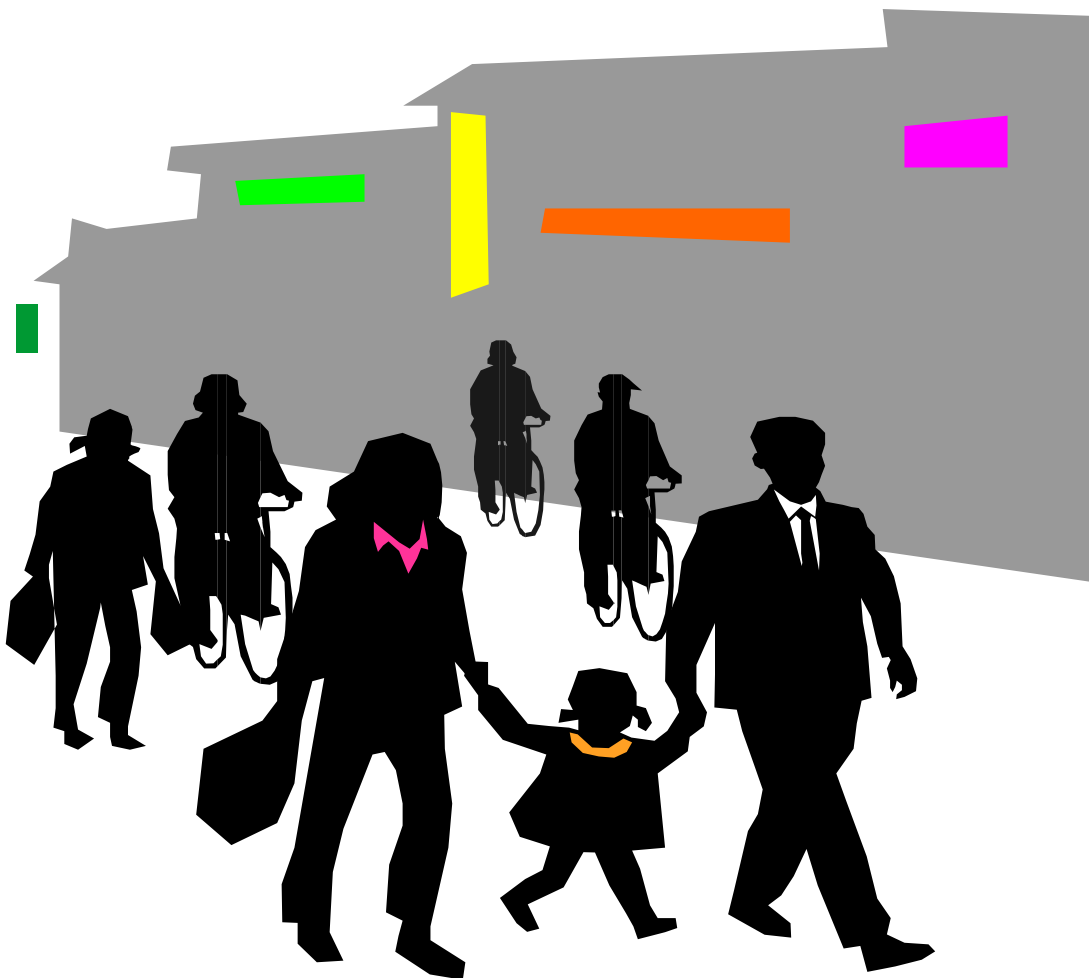




# Home to School Transport



## Select Committee Report

March 2006





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## Foreword

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The Select Committee has worked hard in order to cover all aspects of our Terms of Reference and in so doing offers for consideration improvement to existing procedures concerning Home to School transport.

We have been required to meet frequently in order to meet our schedule for witness interviews. We feel that we would have been able to accumulate more detailed knowledge if video conferencing facilities had been available within each County Council.

We have also taken into consideration the Government White Paper on Education that contained some proposed changes to Home to School transport.

The report contains details of an opportunity for KCC to make a "step change" in the treatment of Home to School Transport. We consider that this could qualify for Government support through "Pathfinder Authority" status.

Mr John Law, Chairman of the Select Committee



# 1. Executive Summary

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## 1.1 Committee Membership

1.1.1 The Select Committee consists of eight Members of Kent County Council (KCC): five Members of the Conservative Party, two Labour and one Liberal Democrat. The Members agreed to co-opt the Reverend Canon J. Smith (Church of England), representing both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church.



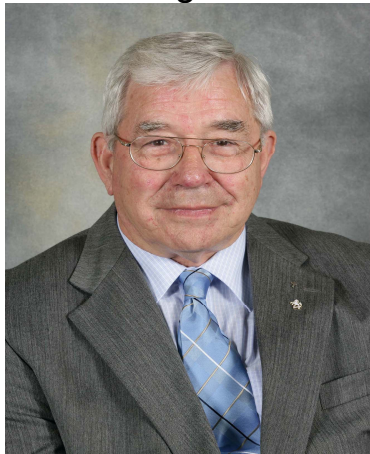
Mr. R. Burgess



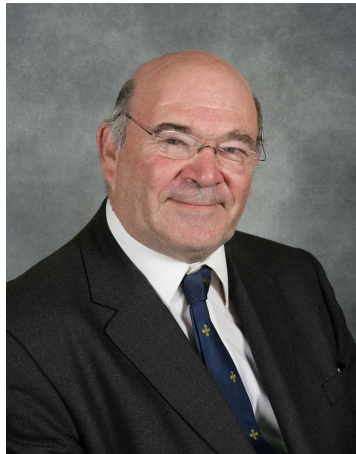
Mrs. T. Dean



Mr. C. Hart



Mr. B. Hayton



Mr. G. Horne



Mr. I. Jones



Mr. J. Law



Mr. C. Wells



Mr. M. Vye

## **1.2 Terms of Reference**

1.2.1 This Home to School Transport Select Committee generally considered whether the provision of home to school transport services in Kent could be more efficient and effective in economic, social and environmental terms. This task was carried out by:-

- (a) Investigating methods of student movement that could result in significant reductions in the use of personal cars for home to school transport
- (b) Considering how different options could affect home to school transport provision by Kent County Council
- (c) Considering the use of technology systems to improve the flexibility and efficiency of home to school transport
- (d) Exploring home to school transport initiatives adopted by other authorities in the UK and by other countries.

## **1.3 Scope**

1.3.1 The breadth and complexity of these issues required a clear and focused approach. More specific themes and aspects the Committee covered are detailed below:-

- (a) Reduction in the use of personal cars for home to school transport:-
  - (i) Look at alternative means of transport to school including cycling, car sharing, rail and walking buses
  - (i) Determine the logistic and financial feasibility of using yellow buses in Kent as means of school transport
- (b) Options for home to school transport provision:-
  - (i) Explore the option of staggering starting and finishing times of Primary and Secondary schools
  - (ii) Consider the integration of school transport provision with other service providers
  - (iii) Determine the viability of expanding Kent's in house bus fleet
  - (iv) Explore the issues around the discretionary provision of free school transport



(c) Use of technology:-

- (i) Look at opportunities for school transport cross-border cooperation with neighbouring authorities by adopting one database
- (ii) Consider the use of an intelligent database for all school transport movements within Kent.

## **1.4 Exclusions**

- 1.4.1 Due to its limited timescale, the Committee agreed not to cover Home to School Transport issues related to pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN).

## **1.5 Scene Setting**

- 1.5.1 The Committee received both oral and written evidence from a variety of stakeholders, including representatives of bus companies, headteachers, officers both of Kent County Council and of other authorities, and students. Due to the limited timescale, the Committee was unable to carry out a more encompassing investigation. A full list of witnesses who provided the Committee with oral evidence and written evidence are listed in Appendix 1.

- 1.5.2 There were a number of reasons for the establishment of this Select Committee. Kent County Council is responsible for the provision and quality of education within Kent. The education structure in Kent is vast. The total school population in maintained primary, secondary and special schools is 213,605. It includes 474 primary schools, 104 secondary schools, 28 special schools and 10 Pupil Referral Units.<sup>1 2</sup> An important task to be performed within this vast structure is the supply of efficient and effective school transport. Several Home to School Transport policy issues have not been investigated in detail for a number of years, and there was a need for them to be reviewed in order to ensure continuous improvement of education standards.

- 1.5.3 It also became apparent that a crucial aspect relating to school transport which deserved attention, together with more structural concerns, was the increasing number of personal cars used by adults to transport pupils to school. The results are increasingly alarming in terms of traffic congestion and environmental degradation. The Committee believed that more sustainable means of transport needed serious consideration.

- 1.5.4 Kent County Council has a strategic function and a community leadership role to perform in improving the quality of life for the residents of Kent. The exploration of diverse school transport related issues outlined above has resulted in a series of recommendations aimed at responding to the needs of the community in Kent.

