, buses
Intermediate Labour Market initiatives	Bridge to Work project
Rebuilding schools	Ensuring new schools have strong community links
An Attractive Place	Wheels to Work, promote alternatives to car, access to countryside and open spaces, community transport initiatives Comprehensive, low cost, energy efficient public transport system Transport safety Share a ride and Wheels to Work, Village Connections taxi voucher scheme Promote farmers' markets
A Healthy Place	Improve health to help people get to work Improve access to local facilities Reduce the need to go to hospital
A Fair Place	E-Government and help points Neighbourhood management projects, 'rural proofing' pilot Promote market towns

Bassetlaw's Community Strategy "Community Strategy 2003-2007. Getting the best for Bassetlaw"

	New cultural venues and leisure facilities across district Community Alliances and Local Community Issues Action Groups Community and social networks Everyone has equal access to services
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Mansfield's Community Strategy

Where We Live: Neighbourhoods and district centres	Easy access to schools, jobs, and community facilities New health facilities at Warsop and Bull Farm
Our Town Centre	Good access to town centre
People in Our Community	Help vulnerable people live independently Improve access to services – Community and Voluntary Sector Forum, Neighbourhood Management Teams
Our Economic Prosperity	Employment sites programme Helping businesses grow Workforce participation
Learning	Encourage locally based training and education for adults Building Learning Communities programme
A Healthier Mansfield	Access to GPs and health care professionals 3 year local health delivery plan – community health facilities and hospital building improvements
Our Local Environment	Promote better public transport Promote travel plans Local Plan measures Better paths and routes to parks and open spaces Promote locally grown produce Deliver 5 integrated transport programmes

Newark & Sherwood's Partnership Community Plan April 2003 to April 2006

Culture	To develop and enhance participation in cultural activity in rural areas
Improve transport infrastructure	Promote integrated transport infrastructure

Newark & Sherwood's Partnership Community Plan April 2003 to April 2006	
	Promote public transport and alternative transport schemes
Environment	Promote sustainable development
Health and Social Care	Implement Local Delivery Plan for health and social care
Lifelong Learning and Information Society	Promote e-learning
Social Inclusion	Support and develop social inclusion

4.2 LAND USE PLANNING

Regional Spatial Strategy and Regional Transport Strategy

At a regional level, County officers have engaged closely in the current review of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) contained within it, and have also taken the lead in the early work to develop a Northern Sub-area Strategy within the revised RSS. The need to adopt growth levels and patterns which support sustainable communities, improve accessibility, reduce the need to travel, achieve economic regeneration and support business competitiveness, particularly in North Nottinghamshire, are amongst the issues key to the County Council's position.

The RTS forms part of the RSS, and contains policies and proposals to help deliver the wider objectives. It, aims to reduce the need to travel and traffic growth, promote a step change in the quantity and quality of public transport, and only promotes additional highway capacity when all other options have been exhausted.

The policy in the RTS that sets the regional transport objectives states that local authorities should have regard to 6 objectives when drawing up their Local Transport Plans, one of which is 'to promote accessibility and overcome peripherality in rural areas'. East Midlands Regional Assembly has stated that the North Nottinghamshire LTP is in full conformity with RTS policies, having reviewed a checklist demonstrating this.

Joint Structure Plan

Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council have developed the Joint Structure Plan, which sets out strategic land use policies to guide the scale and location of development in the Plan Area which will apply until 2008. The Plan covers the scale and broad location of housing and employment land, the protection and enhancement of the environment, transport, recreation and tourism, and shopping.

The vision for the Structure Plan is of 'a thriving and prosperous County and City, with a good and improving quality of life for the whole community based on new development which promotes greater accessibility to homes, jobs, services and facilities in an enhanced environment.' It includes a series of policies specifically targeted at furthering social inclusion and improving health by improving access to key facilities, and continuing to integrate land use and transport to reduce the need to travel.

This has in turn informed the current Local Plans, influencing their approach to travel demand management.

Local Plans and Local Development Frameworks

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all local planning authorities to replace their Local Plans with Local Development Frameworks (LDF) by 2008.

District	Status of Local Plan
Ashfield	Adopted 2002; to be replaced by LDF from 2007
Bassetlaw	LDF being developed for full adoption by 2008
Mansfield	Adopted 1998; to be replaced by LDF from 2007
Newark & Sherwood	Adopted in 1999; to be replaced by the LDF from 2006

LDFs will see considerable emphasis on partnership working between the local planning authority, developers, and others to ensure that the LDF helps to deliver the wider vision and objectives within the Local Community Strategy. This offers the opportunity for accessibility objectives to be considered at the earliest stages in the planning of new development.

Evidence required to inform the associated Development Plan documents includes information on accessibility to key services, and Nottinghamshire County Council will be the provider of this for the district planning authorities. Nottinghamshire County Council has been working with the district planning authorities for Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood since summer 2005 to provide technical support to LDF processes relating to accessibility planning. Planning colleagues are also offered the opportunity to attend Wider Reference Group events. The districts' research and data collation on land uses to enable them to prepare LDFs will be used in future mapping to be carried out by the County for accessibility planning.

A discussion of the national proposals for a Planning-gain Supplement and how the authority proposes to respond to it is given in chapter 7.

Car parking provision

The control of car parking has an important influence on modal choice. The County Council is seeking to improve the relative cost of bus travel to use of the car by working with District Councils on the level and cost of car parking provision in town centres. The Council is also working in close partnership with the District Councils to deliver Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) in Nottinghamshire. This will be invaluable in enforcing Traffic Regulations Orders (TROs) without which initiatives such as bus priority schemes cannot be achieved.