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<sup>1</sup> Education and Libraries Strategic Plan, Kent County Council, 2004

<sup>2</sup> Accessibility Strategy for Kent, Kent County Council, 2006

## **1.6 Recommendations**

- 1. For Kent County Council to make the description and explanation of school transport rules in its school admission booklets more clear and accessible (Page 14).**
- 2. To consider the provision of online systems that supply school admission and transport information, and that enable electronic applications and payments (Page 14).**
- 3. To ensure continuous dialogue between Kent County Council and religious denominations in an effort to reflect more accurately the communities that denominational schools serve in the entitlement and provision of free home to school transport (Page 17).**
- 4. That in the interests of consistency consideration be given to free home to school transport for pupils specifically selected by aptitude to attend specialist schools (Page 17).**
- 5. That in the interests of consistency consideration be given to providing transport to the nearest single sex school if a preference is expressed by the parents (Page 17).**
- 6. To ensure additional legal support is available to Members when they exercise their discretion at the Regulation Committee Case Panel (Page 18).**
- 7. To consider younger siblings' eligibility for free transport when applying to a school that, although not their nearest appropriate, is the one to which the older sibling has been directed, therefore receiving free transport (Page 19).**
- 8. For Kent County Council to take lead responsibility in promoting walking bus initiatives. This includes: for KCC to make financial contributions to walking bus schemes; attract business sponsorship to help funding walking buses; encourage a greater involvement of Community Wardens in promoting walking buses at strategic and operational level (Page 26).**
- 9. To continue to support and promote initiatives and schemes aimed at encouraging safe cycling to school and at improving the quality of cycling networks and services in Kent (Page 28).**
- 10. For Kent County Council to enhance its involvement in organising, promoting and monitoring its own car sharing initiatives in order to increase the number of people using the scheme (Page 32).**
- 11. To maximise the use of the rail network, where available, for school transport purposes. (Page 33).**
- 12. To urge a stricter enforcement of parking regulations in schools' surroundings (Page 34).**

- 13. To ensure that Green Travel Plans are embodied in the planning stage before building new schools, which should include consultation with KCC Commercial Services (Page 35).**
- 14. For Kent County Council to gradually expand its bus fleet, where this can be done without unacceptable harm to the viability of commercially provided routes (Page 37).**
- 15. To promote the use of CCTV systems in all buses used for school transport provision in Kent and to encourage the provision of escorts in school buses (Page 39).**
- 16. To carry out further investigation, through bus companies and school clusters, into the staggering of starting and finishing times of primary and secondary schools in Kent in order to reduce car congestion and school transport costs (Page 41).**
- 17. To continue to monitor technical developments which may be of use in the provision of school transport to a higher appropriate standard (Page 44).**
- 18. To support the East Kent Direct Project in an effort to supply a more co-ordinated, integrated and efficient allocation of transport services which meet the needs of Kent residents (Page 45).**
- 19. To continue to support cross-border collaboration with neighbouring authorities, and to promote the initiative of a shared, co-ordinated transport database aimed at maximising the utilisation of school transport and at creating a more cost-effective transport system (Page 47).**
- 20. To explore the possibility of becoming a Pathfinder authority, by providing all students aged 11 to 16 years living in a selected area of Kent with an annual bus pass in order to evaluate bus usage and consequent reduction in car use (Page 53).**



## 2. Background Context

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### 2.1 Home to School Transport for Mainstream Pupils – Legislation

2.1.1 In order to make informed investigations about school transport issues, it is important to consider the current legislative context<sup>3</sup>.

2.1.2 Under the *Education Act* 1996:

- A parent has a duty to secure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil.
- The local authority currently has a duty to provide free transport for a child where the home to school walking distance measured by the nearest available route is:-
  1. Two miles or more for a child under eight.
  2. Three miles or more for a child over eight.

*(Although please note that changes may be brought about by the recently published White Paper “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All – More Choice for Parents and Pupils”, October 2005<sup>4</sup>. The implications of the White Paper in relation to Home to School Transport will be explored more in detail in Chapter 6).*

- The local authority has discretionary powers to provide transport to other pupils.

2.1.3 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that a child shall not be taken to have failed to attend regularly at the school if the parent proves that the school is not within walking distance of the child’s home and that no suitable arrangements have been made by the local authority for his/her transport to and from school.

2.1.4 This section defines “walking distances” as two miles for a child under eight and three miles for any other child measured by the nearest available route. It is a defence to a prosecution for not sending a child to school that the local authority has not complied with its duty of providing free transport.

2.1.5 Section 509 of the Education Act 1996 provides that:-

1. A local education authority shall make such arrangements for the provision of transport and otherwise as they consider necessary (or as the Secretary of State may direct) for the purpose of facilitating the attendance of pupils at schools and any transport provided in pursuance of such arrangements shall be provided free of charge.

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<sup>3</sup> Home to School Transport for Mainstream Pupils, Kent County Council, 2002

<sup>4</sup> White Paper “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All – More Choice for Parents and Pupils”, October 2005

2. A local education authority may pay the whole, or any part, as the authority think fit of the reasonable travelling expenses, of any pupil in attendance at any school for whose transport no arrangements are made under sub-section (1) above.
3. In considering whether or not they are required by sub-section (1) above to make arrangements in relation to a particular pupil, a local authority shall have regard (amongst other things):
  - (a) to the age of the pupil and the nature of the route or alternative routes, which he/she could reasonably be expected to take; and
  - (b) to any wish of his/her parent for him/her to be provided with education at a school or institution in which the religious education provided is that of the religion or denomination to which his/her parent adheres.

2.1.6 The Transport Act 1985 encourages local authorities to co-ordinate school and social service transport together with public transport, education and social service functions to co-operate with one another to obtain the best value for money from the expenditure on public transport, taken as a whole.

## **2.2 Policy**

2.2.1 Kent complies with the legislation outlined in the previous section and exercises discretionary policies in a number of areas.

2.2.2 The key features of Kent's policy, agreed by the Education Committee on 25 January 1994<sup>5</sup> are:-

1. To take a uniform approach based on the principle of the nearest appropriate school within a particular scheme of education.
2.
  - (a) In those parts of Kent where the selective schemes of education operate the issue of selection is taken into account when determining the nearest appropriate school. Pupils will be provided with transport either to the nearest grammar school or to the nearest high school according to his/her assessment. (Where schools have changed status from high to comprehensive they continue to attract free transport as if they had remained high schools).
  - (b) In those parts of Kent where the comprehensive schemes of education operate comprehensive schools are the nearest appropriate schools for the pupils of all abilities.
3. A discretionary policy with regard to denominational schools. The nearest denominational school can be regarded as the nearest appropriate school, subject to the certification from the appropriate

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<sup>5</sup> Education Committee, Kent County Council, 1994.

Church Authority that the pupil is of the same denomination and regularly attends church at the time of application.

This policy was reaffirmed by the Education and Libraries Committee on 18 October 1999<sup>6</sup>. This means that children who are practising members of the Church of England may receive free transport to the nearest appropriate Church of England School and children who are practising Roman Catholics may receive free transport to the nearest appropriate Roman Catholic School. Free transport is provided to such schools even if the school is located in a different scheme of education. (Kent does not normally provide free transport to schools out of the County on denominational grounds except where the Roman Catholic Schools in neighbouring Bexley are nearer for large groups of children than schools within the County).

4. That the nearest appropriate school policy does not take into account whether the school is a specialist school, single sex or mixed, (for example, parents are not able to obtain free transport for their daughter to a girls' school if this is further than the nearest appropriate mixed school).
5. A procedure for determining hazardous routes.

2.2.3 The policy outlined above exists within the broad framework of the legislation, and the two mile and three mile qualifying distances apply.

2.2.4 It is important to note that the DfE letter of 21 January 1994 states that: "The Secretary of State considers that, in general, the nearest "suitable" school for a 5-16 year old will be the maintained school closest to his/her home by the nearest available route which offers an efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs he/she may have".

2.2.5 This means that if the Nearest Appropriate School (NAS) as designated by KCC is not the geographically nearest school, free school transport must be offered to both schools.

## **2.3 16+ Transport**

2.3.1 Section 509 of the Education Act 1996 requires a local authority to treat 16+ students in schools and 16+ students in FE colleges equally.

2.3.2 There is no statutory duty to provide transport for students at school beyond statutory school age.

2.3.3 However, Kent's policy (since 1 September 1993) is to make a termly charge towards the cost of travel for all 16+ students who are attending their nearest appropriate school (or college) and who live more than three miles away. The charge is waived for students whose parents are in receipt of specific means-

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<sup>6</sup> Education and Libraries Committee, Kent County Council, 1999.

tested State benefits. 16+ transport was reviewed by the Case Sub-Committee on 27 November 1997<sup>7</sup>.

## **2.4 Vacant Seats Payment Scheme (VSPS)**

- 2.4.1 A local authority is allowed to make a reasonable charge for pupils who are not entitled to free transport but who wish to take advantage of spare seats on hired transport.
- 2.4.2 Kent makes a termly charge which must be paid before a ticket is issued; there are no exemptions from payment.
- 2.4.3 Parents are informed that where a seat is offered, under the VSPS, that it may have to be withdrawn at a later date if it is needed for a child who is entitled to free transport, or if it is decided to stop running the vehicle, or if it is decided to run a smaller vehicle.
- 2.4.4 The situation is reviewed termly and the number of spare seats available is very limited.