Sensitive but effective control of land use planning is a vital tool in improving accessibility. Through this tool the County Council will seek to deliver the three aims of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS): to remove or reduce the need to travel, promote a step change in the level of public transport and only deliver highway capacity when all other measures have been exhausted.

'The Sustainable Developer Guide for Nottinghamshire', a guide for developers on parking provision in new developments has been produced in conjunction with the local planning authorities. This guide aims to ensure that developers fully consider the implications of parking and the positive effects this can have on other modes of transport. The County Council's recent 'Parking Provision for New Developments' document provides for enhanced standards of disabled parking provision.

4.3 ACCESSIBILITY IMPLICATIONS OF LTP STRATEGIES & POLICIES

Nottinghamshire County Council's Bus Strategy 2003 and emerging Countywide Rail Strategy set out how the authority will improve accessibility in North Nottinghamshire through public transport improvements; both plans will be revised and submitted with the full Local Transport Plan in March 2006. This revision will allow a fuller picture of people's needs, built up through the accessibility planning process, to inform the development of these strategies which are at the heart of ensuring people can reach jobs and services.

The Cycling and Walking Strategies and Rights of Way Improvement Plan also have a vital role to play in helping people get to more local facilities and opportunities, and for allowing travel at minimal cost. Awareness-raising and behaviour-change plans, in the form of the Smarter Choices strategy, will ensure that people have the information they need to make the most appropriate travel choice.

4.4 BUS STRATEGY

Buses provide access to vital services such as education, shopping, healthcare and employment for those without access to private transport. Nottinghamshire County Council published its first statutory bus strategy in 2003 under section 110 of the Transport Act 2000. Although this document has served the County well, it has been revised to bring it into line with the five year review cycle for Local Transport Plans (LTPs). The Bus Strategy for North Nottinghamshire is, like this Accessibility Strategy, an accompanying document to the North Nottinghamshire LTP, and will run for a five year period from April 2006 to March 2011.

The Bus Strategy provides a framework for investment in, and action to improve, the bus network over the next five years. It plays a major role in delivering the LTP objective of improving accessibility.

Aims and objectives

The County Council aims in partnership with bus operators and other stakeholders to develop and maintain a public transport system that is comprehensive, reliable and punctual, quick, fully integrated, high quality, affordable, easy to understand, accessible and safe.

A number of barriers to bus travel, and therefore barriers to making it easier for people to get to where they need to get to, have been identified. The objectives of the Bus Strategy will help to address these obstacles:

	Bus Strategy objective	Addressing obstacles
1	Maintain and extend the local bus network to maximise accessibility and choice	Maximising the coverage of the network with relation to geographical extent, time, frequency, and connectivity with value for money in mind
2	Improve the quality of the services themselves	Working towards high quality bus services in order to attract users through service reliability and punctuality, length of journey, vehicle quality and accessibility, and driver standards of customer care
3	Improve bus infrastructure	Providing quality and well-maintained facilities where people wait for buses, including bus stops, bus interchanges, and multi-modal interchanges
4	Reduce the relative cost of bus travel and improve ticketing	Reducing the relative cost of bus travel, in part by maintaining the concessionary travel scheme, to ensure affordability to those on low incomes and an attractive alternative for car drivers. Integrated ticketing, particularly enabled by smartcard, will also help remove the additional costs and inconvenience associated with changing services
5	Improve information and the marketing of bus services	Improving information provision, reflecting costs and users' preferences. Formats include roadside timetables and bus stop flags, printed leaflets and other paper-based information, telephone and internet-based and real-time information, and face-to-face and personalised information

	Bus Strategy objective	Addressing obstacles
6	Improve personal security	Increasing feelings of security for users and potential users of bus services through measures such as CCTV on buses and at waiting facilities, and lighting at bus stops

Social inclusion and promoting equality is one of the driving principles of the strategy. Improved bus services can contribute greatly to improving the accessibility of jobs and services to people experiencing, or at risk of, social exclusion, and consequently lie at the heart of the North Nottinghamshire LTP.

North Nottinghamshire contains significant levels of social deprivation, as identified in the 'Social Need in Nottinghamshire 2004' study. Achieving social inclusion is an important objective for the County Council, and for many other local partners. Major problems still exist to the west of the county with the legacy of the decline of the coalfields and the impact this has had on employment, skill levels and environment. Rural isolation in the north-east has its own problems of access to jobs, education and services. The north-west combines problems of rural isolation, the decline of heavy industry and the poor quality of its environment. In the east, relative prosperity and a good quality environment are marred by pockets of deprivation.



Picture 4.1 Lighting at bus stops can address personal security issues

Social need exists not just geographically, but also with specific groups. These include the elderly and those with physical and learning disabilities, many of whom fall within the scope of social services provision, and others such as ethnic minorities.

In the prioritisation of funding for bus services and infrastructure, a balance needs to be struck between that which promotes accessibility and that which tackles congestion and modal shift. Although both are important objectives, in North Nottinghamshire providing improved accessibility will be the top priority.

The LTP and Bus Strategy aim to tackle social exclusion in its widest sense. The authority's pioneering local bus performance framework guides the County Council's use of revenue funding to support bus services. This uses the Index of Multiple Deprivation and car ownership as major criteria in funding decisions on which bus services can be supported, and is discussed further in chapter 5. The framework has been complemented by a strong emphasis within the LTP on the provision of accessible vehicles, a programme to install raised kerbs at bus stops, and the production of public transport information that is accessible to all including those who are sight impaired or who cannot read English.

For those who cannot take advantage of the bus network, the County Council also supports community transport providers which operate in many areas, and operates a dial-a-ride service which provides specialist transport for those with more severe mobility problems.

For many the cost of transport contributes to social isolation. The County Council together with Districts operates a highly regarded concessionary travel scheme that is considerably more comprehensive than the statutory minimum, and enables the elderly and disabled to travel (from 1 April 2006) free of charge. It also offers discounted travel for some students.

Funding

Revenue and capital funding must be sustained in parallel. Capital investment without adequate revenue funding would lead to an inability to maintain the investment, and also reduce accessibility. Conversely capital funding is essential to achieve step changes in the quality of bus infrastructure. There are choices to be made between investment which provides accessibility benefits, and that which helps to tackle congestion and modal shift.

Revenue funding to support socially necessary bus services tends to provide accessibility benefits by enabling high dependency but low demand services to be provided (e.g. to rural villages). By contrast congestion relief requires the displacement of significant numbers of people from cars onto other modes of transport including bus services, and this demand will often be met on a commercial basis rather than requiring revenue funding.

The investment of capital funds can be either into schemes which promote congestion (e.g. bus lanes, improved infrastructure, real time passenger information along high volume transport corridors) or those which promote accessibility (e.g. investment in bus shelters, improved information, and facilities for disabled passengers across the whole network) and social inclusion.

The County Council has significantly increased its revenue support for conventional bus services, voluntary car schemes and community transport schemes particularly in rural areas. This has enabled the wider network to be maintained and enhanced.

Strategy and actions

Maintain and extend the local bus network

The extent and frequency of bus service provision in rural areas puts the County well above the national average for the Rural White Paper rural accessibility target. It is estimated that 80% of conventional bus services are operated commercially, although the extent of commercial bus service provision across the county varies. There are significant areas of the county where all the services are provided by the supported bus network indicating that without County support these communities would be without a bus service. Further information on the extent of the public transport network and the positive effect that support from Nottinghamshire County Council has on accessibility, particularly in rural areas, is included in chapter 5.

It is recognised that there are still a number of commercial services that operate in rural areas, and care should always be taken that they are not undermined by initiatives intended to improve accessibility or choice in outlying areas. This would be to the disbenefit of the operator and the local authority who may be left with a deregistered service.

Although Nottinghamshire County Council provides a high level of revenue funding support compared to many local authorities in the UK, it is not possible to continuously increase the local bus budget in this way in the future. The County Council has therefore been highly innovative in trying to meet the additional demand in other ways, for example by:

- introducing a Performance Management Framework for bus services, designed to ensure that the funding available for public transport support can be used in the most cost effective way possible to achieve the greatest benefit
- trialling more flexible demand responsive transport services such as the Ashfield Lynx (which serves King's Mill hospital) and Sherwood Sweeper
- increasing investment in the community transport sector, both financially and in terms of advice and support. The authority currently supports 10 community minibus and 13 voluntary car schemes with a total subsidy of around £190k a year, from a total budget of around £230k. This initiative has been supplemented by the work of the Rural Transport Partnership which has enabled a joined up approach with the enablers and providers.
- Setting up in April 2005 the Nottinghamshire Integrated Transport Centre (NITC), an integrated booking and journey planning system for social services dial-a-ride, special needs and demand responsive transport services. The centre uses the latest route planning software and provides a single point of contact for the users
- Co-ordinating and integrating local bus and school transport to ensure that the best use of resources is achieved.
- Reviewing the £860k Rural Bus Subsidy Grant to ensure it is used to improve access in the most needy areas.



Picture 4.2 Local branding of a supported service

Actions to be taken forward through the Bus Strategy which particularly focus on improving accessibility are:

- Implementation of the bus performance framework and promoting the Bus Quality Partnership initiative.
- Continually review our supported bus network through our Local Bus Performance Management Framework (which is based on cost per passenger, number of passengers, journey purpose, and availability of alternatives, the Index of Multiple Deprivation and availability of car). This will ensure efficient use of the limited funds, with maximum output.
- In particular, review the services funded by Rural Bus Subsidy Grant to ensure it is aligned with our accessibility strategy, provides access to key services and ensures efficient use of this valuable resource.
- Build accessibility planning core indicators into the prioritisation process, so that we achieve the best accessibility outcome with the revenue funding available.
- Market supported services with the greatest potential to grow in order to increase patronage and income. This will reduce subsidy requirements and release funds for reinvestment elsewhere within the supported service network.
- Wherever possible and cost effective to do so, secure supported services on a "minimum subsidy" basis in order to provide the operator with an incentive to improve the service and grow the market.
- Consider opportunities for using LTP capital funding to purchase or enhance vehicles in order to reduce the revenue cost of providing a subsidised service.
- Seek external funding to pump prime new services or to enhance existing provision. In particular we will use external funding to enable the provision of better bus access to Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield (RHADS).
- Through the accessibility and land use planning processes, seek to locate new development along public transport corridors. In addition, where appropriate, and subject to new guidance on the proposed Planning-gain Supplement, we will secure funding through s106 planning

agreements, based on the Authority's ground-breaking Interim Transport Planning Statement, to subsidise bus services.

- Continue to seek innovative and new ways to provide accessibility where traditional local bus services cannot be justified financially. This includes demand responsive and community transport where this can provide a better cost effective solution.
- Work with other vehicle providers, such as health, social services and community transport, where it may be appropriate and efficient to use their resources to provide supported bus services.
- Develop the Nottinghamshire Integrated Transport Centre to include other services to ensure efficient use of vehicles and funding.
- Continue to work with the Rural Transport Partnership, currently under review following the end of Countryside Agency funding to find innovative solutions to transport issues in rural areas.
- Continue to use "de minimis" payments creatively to secure small operational improvements to otherwise commercial services

Improve the quality of the services themselves

Until recently there has been a lack of authoritative data on vehicle age and accessibility. To address this problem the County Council undertook a survey of operators to determine the percentage of the vehicle fleet that is accessible. This suggests that two-thirds of vehicles are either DiPTAC (Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee) or DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) compliant, and three-quarters of vehicles are under ten years old. Trent Barton, who runs services in North Nottinghamshire, has a fleet which is fully DDA compliant. It is hoped that a project to encourage provision of vehicles with accessible facilities will be initiated through grant aid by the County Council, and will be informed by the results of the survey. It is hoped that this will accelerate the achievement of full DDA compliance for buses in the plan area. Additional information on environmental standards was also sought through the survey, revealing that two-thirds of buses are of 1, 2 or 3 Euro standard engine type.