## **2.5 Appeals**

- 2.5.1 There is a two-stage appeal process for parents who are unhappy about a decision to refuse transport:-
  - 1. The Transport Officer
  - 2. The Regulation Committee Case Panel.
- 2.5.2 The role of the Regulation Committee Case Panel is:-
  - 1. To consider individual cases where parents are appealing against a decision.
  - 2. To consider appeals from parent(s) that particular routes should be deemed hazardous so that transport should be provided for pupils living less than the statutory distance from the nearest appropriate school.

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<sup>7</sup> Case Sub-Committee, Education and Libraries, Kent County Council, 1997.



### 3. Accessibility

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#### 3.1 Information for Parents

- 3.1.1 Kent's transport arrangements are set out in the booklets "Admission to Primary School in Kent"<sup>8</sup> and "Admission to Secondary School in Kent"<sup>9</sup>, which are published in the Autumn Term and are available at least six weeks before parents make their choices about their children's education.
- 3.1.2 It is clearly important that parents understand policies and regulations related to the eligibility of free transport for pupils, as this can only be granted by following the correct procedures. Understanding the information in the admission booklets is also significant because the preference of children's schools may be affected by whether or not they are entitled to financial help with the cost of school transport.<sup>10</sup>
- 3.1.3 Parents, for example, can express their preference for any school they wish, but they may not always be aware that admissions applications and transport applications are completely separate.<sup>11</sup>
- 3.1.4 Importantly, it was pointed out that the way information in the admission booklets is presented could be improved. For instance, in the booklet "Admission to Secondary School in Kent 2006" the transport advice is relegated, other than the specific chapter on transport, to a small paragraph right at the end of the description of each school. Also, it was felt that the information explaining that the nearest appropriate school must be one of those chosen in order to be entitled to free school transport was often missed by parents and needed to be given more prominence. Finally, it was pointed out that the policy stating that free transport would be provided to both nearest appropriate school and geographically nearest school was not included in the description of each school in the booklet.
- 3.1.5 In addition, it was suggested that admissions and transport information, and some services could also be provided online, through the Internet. Services could include the introduction of online applications and electronic payments.
- 3.1.6 Finally, it was noted that, under the schools section of the "Admission to Secondary School in Kent 2006" booklet, one of the eligibility criteria for free school transport related to the Parish Council area in which the pupil is domiciled. This can sometimes be misleading, as there can be a mismatch between the concept of "nearest appropriate school" in relation to parish location. However, it was conceded that, although this parish-based system was set a long time ago (1944), it was arguably the most functional, as it appeared to fit in with the spatial perceptions of the great majority of parents.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Admission to Primary School in Kent 2005, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Admission to Secondary School in Kent 2005, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

3.1.7 These illustrations suggest that the way information in the admission booklets is presented could be improved.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**For Kent County Council to make the description and explanation of home to school transport rules in its school admission booklets more clear and accessible.**

#### **Recommendation 2**

**To consider the provision of online systems that supply school admission and transport information, and that enable electronic applications and payments.**

### **3.2 Discretionary provision of free school transport**

3.2.1 In the United Kingdom the provision of and entitlement to free transport supplied by the local authority is governed by the Education Act (1944) and by subsequent legislation. It is widely acknowledged that this approach has become increasingly outmoded and that it does not reflect wider changes such as the disparity of household incomes, greater mobility, increased traffic levels and changes in the way in which education is delivered.<sup>13</sup> For example, it is argued that distance-based eligibility means that parents on lower incomes may have to pay for their children to travel to school, while parents on higher incomes may be eligible for free school transport.<sup>14</sup>

3.2.2 The education structure in Kent is complex, and this complexity is reflected in the entitlement and provision of subsidised school transport. About 100,000 students use public transport every day. Kent County Council provides free or concessionary school transport for approximately 25,000, including 3,000 with special needs.<sup>15</sup> The annual spend on home to school transport for mainstream students is approximately £13million, with a similar figure spent on pupils with special educational needs (SEN).<sup>16 17</sup>

### **3.3 Transport to Selective Schools and Specialist Schools**

3.3.1 Secondary schools in Kent are organised around different systems, called “schemes of education”.<sup>18</sup> There is a large area with grammar schools and all-ability schools. Although this arrangement for secondary education applies to most of Kent, there are some exceptions. There are some parts of the county where 11 is not the normal age to transfer to secondary school, or where pupils do not usually take part in the 11+ assessment for admission to

<sup>13</sup> Kent County Council's Vision for Education and Libraries, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Best Practice for Increasing Bus Use for Journeys to School, Department for Transport, 1999.

<sup>15</sup> See Bus Strategy in Kent, Strategic Planning, Knet, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Jenny Young, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Highways Advisory Board, Kent County Council, 1 November 2005

<sup>18</sup> Admission to Secondary School in Kent, 2006

grammar school.<sup>19</sup> Swanley/Hextable, Swanscombe/Stone/Greenhithe, Longfield/New Ash Green, Paddock Wood, Tenterden and the Romney Marsh areas are all served by comprehensive schools that admit children at age 11. The Isle of Sheppey is served by a comprehensive system which has first schools (ages 4 to 9), middle schools (ages 9 to 13) and an upper school (ages 13 to 18). The Cranbrook area has an all-ability school which admits children at age 11, and a grammar school which admits children at 13.<sup>20</sup>

3.3.2 Free home to school transport is currently provided to selective pupils who attend their nearest selective school if they live beyond the statutory walking distance. However, this is not extended to those pupils of selective ability who live within comprehensive schemes of education.<sup>21</sup> In 2005, the number of grammar school pupils paid for home to school transport was 8,548 – that is, 46% of the total number of pupils in Kent to whom free school transport was granted.<sup>22</sup> It has been pointed out for some time that extending the right of free transport to all students of selective ability in Kent would provide a more equitable system. However, it has also been recognised that this would lead to a significant increase in costs and would have an adverse impact on the viability of some of Kent’s comprehensive schools.<sup>23</sup>

3.3.3 Free school transport is also not extended to pupils attending specialist schools. The specialist school movement was based on the American Magnet School model, which generally embodied a bussing policy. However, it appears that the Government applied the model in the UK without the infrastructure to support it.<sup>24</sup> It was the Committee’s view that there should be legislation in place to provide for free school transport to specialist schools in order to deliver equity of choice to all children.

### **3.4 Transport to Denominational Schools**

3.4.1 The issue of discretionary provision of free school transport in Kent is also linked to denominational schools. In 2005 there were 12,114 children studying in denominational schools, of which 2,964 were in receipt of free school transport. This corresponded to 25% of the total number of pupils receiving free transport.<sup>25</sup>

3.4.2 It is Kent’s policy that the concept of nearest appropriate school does not take account of parental preference in relation to, for example, single-sex schools or specialist schools.<sup>26 27 28</sup>

3.4.3 It is also specified that only pupils belonging to a Roman Catholic or Church of England denomination are automatically entitled to free school transport, if

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Jenny Young, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>23</sup> School Organisation and Transport Best Value, Kent County Council, 2002.

<sup>24</sup> Ian Craig, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 9 February 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>26</sup> Home to School Transport Select Committee, 9 February 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Jenny Young, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>28</sup> See [www.kent.gov.uk/education](http://www.kent.gov.uk/education), 2006.

they live beyond the statutory distance. Free transport is provided to such schools even if the school is located in a different scheme of education.<sup>29</sup> Pupils of other Christian faiths, for example Baptists or Methodists, and pupils belonging to other religions, are excluded from such entitlement.<sup>30</sup>

- 3.4.4 More specifically, Kent's local authority will provide free transport if evidence of adherence to the Roman Catholic or Church of England denominations is provided by a minister of those Churches. In practice, it appears that there is a certain degree of flexibility as, for example, Church of England schools tend to interpret denomination more widely to include sometimes children of a Christian background.<sup>31</sup> This policy is adopted by other 43 local authorities in the United Kingdom.<sup>32</sup>
- 3.4.5 Denominational policies adopted elsewhere in the UK vary greatly; for example, 41 local authorities provide free transport if the pupil is attending the nearest school of the denomination desired, but without provision of ministers' evidence. In other 35 authorities, evidence may be needed and journey times and distances are limited (in Kent there are not strict rules about distance, although there are guidelines suggesting to provide for transport at no cost for a journey no longer than 45 minutes).<sup>33</sup> <sup>34</sup> Finally, in 5 authorities, such as Essex County Council, free transport is not supplied unless the student has special needs.<sup>35</sup> <sup>36</sup>
- 3.4.6 There is a current debate surrounding the ethos of denominational schools, as the Churches to which denominational schools belong believe that their schools should represent the communities that surround them. However, this belief seems to be in conflict with their admissions systems, which prioritise pupils of their own denomination even if they are transported from long distances.<sup>37</sup>
- 3.4.7 Legally, denominational schools admission policies do not rely on "catchment" areas but on over-subscription criteria; if a denominational school is not over-subscribed, then it would accept non-denominational pupils.<sup>38</sup> For example, St George's School in Gravesend, had fewer applications than some other denominational schools, and would often admit "non-denominational" pupils.<sup>39</sup>
- 3.4.8 On the other side of the argument, there are agreements and rules that appear to rationalise discretionary provisions of free transport to denominational schools, and have their historical origins in the 1944 Education Act.<sup>40</sup> It is specified that, in terms of church controlled schools (in Kent half of the Church of England schools are controlled schools), the church to which

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<sup>29</sup> Home to School Transport for Mainstream Pupils, Kent County Council, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Ian Craig, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 9 February 2006.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>32</sup> Confed Survey, Summary of LEAs' Transport Policies Broken by Category, 2004.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>34</sup> Jenny Young, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> Confed Survey, Summary of LEAs' Transport Policies Broken by Category, 2004.