Nonetheless there is evidence to suggest that vehicle quality is poorer in North Nottinghamshire than (for example) in neighbouring Greater Nottingham, and that it is probably worse in supported services as compared to the commercial network. The costs of providing newer fleet are passed on to the authority in higher contract costs for supported bus services. A careful balance therefore needs to be made between the total number of routes which the County Council can support, and the quality of the buses running on them.

Actions to be taken forward include:

- Through the decriminalisation of traffic offences, greatly increase the effectiveness of enforcement of offences such as parking in bus lanes and bus stops.
- Consider use of LTP funds to purchase vehicles as a mechanism for improving vehicle standards within the supported service network, as well as a way to reduce costs and therefore improve frequency or network coverage.
- Introduce more 'Quality Bus Networks', such as the Bridgford Bus (in Greater Nottingham LTP area) integrating schools, local bus services and community bus services. This will not be a statutory BQP or bus quality contract, but instead a new approach to tendering for supported services which seeks to secure a provider for a local network rather than individual routes.
- Maintain and enhance inspection of the tendered network, working where necessary with the Vehicle Inspectorate, to ensure rigorous compliance with both contract conditions and legal requirements.
- Pilot free driver training courses for both the commercial and supported networks in issues such as awareness of the needs of people with learning disabilities.

- Improve information about bus services and payment options at bus stops to reduce delays.
- Continuously review the balance between quality and cost in subsidised provision, and work with contracted operators to achieve improved vehicle standards over time. Particular emphasis will be placed on developing a programme for compliance with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, and improving engine technology and maintenance to reduce air pollution.

Improve bus infrastructure

There is a need to tackle the backlog of investment in bus infrastructure with an investment programme which seeks to balance the needs of high quality commercial routes with those of the wider network. There is also a need to complement capital investment in new and improved infrastructure with revenue funding for ongoing maintenance.

Specific proposals include:

- Deliver a bus stop infrastructure investment programme which has been developed from a recent audit, adopting a hierarchy of standards of provision at different categories of stop, and setting out the programme of investment required to achieve these standards. There will be an emphasis, driven primarily by accessibility objectives, on bringing the entire network up to a minimum standard.
- Providing new poles, flags and timetable cases at all bus stops in North Nottinghamshire by 2011, and to replace 86 bus shelters which have reached the end of their operational life by 2011, with specific focus on the needs of people with disabilities, partly to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act and access to services.
- Proposals for the major bus stations in North Nottinghamshire will be pursued as part of this investment programme, including Mansfield Bus Station (the proposed Major Scheme within the LTP2), reconstructing Retford Bus Station, influencing the commercial redevelopment of Newark Bus Station, and considering what other improvement measures can be made at the major interchanges in Worksop and Sutton.
- Further investment at rail-bus interchanges to ensure effective inter-modal integration.
- The County Council will formally assume legal ownership of all existing roadside infrastructure (by agreement with bus operators), and place them under a renewed maintenance contract. This will enhance accessibility by improving the waiting environment for passengers.



Picture 4.3 Quality rural bus stop

Reduce the relative cost of bus travel and improve ticketing

Fare levels and a lack of integrated ticketing within North Nottinghamshire are a significant constraint on accessibility for some people on lower incomes. There are barriers to interchange both between commercial operators, and between the commercial and supported networks, which need to be addressed. The County Council's ability to influence fare levels is legally very constrained, but the implementation of the Nottinghamshire concessionary travel scheme is an example of how the authority can address fare levels. It helps to address accessibility problems caused by fare levels for people over 60 and the disabled:

- *Before April 2006:* Benefits are currently provided across the County area for 90,000 elderly and 4,000 disabled people. At present the scheme is jointly funded by the District and County Councils and costs £2.5m per year – significantly in excess of the resources provided by government for the statutory minimum scheme.
- *After April 2006:* The scheme will be improved further from April 2006 to offer free bus travel across the county. The scheme will operate after 9.30am Monday to Friday, and all day at weekends or on public holidays. Other features of the scheme include free off-peak tram travel, and half fare travel on trains and community transport at all times. The new County-wide free scheme will cost in excess of £7m per annum, through statutory and additional discretionary funding. This sustains the historic arrangement to provide a scheme in excess of the statutory minimum, which from April 2006 is free travel within district boundaries. Evidence from Wales suggests that take-up of concessionary travel passes is certain to increase as a result of the new scheme, for which approximately 160,000 people in Nottinghamshire are eligible.

The use of smartcard technology as part of the DfT's Legacy '*freedomcard*' ITSO Migration Project to underpin the concessionary travel scheme offers major opportunities to design and deliver integrated ticketing in the North Nottinghamshire area. Although this can be done without smartcards, the use of ITSO-compliant smartcard infrastructure, including back-office systems, will make the task significantly easier.

Actions include:

- Promote the new concessionary travel scheme to improve takeup and usage.
- Continue to develop smartcard, and migrate "*freedomcard*" (the Nottinghamshire smartcard) to ITSO from January 2007.
- Develop and introduce integrated ticketing products where there is a customer demand in North Nottinghamshire.
- Promote the greater use of off bus sales and encourage the bus operators to introduce simple fare structures.
- In relation to the relative costs of car use, the County Council will continue to work with District Councils on the level and cost of car parking provision in town centres.