<sup>37</sup> Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>38</sup> Ian Craig, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 9 February 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Jenny Young, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*.

the denominational school belongs to is not under obligation to make a financial contribution. However, in terms of church aided schools, where the church is the authority, the church to which the school belongs contributes 10% of any capital expenditure on the school. In Kent, half the Church of England schools and all the Roman Catholic schools are church aided.<sup>41</sup>

- 3.4.9 In short, the Select Committee agrees that it is important, when analysing the issue of discretionary provision of free school transport to denominational schools, to pay serious consideration to the question of parental choice – endorsed by KCC – as well as to appreciate the Churches’ contribution to education provision in the county.

### **Recommendation 3**

**To ensure continuous dialogue between Kent County Council and religious denominations in an effort to reflect more accurately the communities that denominational schools serve in the entitlement and provision of free home to school transport.**

### **Recommendation 4**

**That in the interests of consistency consideration be given to free home to school transport for pupils specifically selected by aptitude to attend specialist schools.**

### **Recommendation 5**

**That in the interests of consistency consideration be given to providing transport to the nearest single sex school if a preference is expressed by the parents.**

## **3.5 Regulation Committee Case Panel**

- 3.5.1 Sometimes applications for free home to school transport are turned down. The reasons for application vary and may include: individual cases, in which the school chosen is not the nearest appropriate school for free transport purposes, denominational matters, medical grounds and exceptional family circumstances.<sup>42</sup>

- 3.5.2 When this happens, parents are reminded to contact first the Kent Admissions and Transport Team, to find out the reasons for transport refusal. If they are dissatisfied with the decision to refuse transport, they can ask for a review of their application by the Transport Officer at the Education Office.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> See KCC Constitution, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> See [www.kent.gov.uk/education](http://www.kent.gov.uk/education), 2006.

- 3.5.3 If parents still remain unhappy and believe they have a special case for receiving travel assistance, then they can ask for their case to be considered by members of the Regulation Committee Case Panel.<sup>44</sup>
- 3.5.4 The Regulation Committee Case Panel is composed of a Chairman and a minimum of 3 participating KCC Members. Any Member trained to perform the Panel's duties can participate. Ideally membership consists of 3 Conservative Members, 1 Labour and 1 Liberal Democrat.<sup>45</sup>
- 3.5.5 The following statistics show the number of appeals considered since 2001, and the number of appeals upheld:-<sup>46</sup>

2001/2 –146 appeals, of which 30 upheld (21%)  
2002/3 –163 appeals, of which 42 upheld (26%)  
2003/4 – 121 appeals, of which 67 upheld (55%)  
2005<sup>47</sup> - 147 appeals, of which 49 upheld (33%)

### **3.6 Legal Matters**

- 3.6.1 Although it is clear that the Regulation Committee plays an important and active role in considering the application of discretionary measures in the provision of subsidised school transport, some issues emerged. Some Members who have worked on the Regulation Committee suggested that specific legal advice was sometimes necessary when exercising their discretionary powers.
- 3.6.2 It was pointed out that Members, even if experienced in working for the Regulation Committee, lacked in depth, professional legal expertise. It was suggested that legal support was crucial and reassuring, when making delicate decisions that can have a meaningful impact on applicants' lives or set important precedents.
- 3.6.3 Regular legal support to the Regulation Committee would reassure Members of making fair and informed decisions in relation to home to school transport matters.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**To ensure additional legal support is available to Members when they exercise their discretion at the Regulation Committee Case Panel.**

### **3.7 Siblings of “Directed” Pupils**

- 3.7.1 Another matter that emerged concerns the “direction” of pupils by the LEA to specific schools chosen by the Authority and not by parents. If a local authority directed a child to a specific school, then the authority would have to

<sup>44</sup> Admission to Secondary School in Kent, 2006

<sup>45</sup> See KCC Constitution, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Please note: from 2005 the number of appeals has been measured from January to December, and not by academic year.

pay for the school transport. This, it was pointed out, was a general policy, although specific circumstances would be considered when making decisions.<sup>48</sup>

3.7.2 There are three main reasons for directing a pupil to a particular school. The first one relates to the transfer to secondary school, where an obscure school preference has been made and the LEA qualifies it. The second one relates to a situation in which a child has recently moved to the area and it is too late to apply through the normal admission process. The third one relates to a situation in which all school choices are oversubscribed.<sup>49</sup>

3.7.3 However, if the younger sibling applied to a school which is not the nearest appropriate, but which is the school the older sibling has been directed to, the younger sibling is not entitled to free transport. This Members' policy seems to clash with one of the most important criteria in the priority order for the allocation of school places in Kent, "Current Family Association". That is, when a pupil is allocated in a school which a brother or sister is already attending.<sup>50</sup>

3.7.4 In this circumstance parents may argue that, if they did not choose the school for the older sibling, then they should not pay for the transport for the younger sibling.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**To consider younger siblings' eligibility for free transport when applying to a school that, although not their nearest appropriate, is the one to which the older sibling has been directed, therefore receiving free transport.**

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<sup>48</sup> Jenny Young, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Admission to Secondary School in Kent, 2006





## 4. Tackling Car Congestion

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### 4.1 Car Congestion and Home to School Transport

4.1.1 As mentioned in Section 3.2, there is a widely held perception nationally that the 1944 Education Act is out of date both in terms of allocating free travel to school and in tackling increased traffic levels.

4.1.2 Over the past 20 years there have been wide changes in the way children travel to school. Today in Kent, 78% of households own one or more cars.<sup>51</sup> Government's projections predict that this figure will increase and that traffic in England will grow by 26% between 2000 and 2010, with an average increase of 2.6% per annum.<sup>52</sup> At regional level it is predicted that traffic levels in the South East region will be above the national average figure.<sup>53</sup> (Note: See Appendix 3 for Kent Average Traffic Flows, 2004)

4.1.3 In urban areas in term time nearly one in five cars at 08.50 am is on the school run.<sup>54</sup> In the last 10 years the proportion of car journeys to school has nearly doubled, from 16% to 30%.<sup>55</sup> The average length of the journey to school for secondary school pupils has gone up by well over a third.<sup>56</sup>

4.1.4 This problem affects now more than 9 million young people in education in the UK and their families. It also touches everyone indirectly through its effects on health, education, local air quality and congestion.<sup>57</sup>

4.1.5 The causes are complex and inter-related, and include:-

- Rising car ownership
- A wider choice of school other than neighbourhood schools
- Inadequate bus services and high fares in some areas
- Increased traffic and fears about road safety
- Increased fears about personal safety, including bullying and abduction
- Children carrying more equipment and books to school
- Parents under increased pressure of time.

4.1.6 These and other causes have resulted in an increase in traffic and congestion. They can often lead to a vicious circle in which fears about safety in traffic lead to less walking and cycling and to more driving.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Provisional Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-11, 2006.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Travelling to School: An Action Plan, Department for Transport and Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

<sup>55</sup> [www.dft.gov.uk](http://www.dft.gov.uk).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

- 4.1.7 There are significant benefits to be gained by reducing the use of personal cars. Surveys show that there is unmet demand among young people for more independent travel and greater freedom. Physical exercise improves fitness and protects against coronary heart disease in the longer term. Importantly, more walking and cycling can help reduce car congestion and pollution, improving the quality of life for everybody.<sup>59</sup>
- 4.1.8 Finally, a significant report that the leading insurance company “More Than” submitted to Government shows that school run motor accidents cause almost 7,000 deaths and injuries a year. It is also pointed out in the report that a 10% reduction in school journeys by car could prevent 190 deaths and injuries a year, that is one for every school day.<sup>60</sup> (Please see Appendix 3 for killed and seriously injured people in Kent, 2004).

## **4.2 Smarter Choices and School Travel Plans**

- 4.2.1 Kent County Council already promotes cutting the use of personal cars through a dedicated team that delivers “School Travel Plans”, encouraging for example the use of public transport, walking and cycling.<sup>61</sup> KCC’s School Travel Plans reflect a wider initiative by the Department of Transport, “Smarter Choices”, aimed at influencing people’s travel behaviour towards more sustainable options.<sup>62</sup>

## **4.3 Smarter Choices**

- 4.3.1 In July 2004 the Department for Transport published a major research report called “Smarter Choices: Changing the Way We Travel”. It was based on 24 UK case studies and worldwide literature reviews about the effects of similar schemes.<sup>63</sup>
- 4.3.2 The case studies involved finding out what resources local authorities had available to them and how much change they were able to deliver.
- 4.3.3 The main aim of the research was to consider what difference Smarter Choices could make to future UK traffic levels in about 10 years time. They developed two scenarios: “low intensity” and “high intensity”. In the first one, they assumed that local authorities would carry on introducing these initiatives, so there would be gradual growth in the number of schemes, but no step-change.<sup>64</sup>
- 4.3.4 In the second one, the researchers assumed that there would be greater activity and many more resources than at present, while within the limits of what was achievable.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> More Than Motoring Risk Report, produced in association with the Centre for Economics and Business Ltd, 2004

<sup>61</sup> Smarter Choices Kent, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> Making Smarter Choices Work, Department for Transport, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

4.3.5 The scenarios were based on evidence from the case studies and investigated how much difference each measure would make to car use and how many people would be affected.