Improve information and the marketing of bus services

Evidence suggests that whilst electronic information, and increasingly service leaflets, are widely available, there is still a lack of accurate, high quality information at bus stops. This is partly a result of the lack of available infrastructure, which LTP funds can help to address, but also suggests increased effort is required by bus operators to make full use of the infrastructure that is available by supplying service information at stops where display cases are provided. The Bus Strategy will address this, particularly at bus stops. Emphasis will also be placed on other aspects of information provision, particularly electronic, to ensure its accuracy and availability for those who wish to use it.

The County Council has developed a marketing strategy, "NottsBus", for specific supported local bus services.

Proposals include:

- Revise the Nottinghamshire Local Bus Information Strategy by April 2007, with a separate strategy for North Nottinghamshire
- By 2011 provide and maintain bus stop flags and timetable cases at every stop in North Nottinghamshire, and ensure that high quality information is displayed within these facilities in accordance with the Nottinghamshire Local Bus Information Strategy.
- Ensure comprehensive provision of service leaflets for individual bus services by operators.
- Maintain and promote the bus services database for the Traveline enquiry services and the County's online journey planner.

- Work with other transport authorities and bus operators to develop real time information including the use of new mobile technologies.
- Increase personalised travel planning and direct information to homes and businesses.
- Market supported bus services in accordance with the NottsBus marketing strategy, focusing in particular on those services which have the greatest capacity to grow and increase their patronage, together with a more general marketing campaign.
- In conjunction with this, strongly promote the use of buses in Workplace Travel Plans, School Travel Plans, and other promotional campaigns and initiatives.

Improving personal security

There is a perception that using buses can be unsafe from a personal security point of view, which can reduce accessibility by effectively making certain services unavailable to people afraid of crime or anti-social behaviour. Whilst actual crime levels do not support this perception, it is nevertheless important to work to allay this fear.

CCTV is becoming widely, and successfully, used by bus operators across the country as a deterrent, but also to prevent vandalism. The cost of the equipment is quickly offset by the reduction in costs to repair damage, and is therefore good value for money. As part of a project to improve behaviour on school buses Nottinghamshire County Council currently have 36 vehicles fitted with CCTV, with a further 38 to be fitted by the end of March 2006. The County Council also has a programme of introducing lighting at bus stops, and is piloting the use of solar-powered lighting as a low cost and environmentally sensitive solution in rural locations.

Measures include:

- Resist calls for bus shelters to be removed as a response to antisocial behaviour, but seek to deal with the issue in other ways in partnership with the police and the local community
- Continue with the program of installing CCTV on school and local bus services, and providing CCTV at major bus stations and interchanges as part of the rebuild and refurbishment programme.
- Where possible install lighting at bus stops as part of the programme of investment in infrastructure. In addition, the Authority will continue to test the effectiveness of solar power at bus stops in rural locations as a low-cost and environmentally sensitive solution.
- Apply rigorous standards for repairing damage and vandalism at bus stops.
- Develop a public awareness initiative, modelled on the Respect for Transport campaign in Greater Nottingham, which promotes responsible behaviour on public transport services.
- Particular effort will be applied at working with police and bus operators in areas such as Mansfield where bus services play an important role in supporting the developing night-time economy.

4.5 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT STRATEGY

For those who cannot take advantage of the bus network, the County Council also supports community transport providers which operate in many areas, and operates a dial-a-ride service which provides specialist transport for those with more severe mobility problems. In recent years, the County Council has significantly increased its revenue funding support for conventional bus services, and voluntary and community transport schemes particularly in rural areas. This has enabled the wider network to be maintained and enhanced.

The authority currently supports 10 community minibus and 13 voluntary car schemes with a total subsidy of around £190k a year, from a total budget of around £230k. This initiative has been supplemented by the work of the Rural Transport Partnership (RTP) which has enabled a joined up approach with the enablers and providers. The RTP's partnership working and funding arrangements will change from April 2006 and will adopt an approach which complements the objectives of the Accessibility Strategy.

In April 2005 the authority established the Nottinghamshire Integrated Transport Centre (NITC), an integrated booking and journey planning system for social services dial-a-ride, special needs and demand responsive transport services. The centre uses the latest route planning software and provides a single point of contact for the users.

Nottinghamshire's draft Community Transport Strategy contains actions to meet the following five objectives:

- Improve access to health: joining up access to health services particularly for return journeys, enhancing recognition of volunteer drivers' identity cards at hospitals, providing transport to hospital information booklets, setting up prescription collection services, and allowing concessions for trips to hospital appointments
- Integration: linking community and mainstream transport, better information on transport choices, awareness raising for transport providers, including community transport information on Traveline, introducing transport brokerage for health trips
- Recruitment: changing the image of volunteering, mapping volunteers by Accession and registration through Nottinghamshire County Council, concentrated recruitment campaigns in areas with few volunteers
- Standardisation: IT software for car schemes, set up regional community transport officers' network, MIDAS training for minibuss drivers, training for taxi and car drivers
- Increase awareness: information on community transport provision, volunteer awareness and recognition, increase networking for schemes.

Nottinghamshire's strategy for community transport will continue to seek innovative and new ways to provide accessibility where traditional local bus services cannot be justified financially. This includes demand responsive and community transport where these modes can provide a more cost effective solution. The authority will continue to support community transport providers, both community minibusses and voluntary car schemes, in both financial terms, and in the form of advice and other support such as free MIDAS training for volunteer drivers.

Gaps currently exist between eligibility for hospital transport (which is evaluated on the basis of ill-health), and community transport schemes which do not cover some health trips. Some people falling into this gap in provision, such as certain people with mobility problems or the elderly, find it very difficult to access hospitals because of the absence of suitable public transport or being unable to walk to the bus stop. Consideration will be given to expanding existing community transport to address this.

The Countywide dial-a-ride service will continue to support those whose disabilities prevent them from using mainstream public transport, community transport, or other sorts of transport provision. The authority will also consider working with other vehicle providers, such as health, social services and community transport, where it may be appropriate and efficient to use their resources to provide supported bus services.

4.6 RAIL STRATEGY

Rail has a strong role to play in improving accessibility. There are 20 stations in North Nottinghamshire. They are predominantly rural, and serve settlements of widely varying sizes. For their respective catchment areas they serve a vital purpose, providing connections and accessibility to all the facilities of the main urban areas, most particularly employment, hospitals, higher and further educational institutions, and leisure facilities.

Improving accessibility for disadvantaged communities was at the heart of the Council's case for promoting the re-opening the Robin Hood Line from Worksop to Nottingham from 1993 onwards, for which the County was the lead authority. The project was developed following the devastating colliery closures in the north of the County in the early 1990s, and has been a great success. The line has achieved major economic, regeneration and transportation benefits and over 1 million journeys are recorded per annum. A 2003 survey revealed as many as 34% of

all journeys were to access work, with a very significant number from households without a car who would have had great difficulty accessing employment in Nottingham, as a major source of potential employment, without the rail service.

The Robin Hood Line is recognised as one of the most successful rail re-openings in England, and, although the County Council subsidised its operation until 2003, the service has now been wholly incorporated into the Central Trains franchise.

Elements of the emerging Countywide Rail Strategy most relevant to relieving congestion are explained in the LTP; these will also benefit accessibility.

Rail Quality Partnerships

The County Council has an important role to play in promoting and developing existing stations and services in the County. Small scale improvements to stations can significantly improve the environment for passengers to improve accessibility and encourage greater use of existing services.

An assessment has been made of all stations from which in excess of 10,000 journeys were generated during 2003/04, followed by site visits to identify opportunities at each station site. A focus on the following measures is likely to offer the most benefits for accessibility:

- measures for personal security, such as CCTV and improved lighting.
- improved information, including passenger information screens at stations.
- enhancing interchange with other modes, including bus, tram, car, taxis, walking and cycling, for which best practice guidance exists.
- rail information at bus stations and stops, and bus information at rail stations, consistent with the County's 'Strategy for the Provision of Information on Local Bus Services' (2003).
- good quality waiting facilities.
- promotion of integrated ticketing to ensure that rail services can be accessed easily and affordably through appropriate ticketing options.

Maximum value would be gained by developing partnerships with Train Operating Companies (TOCs), which might allow larger scale infrastructure renewals and improvements, such as enhanced provision for the disabled at stations such as Newark Northgate and Retford, to be secured.

The Council has a well-established practice of involving local people and communities in the development of its rail policy and practice. Many of the minor improvements to rail facilities over the first LTP period arose from suggestions made from local groups or individuals e.g. provision of toilets at Worksop; shelters, cycle lockers, and CCTV at Newark Castle; car parking at Fiskerton; and taxi contacts at Kirkby-in-Ashfield. It is not possible to say in advance exactly what suggestions local people may make over the coming 5-year LTP period, but the Council is committed to continuing to respond to such suggestions and to taking them forward wherever reasonably possible.

The Council will also assist in publicising and promoting new facilities, particularly those provided using LTP funds. The Council will continue to investigate small-scale improvements to rural stations, where accessibility standards may not be to the same levels as stations within the urban areas.

Alternative funding sources should also be investigated to bring added value to Rail Quality Partnerships. These might include the Regional Development Agency, Section 106 agreements and developer contributions, and heritage funding sources.

The rationale for the pattern of stops on local services is not always clear, and currently some relatively well-used stations, such as Collingham, have relatively few services, with many trains passing through non-stop even though they continue to stop at other very sparsely used stations.

Consultation has shown this to be a major concern to local people. Under the Rail Quality Partnerships, the Council will seek to review the service pattern to local stations within the LTP area, and press for increased stops at the busiest stations.

Improving physical access for disabled people

The Council will continue to promote improvements to rail infrastructure to assist people with disabilities. In March 2005, the Government announced that £370 million had been earmarked for accessibility improvements on the national rail network. A new 'Access for All' fund for physical and customer service improvements will run until 2015. The following stations in North Nottinghamshire are proposed by the SRA/DfT Rail for improvements through this fund:

- Mansfield: public announcement system
- Worksop: customer information system
- Newark Castle: to become fully staffed, i.e. to have platform staff available throughout the period of timetabled train services.

As part of the development of a Countywide Rail Strategy, North Nottinghamshire's stations will be assessed and prioritised for physical accessibility improvements.

In addition, GNER has announced that lifts will be installed at Newark North Gate by 2008.

Community Rail Lines and Partnerships

The Robin Hood Line and Barnetby-Retford lines were proposed for formal designation as Community Rail lines by the SRA's Strategy for Community Railways consultation paper (2004). In discussions with the SRA, the County Council recommended that these two lines be excluded from the first tranche of designations due to their characteristics. This was accepted by the SRA and they were not actually designated.

However, it is recognised that the designation of Community Rail Lines is a pragmatic approach to securing the future sustainability of rural and local railways, which will increase community involvement in the running of designated lines, and lead to improved accessibility through awareness of local need, and eventually, enhanced patronage.