4.3.6 The final figures estimated how much traffic could be cut if a Smarter Choices programme was developed over a period of about 10 years. In the high intensity scenario, peak time urban traffic could be cut by 21% and peak hour non-urban traffic by 14%. Nationally, traffic could be cut by 11%.<sup>66</sup>

#### **4.4 School Travel Plans**

4.4.1 A School Travel Plan helps parents and children understand the harmful effects of the increased use of cars on our health and safety, and can help children begin to travel independently.<sup>67</sup> The need for these plans emerges from the fact that more children travel to school by car, resulting in less exercise, less understanding of where they live and less experience of making journeys of their own.<sup>68</sup>

4.4.2 School Travel Plans are more effective where the school is actively involved together with strong support from the County Council.<sup>69</sup> As of July 2005, KCC in September 2004, with 92 (15%) schools completing travel plans to the required standards.<sup>70</sup> The team has established good working relationships with schools and is about to meet its target of 40% of Kent schools with travel plans in place by March 2006, and 100% by 2010.<sup>71</sup>

4.4.3 Funding is available to schools that participate to the initiative. The amount of funding depends on the type of school and on the number of pupils at the school.

- Primary, infant and junior schools receive £3750 and an extra £5 for each pupil
- Secondary schools receive £5000 and an extra £5 for each pupil.<sup>72</sup>

4.4.4 Travel plans can embrace a wide range of initiatives, including:-

- Walking buses
- Cycle facilities
- Car sharing
- School buses

#### **4.5 Walking Buses**

4.5.1 A walking bus is the name for a supervised group of children walking to or from school. It is made up of at least two adult volunteers, who act as a

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<sup>66</sup> Making Smarter Choices Work, Department for Transport, 2004

<sup>67</sup> [www.kent.gov.uk/transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Smarter Choices Kent, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> [www.kent.gov.uk/transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport).

‘driver’ and a ‘conductor’ and escort the children. Adults and children all wear high-visibility waistcoats.<sup>73</sup>

4.5.2 The bus follows a set route and ‘walks’ to a published timetable. Children can join or leave the bus at set points along the route. The decision on when a walking bus operates is left to the school and volunteers; it doesn’t have to operate morning and afternoon, or even every day.<sup>74</sup>

4.5.3 Walking buses depend totally on support from volunteers. For a scheme to succeed volunteers need to be enthusiastic and committed. A lead co-ordinator needs to be identified to be the main contact for the walking bus. He or she must be someone the school knows.<sup>75</sup>

## **4.6 The Benefits of Walking Buses**

4.6.1 According to the publication “Travelling to School: An Action Plan” (2003), children develop travel preferences in the early years of primary school.<sup>76</sup> The Health Survey for England (2003) showed that the amount of daily exercise taken by children has decreased in recent years, contributing to the growing proportion of children who are overweight and obese. As of 2003, child obesity affected 8.5% of 6 year olds and 15% of 15 year olds.<sup>77</sup> The publication maintains that most parents, children and their communities want to reverse the trend of recent years, adopting more environmentally friendly and healthy travel choices.<sup>78</sup> Written and oral evidence received from different stakeholders, including KCC officers, schools and bus companies’ representatives, appears to support this view.<sup>79</sup>

4.6.2 The Walking bus scheme can benefit children, parents, the school and the local community in several ways:

- cutting fuel consumption
- reducing road accidents
- developing pedestrian and social skills
- promoting healthy exercise
- saving time for parents
- developing children’s independence, whilst in a supervised environment
- reducing traffic congestion around schools
- improving air quality.<sup>80</sup>

## **4.7 The Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group**

4.7.1 The Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group provides a link between schools and local authority professionals trying to set up and operate Walking Buses in

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<sup>73</sup> Walking Bus Guidelines, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Travelling to School: An Action Plan, Department for Transport and Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

<sup>77</sup> Health Survey for England, The Department for Health, 2003.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Simon Dolby, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>80</sup> [www.kent.gov.uk/transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport), 2006.

Kent. Many schools have already joined the scheme.<sup>81</sup> Mr Simon Dolby, Chairman of the Group, recently stated that there were 60 walking bus initiatives in the Kent and Medway area, involving a total of about 1,500 children.<sup>82</sup> He added that almost all Districts in Kent had walking bus initiatives; the greatest success was achieved in Canterbury, with 20 walking buses. Only Swale District lacked an established walking bus scheme.<sup>83</sup>

4.7.2 The Group is a registered charity and was set up about 5 years ago. Currently it does not receive financial support from Kent County Council; Kent County Council's support is limited to setting up, promoting and checking routes for walking buses.<sup>84 85</sup>

4.7.3 The Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group is structured as a committee. It is made up of volunteers from schools, the media, local councillors and highway staff, with the aim of supporting the work of road safety officers to expand the network of Walking Buses in Kent and Medway.<sup>86</sup>

4.7.4 Mr Dolby stated that his ambition was to have participation from all Districts up to Canterbury's participation levels.<sup>87</sup> Also, he wished ideally to have four buses for each school, reflecting the four points of the compass, so as to provide a more extensive service. Blean Primary School in Canterbury had successfully achieved this ambition.<sup>88</sup>

#### **4.8 Support Provided by Walking Bus Schemes**

4.8.1 The Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group provides support in a variety of ways.

4.8.2 It provides reflective tabards to schools on a free loan. Kit is only returned if the bus stops operating.<sup>89</sup> These high-visibility waistcoats are compulsory in order to launch a scheme; they must be worn at all times, both for safety and for insurance purposes.<sup>90 91</sup> When discussing the safety of walking routes, the Committee pointed out that it seemed an anomaly that KCC – unlike Medway Council – was reluctant to approve any route that lacked pavements to be used by children wearing tabards in a walking bus, even if parents were already using it to walk their children to school. Mr Dolby indicated that the average cost of tabards per walking bus is approximately £500.<sup>92</sup> The Group also supplies free walking bus baseball caps to all children and adults using the 'bus'.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> [www.kentwalkingbus.org](http://www.kentwalkingbus.org)

<sup>82</sup> Simon Dolby, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> David Joyner, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

<sup>86</sup> [www.kentwalkingbus.org](http://www.kentwalkingbus.org)

<sup>87</sup> Simon Dolby, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> [www.kentwalkingbus.org](http://www.kentwalkingbus.org)

<sup>90</sup> Simon Dolby, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>91</sup> Walking Bus Guidelines, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>92</sup> Simon Dolby, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

- 4.8.3 In addition, the Group organises several events for the promotion of walking buses and for volunteers and families to meet up. For example, Canterbury hosts a televised “Big Bus” event, in which different walking buses are encouraged to design their own banners in order to win prizes for the best banner.<sup>94</sup>
- 4.8.4 Also, free incentives are awarded to children who use their walking bus regularly. For example, in Canterbury this includes free child swim vouchers to the three swimming pools operated by Active Life in the Canterbury District, and free child meal vouchers for Canterbury's Pizza Hut restaurant. Both sets of vouchers are provided by the sponsoring companies. In Thanet, Pizza Hut offers child meal vouchers, Thanet Leisure Force donates swim vouchers, and AMF bowling donates free games. Both areas receive child entry vouchers from Wildwood at Herne.<sup>95</sup>
- 4.8.5 Volunteers are also rewarded for their help and commitment. Free prize draws are organised each academic term, to which all Walking Bus volunteers in the area have automatic entry. Prizes include family theatre tickets to Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury and family trips to Disneyland Paris, supplied by the Kent Messenger Group.<sup>96</sup>
- 4.8.6 Attracting sponsorship from companies and organisations to fund and supply tabards, baseball caps, incentives and events is another task of the Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group. For example, it was suggested that it might be possible for Kent County Council to lead with the idea of attracting property developers’ financial contributions to fund tabards. This initiative would have the mutual effect of supplying tabards for walking buses and, at the same time, of giving developers’ publicity on the tabards.<sup>97</sup>
- 4.8.7 Another idea suggested by Mr Dolby entails the strategic involvement of Community Wardens, who are now present in many areas of Kent.<sup>98</sup> Mr Dolby explained that many Community Wardens were advocates of walking bus schemes and that it was an effective way of promoting walking buses in an area. For example, one of the driving forces in establishing a walking bus in Capel Primary School, in the Dover District, was the encouragement of the Wardens.<sup>99</sup>
- 4.8.8 There are many valid reasons, then, to give full support to walking bus schemes. Kent County Council should take a leading role in promoting and sustaining these initiatives.