In mid-2005 the Grantham-Skegness line, part of the Nottingham-Skegness line which passes through the LTP area, was designated as one of the pilot Community Rail Lines. Nottinghamshire County Council will liaise with their Community Rail Officer to explore the possibility of mirroring certain aspects of the Community Rail approach in the Nottinghamshire stretches of the line.

In addition the Council has had some initial discussions with local people about the possibility of establishing a Community Rail Partnership (CRP) for the Nottingham - Newark - Lincoln line. A CRP does not involve formal designation as a Community Rail Line, but rather it is a partnership, driven by the local community. Experience of CRPs elsewhere has shown they can provide opportunities for local involvement in the promotion and development of the rail service, making the rail service more responsive to local needs and thereby leading to increased usage. It is inherent in a CRP that it should be driven by the local community not a local authority, but the County Council will explore how it can most appropriately support the local people who wish take a CRP forward.

Robin Hood Line half-hourly and Sunday service

In 2002, an additional Robin Hood Line half hourly off-peak service was introduced on Mondays to Fridays, complementing the Saturday pattern. This followed a bid to the Rail Passenger Partnership fund operated by the SRA. These off-peak services have been well used, and the provision of this service has been confirmed through to the end of the existing Central Trains franchise in 2007. It is a high priority to secure the inclusion of the service within the minimum service specification for the new franchise.

Robin Hood Line services, including the Saturday and off-peak services, carry around a million passengers per annum, and average load factors are above the average for other East Midlands local services. This shows the strong demand and need for the services, yet currently the last train leaves Nottingham at 21.05 and there is no Sunday service. Thus, a further high priority for the County Council is to secure the introduction of a Sunday service and late evening services on the Robin Hood line. A final issue is the desirability of some through services from Mansfield to London, at least in the peak periods.

The Council will press for these enhancements to be included in the new East Midlands franchise, and will undertake evaluations of the business cases for these initiatives with the future train operator for the service.

Rail access to Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield (RHADS)

RHADS at Finningley in South Yorkshire opened in April 2005. A limited passenger service operates on the adjacent Doncaster to Gainsborough line and the developer is proposing to build a rail station on the line to serve the airport. This would initially be an 'on-line' two-platform design, located on the existing Doncaster-Lincoln line, connected to the terminal by a shuttle bus.

The South Yorkshire Draft Rail Strategy (November 2004) identifies the development of a rail spur into the site, which would deliver rail access directly into the airport terminal, as a medium to long term priority. Improved links to the airport will be important to provide access to employment opportunities for residents in the north of the County and the Council will therefore continue to support rail to complement improved bus services from the north of the County to the airport. A further medium-term action is for the developer to consider the implications of a possible Parkway station on the East Coast Main Line.

Any service from Worksop via Gainsborough to Robin Hood Airport at Finningley and Doncaster would, at the present slow line-speeds, have very unattractive journey times, which would also have a detrimental effect on the viability of such services. However, in consultation with them, the local business community has articulated a demand for such a service. When the track is renewed - which is likely to be after this LTP period - there will be an opportunity for Network Rail to increase line-speeds, and the Council will press for this to happen as soon as it can be cost-effectively done, so as to facilitate a future service.

Taxis

The County Council recognises the role that taxis have in an integrated transport system. During the last five years the County Council has worked closely with taxi groups in rural partnership work and through the Mobility Management Action Area (MMAA) programme, which focused on market towns and district centres.

Through this work the Council has developed and supported a variety of initiatives. These schemes include the Fare Ride pilot taxi voucher service offering flexible transport in rural areas, and working in partnership with taxi groups and district licensing officers to install CCTV in Hackney carriages, which will improve safety and encourage taxis to serve the night time economy. The Council is also undertaking wider feasibility work, such as considering the benefits and limitations of allowing taxis to use bus lanes.

The LTP aims to build on these solid foundations of partnership working to further develop the role of taxis in the overall transport system.

4.7 CYCLING AND WALKING STRATEGY AND RIGHTS OF WAY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Cycling and walking may often be the most cost-effective and convenient mode of transport for certain population groups to given destinations (e.g. for jobseekers without physical disabilities to nearby employment zones) whereas for others they will not be appropriate (such

as for many people in accessing health care). However, consultation and studies have identified a number of issues people regard as obstacles to cycling and walking, including risk and perceived risk of injury, severance of routes, personal safety and fear of crime, poor route condition, poor image of these modes, weather, journey length, and air and noise pollution.

Accessibility planning needs to ensure, where possible, that people can access jobs and services by walking and cycling - by improving routes and facilities, maintaining them in a more usable condition, improving Rights of Way in both urban and rural areas, and making routes safer, more secure, and more attractive. Local accessibility assessments and associated indicators will allow decisions to be made on the prioritisation of funds to support cycling and walking related actions, and to monitor their effectiveness in terms of improving accessibility.

Cycling and walking strategy

Cycling and walking are everyday, mainstream forms of transport that contribute to the economic well being and quality of life. Virtually everyone is a pedestrian at some stage of the day. Two-thirds of journeys are less than 5 miles in length, which is an ideal cycling distance, and many journeys made for employment, leisure, education, daily living or health reasons can be made effectively by walking or cycling. These modes are also low-cost; running a car on a low income can reinforce social exclusion because of the disproportionate amount of income it requires to maintain, although it is recognised that some journeys to less accessible locations can realistically only be made by car.

The strategy for cycling and walking is detailed in the full Local Transport Plan. In summary the programme of improvements covers:

- quality of footway provision
- encouraging greater provision of on-carriageway facilities in urban areas
- linking improvements to the National Cycle Network
- provision of crossings
- evaluating pedestrianised areas
- roundabout style
- reallocation of roadspace
- rural facilities and leisure walking
- integration with public transport
- maintenance of routes
- mapping aspirations for cycling
- reviewing parking.