### **Recommendation 8**

**For Kent County Council to take lead responsibility in promoting walking bus initiatives. This includes: for KCC to make financial contributions to walking bus schemes; attract business sponsorship to help funding walking buses;**

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> [www.kentwalkingbus.org](http://www.kentwalkingbus.org)

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Simon Dolby, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Simon Dolby, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

**encourage a greater involvement of Community Wardens in promoting walking buses at strategic and operational level.**

## **4.9 Cycling**

- 4.9.1 Cycling is an important part of KCC's transport plans. Kent has approximately 490 Kilometres of cycle network, which includes national and regional cycle routes, recreational and urban cycle networks.<sup>100</sup>
- 4.9.2 Cycling seems to offer a range of benefits. It takes less road space and helps reduce the amount of traffic on the roads.<sup>101</sup> It is claimed that it will not be long before the roads in Kent will not be able to cope with the amount of cars travelling. Traffic jams, delays, more pollution and longer journeys will result from this scenario.<sup>102</sup>
- 4.9.3 Cycling is also recognised to improve levels of fitness and health. For example, the British Medical Association (BMA) claims that on average people who cycle regularly enjoy a fitness level equal to being 10 years younger than those who do not.<sup>103</sup> Finally, cycling is an inexpensive means of travelling.<sup>104</sup>
- 4.9.4 However, while bike ownership is generally high, ownership of a bicycle appears to decline, from around 85% amongst young people aged between 11 and 13 years to 70% amongst those aged between 16 to 18 years.<sup>105</sup> Very few pupils (less than 5%) cycle to school.<sup>106</sup> These statistics appear to be even more significant when considering that many journeys people make by car are less than 2 miles long.<sup>107</sup>
- 4.9.5 Kent County Council is already involved in the promotion of cycling. Kent's Local Transport Plan includes schemes to improve and expand the cycling network and services for cyclists in Kent.<sup>108</sup> In collaboration with schools, through School Travel Plans, the Council encourages a wide variety of initiatives.
- 4.9.6 KCC's Highways Services and schools encourage the establishment of school cycling policies and safe cycling codes for staff and pupils.<sup>109</sup>
- 4.9.7 They also organise cyclist training through the "Kent Rider Safer Cycling Scheme".<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> [www.kent.gov.uk/transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport).

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> [www.kent.gov.uk/transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport)

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Young People's Experiences and Perceptions of Public Transport, Department for Transport, 2006.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> [www.kent.uk/transport](http://www.kent.uk/transport).

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> School Travel Plan Information Pack, 2004.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

- 4.9.8 They promote the provision of secure cycle parking to give pupils a storage area when bringing bikes at school. They support the provision of lockers to store bike equipment and outdoor clothing.<sup>111</sup>
- 4.9.9 Mr Joyner, Sustainable Transport Manager in Kent County Council, explained that there was a further initiative called “Safer Routes to School”, which focused on improving routes for children walking and cycling to school, and on providing traffic calming measures. Funding for this scheme came from the Integrated Transport Section of the Local Transport Plan.<sup>112</sup>
- 4.9.10 Written and oral evidence received generally welcomes the promotion of cycling. School travel plans applications from, for example, St. Mary’s C.E. Primary School in Lamberhurst and Hawkhurst C.E. Primary School in Hawkhurst, actively promote cycling related schemes.<sup>113 114</sup> Mr Heath Williams, Managing Director of bus operator ARRIVA, believed that cycling, together with buses and walking, would offer a satisfactory alternative to cars for school transport purposes.<sup>115</sup>

## Case Study

“At Orchard Vale Community Primary School in Devon, a network of safe walking and cycling routes, cycle storage, walking buses and road safety training have all contributed to a 26% reduction in car use, and corresponding increase in walking, cycling and travel by micro-scooter or roller blades “<sup>116</sup>

- 4.9.11 The potential benefits that cycling to school can bring about are significant in tackling major problems of congestion and pollution that today affect our community. The Committee endorses the work already carried out by KCC. Kent County Council should continue to support cycling initiatives in Kent.

## Recommendation 9

**To continue to support and promote initiatives and schemes aimed at encouraging safe cycling to school and at improving the quality of cycling networks and services in Kent.**

## 4.10 Car Share

- 4.10.1 Car sharing is an activity where two or more people share a car and travel together. The attraction of this initiative is that it allows people to have the convenience of the car while reducing congestion and pollution. A great proportion of peak-time journeys is made by people driving alone, not using

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> David Joyner, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

<sup>113</sup> School Travel Plan, St. Mary’s C.E. Primary School, 2005.

<sup>114</sup> School Travel Plan, Hawkhurst C.E. Primary School, 2005.

<sup>115</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>116</sup> Travelling to School: An Action Plan, Department for Transport and Department for Education and Skills, 2003.



cars in the most efficient manner; today 80% of work journeys by car are made by drivers only.<sup>117</sup>

4.10.2 Although the most successful car share schemes are those associated with the daily commute, car share initiatives are also linked with home to school transport and indeed with any other activity where the use of cars is involved.<sup>118</sup>

4.10.3 Car sharing can bring about several benefits for individuals, the community, organisations and the environment.

4.10.4 It can save travel costs; by sharing a car with other people, it is estimated that transport costs can be reduced by up to £1,000 per year.<sup>119</sup>

4.10.5 Car sharing also reduces the number of vehicles on the roads, resulting in less congestion and pollution, and in fewer parking problems.<sup>120</sup> It has been calculated that if half of UK motorists shared a car one day a week, congestion and pollution would be reduced by 10%, and traffic jams by 20%.<sup>121</sup> The Smarter Choices research also estimated that each active member of a car sharing scheme can save about 4.500 Kilometres per year.<sup>122</sup>

4.10.6 Finally, car sharing can provide a valid solution to the transport problems in rural areas.<sup>123</sup>

#### **4.11 Kentcarshare**

4.11.1 Car share schemes operate either within a company, such as Pfizer in Sandwich, or across a number of several employers in the same area, such as through the KCC “Kentcarshare” scheme. Kentcarshare is delivered in partnership with Medway Council, local District Councils and City and Borough Councils, such as Maidstone Borough Council. The scheme is also supported by other organisations including the University of Kent, Jacobs Babbie and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS.<sup>124</sup>

4.11.2 Kentcarshare is provided by “Liftshare”, an Internet-based company and one of the largest providers of online car sharing schemes in the country.<sup>125</sup> Liftshare is a well-established company that operates over 500 car sharing schemes in the UK. Nearly 90,000 journeys have so far been logged on car sharing systems operated by the company.<sup>126</sup>

4.11.3 Kentcarshare is a free and secure internet-based system that allows people to register their journeys and find drivers or passengers to share one-off or

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<sup>117</sup> [www.kentcarshare.com](http://www.kentcarshare.com).

<sup>118</sup> [www.kentcarshare.com](http://www.kentcarshare.com).

<sup>119</sup> [www.kent.gov.uk/transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport).

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Making Smarter Choices Work, Department for Transport, 2004.

<sup>123</sup> [www.kent.gov.uk/transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport).

<sup>124</sup> [www.kentcarshare.com](http://www.kentcarshare.com).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

regular journeys.<sup>127</sup> After completing a user registration form, members can add their journey details. The system then searches for matches amongst all members in Kent.<sup>128</sup>

## Case Study

“Carshare MK” was launched in Milton Keynes on the same day as a major increase in parking charges across the town centre. Car sharing members of the scheme can park free of charge, saving up to £5 a day. In order to qualify, two members have to display their permits in the windscreen. Car sharing bays are available around the town centre in prime sites.”<sup>129</sup>

### 4.12 Kentschoolrun

4.12.1 Alongside Kentcarshare, Kent County Council launched in October 2005 “Kentschoolrun”, a dedicated schools car share matching system. Kentschoolrun is part of the “New Ways to School” initiative, promoted by KCC’s School Travel Planners.<sup>130</sup>

4.12.2 Currently 50 schools have signed up to the scheme.<sup>131</sup> The operation of the scheme is similar to Kentcarshare’s; parents with a child in one of these schools log in and find someone to share a car with.

4.12.3 The system appears to be safe and secure. Each school can determine the level of security for their scheme. Data is only gathered about parents and not children. All information is used according to Data Protection Act (1998) guidelines. Even if a match is found, it is at parents’ discretion to decide whether to car share.<sup>132</sup>

4.12.4 There are several benefits for schools. The service is free to the first 100 schools that sign up.<sup>133</sup> By encouraging the scheme, it is possible to reduce congestion, pollution and road accidents around the school. In addition, schools can link the scheme with School Travel Plan objectives to reduce car dependency. Finally, schools can encourage the involvement of the school community.<sup>134</sup>

4.12.5 The benefits for parents are that by sharing the school run they can save money, time and reduce congestion and pollution. Importantly, the service is free of charge for them, and can be used also to find other people to walk or cycle to school with.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> [www.kentcarshare.com](http://www.kentcarshare.com)

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> Making Smarter Choices Work, Department for Transport, 2004.

<sup>130</sup> Share the School Run, Share the Costs, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>131</sup> David Joyner, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

<sup>132</sup> Share the School Run, Share the Costs, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

- 4.12.6 Despite all the potential benefits that car sharing can bring about, some challenges exist.
- 4.12.7 The report “Making Car Sharing and Car Clubs Work” (2004), prepared for the Department for Transport, assessed the effectiveness of car sharing across the UK.<sup>136</sup> Through a comprehensive literature review and the examination of 20 case studies, the Report found that there was “little evidence of the effective delivery of formal school car sharing schemes, with activity tending to focus upon wider travel planning information provision and informal matching arrangements”.<sup>137</sup>
- 4.12.8 The Report explained that greater focus was placed upon membership levels rather than the number of trips shared. Currently in Kent there are 687 people registered, and 131 with matched journeys who have made contact with each other.<sup>138</sup> The journey match percentage is 22%.<sup>139</sup>
- 4.12.9 There are several potential perceptual barriers to the use of car sharing identified in the Report. On a general level, these barriers reflect individuals’ desires to travel alone, and maintain personal space and flexibility. In relation to school transport, the issues tend to reflect instead the safety concerns that parents have for their own children.<sup>140</sup>
- 4.12.10 The most effective tools recommended by the Report in overcoming these issues embody a variety of tasks, including: offering “one week trial sharing”; utilising corporate databases to provide added information about potential sharing; stressing the security of the data held in the system; encouraging sharing amongst known groups, such as KCC departments.<sup>141</sup>
- 4.12.11 More general factors of success found by the Report included an effective enforcement policy, a well motivated and influencing administrator, full support by the senior management team, and priority parking for sharers – with parking restrictions for single occupancy vehicles.<sup>142</sup> The Committee also felt that regular monitoring of the scheme would be beneficial.
- 4.12.12 In addition to clear incentives for joiners, the Smarter Choices case studies suggest that publicity is central. For example, when the successful “Carshare Devon” scheme was launched in Devon in 2003, the ingredients of its success included publicity through 40 temporary road signs, radio adverts, 116 bus adverts and 24,000 messages by Devon County Council Chief Executive on staff wage slips.<sup>143</sup>
- 4.12.13 Car sharing schemes can potentially bring about significant benefits for individuals, organisations and the community at large. Kent County Council

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<sup>136</sup> Making Car Sharing and Car Clubs Work, Department for Transport, 2004.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Jacqui Elliott, Travel Planner, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Making Car Sharing and Car Clubs Work, Department for Transport, 2004.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> Making Smarter Choices Work, Department for Transport, 2004.

should ensure the success of its car sharing through greater involvement and contribution.

#### **Recommendation 10**

**For Kent County Council to enhance its involvement in organising, promoting and monitoring its own car sharing initiatives in order to increase the number of people using the scheme.**

#### **4.13 Rail**

4.13.1 In Kent there is an extensive network of passenger rail services. There are 99 stations, ranging from small stations in rural parts of the County to larger ones in the major towns. There are a further 7 stations in the Medway administrative area.<sup>144</sup> (see Appendix 3 for the rail network in Kent, 2006)

4.13.2 Most rail services in Kent are operated daily on at least a half hourly or hourly basis, although in some parts of the network the number of journeys provided increases considerably during peak periods.<sup>145</sup>

4.13.3 The development of passenger rail services is crucial for KCC in order to achieve objectives such as economic growth in deprived areas and modal shift. Rail services are not well used for travel in Kent, and the Council has identified through its Local Transport Plan (LTP) potential to increase the number of local journeys made on the network and enhance accessibility.<sup>146</sup> Although the Council is not directly responsible for most of the public transport services across the county, it can influence bus and train companies to provide services that are needed.<sup>147</sup>

4.13.4 In relation to home to school transport, rail services are also not used well when compared to other means of transport to school. According to a national survey carried out for the Department for Transport, only a very small minority of pupils (1%) travels to school by train.<sup>148</sup>

4.13.5 In Kent there are about 3,200 students travelling to school by train (1,910 in mainstream transport by train, that is 9% of total mainstream school transport), and the total amount spent on rail seasonal tickets is £1.3 million per year.<sup>149</sup>  
<sup>150</sup> This compares with an annual spend on home to school transport for mainstream students of approximately £13million, with a similar figure spent on pupils with special educational needs (SEN).<sup>151 152</sup>

<sup>144</sup> Provisional Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-11, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Accessibility Strategy for Kent (ASK), Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>147</sup> [www.kent.gov.uk/transport](http://www.kent.gov.uk/transport).

<sup>148</sup> Young People and Crime on Public Transport, Department for Transport, 1999.

<sup>149</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>150</sup> Kevin Harlock, Commercial Services Director, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>151</sup> Mrs Jenny Young, Head of Admissions and Transport, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>152</sup> Highways Advisory Board, Kent County Council, 1 November 2005

4.13.6 Kent County Council already promotes the use of trains for home to school transport purposes. Through travel plans and in collaboration with schools, for example, KCC encourages a series of initiatives. These include publicising appropriate local train services to parents and pupils, making sure that children know how to use train timetables and establishing a Code of Conduct leaflet.<sup>153</sup>

4.13.7 The use of trains for school transport purposes should be encouraged in an effort to reduce car congestion and air pollution.

#### **Recommendation 11**

**To maximise the use of the rail network, where available, for school transport purposes.**

#### **4.14 Parking Regulations and Green Travel Plans**

4.14.1 More specific to schools' direct surroundings, there are two connected issues relating to congestion, pollution and safety concerns; these are the issues associated with parking regulations and Green Travel Plans.

#### **4.15 Parking Regulations**

4.15.1 The effective management of parking is already central for Kent County Council in order to deliver the Objective of Demand Management in its Local Transport Plan (LTP).<sup>154</sup> Kent's District Councils are responsible for the practical application of parking policy within a framework organised by KCC. One of the aims of this collaboration is to produce and implement Local Parking Plans (LPPs) which can regulate local parking systems in terms of quantity, length of stay and through charging regimes.<sup>155</sup>

4.15.2 In order to deliver the Local Transport Plan, Kent County Council is aspiring to take on new powers sanctioned in the Traffic Management Act 2004, to enforce parking and moving offences.<sup>156</sup> These powers cover areas such as yellow box junctions, banned turns, one-way streets, parking on pedestrian crossings and a new double-parking offence.<sup>157</sup>

4.15.3 Kent County Council also endeavours to tackle the issue of car parking around school sites. Parking initiatives aimed at reducing congestion and pollution around schools, and aimed at securing pupils' safety, are promoted in school travel plans, which are already considered by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste.<sup>158 159</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> School Travel Plan Toolkit, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>154</sup> Provisional Local Transport Plan for Kent, 2006-11, Kent County Council.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

<sup>159</sup> School Travel Plans, Improving Bus Services, A report to the Highways Advisory Board, Kent County Council, 2005.

4.15.4 Despite these measures, the Committee learned that problems resulting from car parking by parents when taking and collecting their children to and from school persist and are serious. Indeed, Mr Williams, Managing Director of bus operator ARRIVA, complained that the extent of the problem around some schools was so severe that he suggested half mile parking exclusions around schools at start and finish times.<sup>160</sup>

4.15.5 A stricter enforcement of parking regulations around school sites is necessary in order to reduce car congestion and pollution, and in order to increase pupils' safety. This task could be promoted through existing school travel plans.

### **Recommendation 12**

**To urge a stricter enforcement of parking regulations in schools' surroundings.**

### **4.16 Green Travel Plans**

4.16.1 A Green Travel Plan (GTP) consists of a series of measures leading to agreed targets and a monitoring regime in respect of encouraging the use of sustainable transport, as well as promoting a more efficient use of the car.<sup>161</sup> A GTP should be tailored to the particular problems of, and opportunities for, the site.<sup>162</sup>

4.16.2 Schools, together with businesses and hospitals, are a central object for the promotion and implementation of Green Travel Plans.<sup>163</sup>

4.16.3 The targets of a GTP should be aimed at reducing the number of trips made to the school by cars in favour of other modes. Suitable targets might include aims to increase walking, cycling and passenger transport use to the site.<sup>164</sup>

4.16.4 When promoting walking, a GTP should include measures that ensure that links to and from school are pedestrian friendly. These can include the provision of direct and convenient entrances for walkers in order to reduce the walking distances for pupils to reach passenger transport facilities. Also, a GTP should ensure that walking facilities are safe and well lit, and should ensure routes that avoid the need for children to cross large areas of car parking or areas liable to be obstructed by cars.<sup>165</sup>

4.16.5 The requirements for cycling facilities are similar to those for walking. A GTP should ensure the provision of convenient access to school for cyclists. It should also ensure the provision of cycling facilities that take account of safety concerns including lighting and cycle lanes.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>161</sup> Green Travel Plans, Hertfordshire County Council, 2001.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Green Travel Plans, Hertfordshire County Council, 2001.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

4.16.6 Finally, a GTP should make sure that links to and from schools are passenger transport friendly. This can be achieved by providing entrances near bus stops, and well lit bus shelters with convenient information boards.<sup>167</sup>

4.16.7 The benefits that Green Travel Plans can bring about to schools are numerous. However, evidence suggested that sustainable transport was only one of many criteria to be considered when schools were developed, and it appeared that they were not always embodied in the planning stage, before building a school.<sup>168</sup> It was pointed out that support at the planning stage could be provided by KCC Commercial Services, as that division held the database of pupil flows.<sup>169</sup>

4.16.8 The inclusion of Green Travel Plans at the planning stage of school developments encourages infrastructure for sustainable transport, and could avoid or reduce future problems associated with congestion, pollution and safety around the school site.