Picture 4.4 Footway, cycle lane and road - good use of road space.

The strategy also explains the links to health, and details how marketing and education will promote walking and cycling, and how developer contributions will be negotiated in order to provide good links to and around new developments. It is vital that pedestrian and cycle provision is direct, safe and high quality. Those with mobility problems who use a wheelchair or motorised scooter also use pedestrian facilities.



Picture 4.5 Effective shared use facilities

Examples of policies and practices that tackle social exclusion include the Cycle Design Guide, which is used by highway officers, developers, planning officers, local politicians and community and voluntary groups to ensure that the facilities are built properly and in the right place from the outset, and Ridewise, a cycle training company in Nottingham which enables people who have not ridden a bike before or who are 'rusty' to build up the skills needed to ride safely and confidently in modern traffic conditions. The Non Motorised Road User Audit System and Highway Network Management Plan ensure the needs of pedestrians are met in highway projects.

Nottinghamshire County Council intends to produce a detailed design manual for pedestrian facilities for use by highway and transport officers, developers, planning authorities, local politicians, and community groups.

Accession enables the authority to assess the areas of the county affected by poor walking and cycling facilities and identify the worst affected so that resources can be directed to the most serious problems first. It also allows proposals to be checked in line with accessibility planning principles.

Rights of Way

Nottinghamshire County Council's pilot Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) sets out a series of policies designed to ensure that access to the network is maintained and, where possible, enhanced. A detailed explanation of the developing ROWIP, which has identified the condition, use and demand of the rights of way network in Nottinghamshire, can be found in the Local Transport Plan. Through surveys and consultation exercises, five key areas of work have been set out:

- ascertaining the needs and demands of different users
- assessing the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of recreation and enjoyment of the authority's area
- considering the accessibility of local rights of way for blind and partially sighted people and others with mobility problems
- reviewing the relationship of the ROWIP to plans, strategies and other documents
- reviewing existing internal policies.

The themes and priorities of accessibility planning clearly dovetail with several of the ROWIP areas; an improved rights of way network will mean people are more able to access jobs, education, leisure, essential services, health, and enjoy a better quality of life.

ROWIP proposes a mechanism – referred to as the Countryside Accessibility Index – that can be used to identify areas of poor accessibility, which can be linked to quality of life issues such as health and fear of crime. The plan proposes to identify all key routes linking the urban fringe to countryside sites and provide new or improved easy access routes at these locations. It also

aims to locate and map the relevant factors associated with poor accessibility and use this data to target resources. Footpaths serving areas of high social need will be ranked higher in the process of securing funding for improvement works.

4.8 SMARTER CHOICES

As well as reducing congestion, the Smarter Choices agenda aims to give people real travel choices. A detailed discussion of behaviour change initiatives can be found in the North Nottinghamshire LTP. Its programmes include:

- school, workplace and personalised travel planning
- improving public transport information and marketing
- setting up web sites for car share schemes and supporting car clubs
- encouraging teleworking and teleconferencing.



Picture 4.6 A successful school travel plan

All of these measures can be seen as positively affecting accessibility to jobs and essential services, and should be tailored to deliver Smarter Choices-related initiatives at appropriate times within local accessibility action plans. A summary of the contribution that Smarter Choices work can make to improving accessibility is explained here.

Workplace travel plans

Nottinghamshire County Council has had its own travel plan (STEPS) since 1996. The experience it has gained over the past decade enables it to share that experience and best practice with businesses, organisations and people around the country. Nottinghamshire County Council is a leading member of professional organisations (e.g. ACT) and disseminates and receives best practice around the country. That knowledge base ensures companies, education, health services, developers and individuals have the most comprehensive information available to allow them to access employment, goods and services.

Accession can be used to identify areas where people have certain skill levels which can be matched with corresponding job opportunities, and evaluate whether transport networks meets this need. This can be of particular help where an employer has recruitment difficulties, or where areas of high unemployment have challenges in accessing suitable employment. Adjustments to bus services to improve accessibility to employment centres can be evaluated and reality-checked using Accession.

The authority will continue to build and expand the successful workplace travel plan grant scheme TransACT in partnership with Nottingham City Council and business groups. The scheme provides advice, guidance and funding to companies working to reduce sole car journeys, with consequent accessibility benefits.

A Local Accessibility Action Plan for using workplace travel plans as a tool for improving accessibility, and how this was reflected in Nottinghamshire's pilot accessibility planning work in Bassetlaw, is contained in chapter 7.

Personalised travel planning

Personalised travel planning uses national transport planning services such as Travelwise and Transport Direct to provide people with specific information about any journey. Cycle and walking maps, specific bus timetables and links to knowledgeable organisations and individuals provide travel information directly relevant to an individual. The concept can be extended to Job Centres,

employers and service providers so they can provide tailored travel information relevant to a person looking for work or attending a hospital. The strategy contained within the LTP includes partnership working with development control and planners to integrated the funding for personalised travel planning into planning conditions, specifically residential travel plans. This might allow conditions to be built into planning permissions to ensure that people have relevant travel information when they first move to an area, before they develop travel habits.

School travel plans

The authority has a target of 80% of schools in Nottinghamshire to have a school travel plan by 2010. School travel plans help to improve accessibility to schools, improve road safety around school, as well as encouraging cycling and walking as a component of a healthier lifestyle, reducing car journeys and congestion, and improving air quality. The development of a school travel plan is recommended as a condition of planning permission on all new and improved school building work to ensure that alternative travel to the car is considered as part of the development.

Further information on this programme of activity can be seen in chapter 7 of this document, and in the Local Transport Plan.