### **Recommendation 13**

**To ensure that Green Travel Plans are embodied in the planning stage before building new schools, which should include consultation with KCC Commercial Services.**

## **4.17 Dedicated School Buses**

4.17.1 Sometimes local circumstances make walking and cycling impractical systems of travelling to and from school. Rural, denominational and specialist schools tend to have a wider catchment, resulting in greater reliance on the private car.<sup>170</sup> In such situations car sharing or the provision of dedicated school buses seem to be the best realistic alternative to cars.<sup>171</sup>

4.17.2 The Kent community generally supports the use of buses; the bus market in Kent increased from 43.4 million trips in 2003/4 to 44.8 million trips in 2004/5.<sup>172</sup> In terms of use of public service vehicles for home to school transport, 19,183 (91%) mainstream pupils are transported by bus to school, compared to only 1,910 (9%) using the rail network.<sup>173</sup> KCC buys from the two largest bus operators in Kent alone, ARRIVA and Stagecoach, about 10,300 season tickets for a total annual amount of about £8 million.<sup>174</sup>

4.17.3 Together with the commercial provision of school bus transport as an integrated part of the County's scheduled bus network, Kent County Council recently invested in a small, dedicated yellow school bus fleet. Kent's Passenger Services, operated as part of KCC's Commercial Transport

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> David Joyner, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

<sup>169</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>170</sup> Improving Bus Services, School Travel Plans, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Kevin Harlock, Commercial Services Director, Kent County Council, 1 March 2006.

<sup>174</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

Services, recently introduced 9 school buses, of which 6 are constructed to higher specifications and are painted yellow.<sup>175</sup>

4.17.4 They consist of adapted vehicles for, in which CCTV cameras and lifts for wheelchair access were installed.<sup>176</sup>

4.17.5 Similar initiatives involving dedicated school buses have been introduced across the UK. There has been growing interest in the use of American style yellow bus schemes and several local authorities, including West Sussex, Staffordshire and Cheshire, introduced American style school buses as an alternative to their existing school transport contracts.<sup>177</sup> In addition, three pilot schemes were launched by yellow bus operator First Group in Hebden Bridge (West Yorkshire), Runnymede (Surrey) and Wrexham (North Wales), followed by programmes in Wokingham, Aberdeen, and Windsor and Maidenhead.<sup>178</sup>  
<sup>179</sup> <sup>180</sup>

4.17.6 Some disadvantages can be associated with bus transport, and can account in part for a reduced bus use. For example, according to a report commissioned by the Department for Transport, children who travel to school by car are reluctant to use public transport because it is easier and more convenient for them if they are driven door to door.<sup>181</sup> Also, some parents may be concerned about their children's safety and security walking to and from the bus stop and on board of buses, particularly if they are public services.<sup>182</sup>

4.17.7 However, there are also several benefits associated with an involvement by KCC in school transport, and the expansion of Kent's dedicated school bus fleet has already been considered and promoted by the Highways Advisory Board.<sup>183</sup> In general, the study by the Department for Transport reveals that once pupils have tried travelling on buses, they are generally keen on using them, valuing the opportunity to interact with their friends outside the school and enjoying the feeling of independence resulting from travelling without parents.<sup>184</sup>

4.17.8 More specifically to Kent, as witnesses explained to the Select Committee, a central reason for Kent County Council to run its own buses was to fill a vacuum on routes not covered by private bus operators because not considered commercially viable.<sup>185</sup> <sup>186</sup> Another important reason for KCC to run its own buses consisted in the fact these buses regulated the market; by

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Evaluation of First Yellow School Bus Schemes, Department for Transport, 2004

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Runnymede Yellow School Bus, Runnymede Borough Council, 2004.

<sup>180</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk>

<sup>181</sup> Best Practice for Increasing Bus Use for Journeys to School, Department for Transport, 1999.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> School Travel Plans, Improving Bus Services, A Report to the Highways Advisory Board, 2005.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>186</sup> School Travel, Department for Transport, 2006.



introducing them, and through the competition mechanism, KCC influenced and kept lower the fares charged by other operators.<sup>187</sup>

4.17.9 A potential expansion of a KCC bus fleet has to be carried out carefully and gradually. Mr Southgate, Managing Director of Stagecoach bus operator, pointed out that a countywide extension of KCC owned buses would drastically reduce their current fleet and therefore their ability to sustain weekend and evening services.<sup>188</sup> Both Mr Southgate and Mr Williams, Managing Director of ARRIVA bus operator, estimated that their companies would have to reduce bus routes by 10-15%, seriously affecting the network they provided.<sup>189</sup>

4.17.10 Nonetheless, it appears that a careful and gradual expansion of buses by KCC can bring about crucial benefits in terms of covering routes that are not commercially viable and in terms of market regulation.

#### **Recommendation 14**

**For Kent County Council to gradually expand its bus fleet, where this can be done without unacceptable harm to the viability of commercially provided routes.**

#### **4.18 Anti-Social Behaviour on Buses**

4.18.1 Anti-social behaviour on buses was another issue that the Committee considered. The safety and security of children are paramount. Also, young people's perception of bus transport is significantly influenced by their experience on the vehicles, and can be a determinant factor in deciding whether or not to use buses to go to school.<sup>190</sup>

4.18.2 Young people can be the victims of crime and anti-social behaviour when travelling to and from school by bus. When young people are ill-treated, the most likely perpetrators are other young people.<sup>191</sup> Younger children are more likely than older young people to be bullied when travelling, either by pupils at their own school or by young people from another school.<sup>192</sup>

4.18.3 Incidents where adults – drivers or passengers – are the aggressor, are more likely to involve rudeness than intimidation or violence. Older young people are more likely than young ones to have been upset by an adult, perhaps because they are more likely to travel independently and more frequently.<sup>193</sup>

4.18.4 Young people tend to complain that they would like transport staff to be more friendly, respectful and polite, and more helpful in providing information and

<sup>187</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>188</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>189</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>190</sup> Young People and Crime on Public Transport, Department for Transport, 2006.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> Young People and Crime on Public Transport, Department for Transport, 2006.

assistance.<sup>194</sup> Only 18% of those aged between 10 and 12 years describe staff as “usually helpful”, and this declines to 10% for those aged 15 and over.<sup>195</sup>

- 4.18.5 The examples young people give of drivers’ unhelpful attitude include driving past them at bus stops, starting off before they have sat down, and refusing to give change. In addition, many young people feel that drivers treat them alike, stereotyping them as troublesome.<sup>196</sup>
- 4.18.6 Bus operators, on the other hand, complain about pupils’ bad behaviour on board buses. Fear of pupils damaging vehicles is one reason for the reluctance damaged bus raises concern about the companies’ attitudes to vehicle safety and maintenance, and suggests that the operator is not concerned about the pupils.<sup>197</sup>
- 4.18.7 For instance, written evidence from Eastonways bus operator explains that they experience considerable vandalism, which can cause vehicles to be temporarily withdrawn from service in order to be repaired.<sup>198</sup> Also the company complains that the general public is reluctant to use their services because of pupils’ anti-social behaviour.<sup>199</sup>
- 4.18.8 Oral evidence from other bus companies’ representatives appears to support this complaint. Mr Pomfret, Schools Liaison Officer at Stagecoach, indicated that Stagecoach also experienced problems of pupils’ unruly behaviour, discouraging commuters’ use. However, Mr Southgate, Managing Director at Stagecoach pointed out that the idea of running services exclusively for school transport was financially prohibitive, as bus operators could only claim from Government a fuel duty rebate if their services were open to all.<sup>200</sup>
- 4.18.9 Both Mr Southgate and Mr Williams, Managing Director of ARRIVA bus operator, pointed out that young people’s bad behaviour was also one of the main causes for driver turnover, as drivers felt exasperated and threatened.<sup>201</sup>  
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- 4.18.10 While investigating the issue of anti-social behaviour on buses, the Committee was presented with initiatives and ideas aimed at tackling the problem. Eastonways, Stagecoach and ARRIVA representatives, and Mr Ferguson, representative of the Kent Youth County Council (KYCC), indicated the benefits that on board CCTV cameras, and escorts who manage pupils’ behaviour could bring about.<sup>203 204 205</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> [www.travelwise.org.uk](http://www.travelwise.org.uk)

<sup>198</sup> Eric Easton, Eastonways bus operator, 13 February 2006

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>201</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>202</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>205</sup> Steven Ferguson, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

4.18.11 Indeed, Stagecoach representatives pointed out that their companies recently invested £80,000 on fitting 30 vehicles with CCTV. ARRIVA also had a number of vehicles with CCTV; Mr Williams explained that although the cost for each CCTV system mounted to £3,500, the systems provided digital quality recording which could, if necessary, be used in court as evidence.<sup>206 207</sup>

4.18.12 It appears, then, that the issue of anti-social behaviour on public buses is real and it negatively affects the quality of life of Kent residents. CCTV cameras and escorts on board of buses can have a beneficial impact and reduce the extent of this problem.

#### **Recommendation 15**

**To promote the use of CCTV systems in all buses used for school transport provision in Kent, and to encourage the provision of escorts in school buses.**

#### **4.19 Staggering School Times**

4.19.1 Staggering start and finish school times is another initiative that can help reducing car congestion and school transport costs. The issue is complex, and further investigation is necessary in order to consider carefully its benefits and difficulties.

4.19.2 There is no specific legal requirement determining the length of the school day; there is guidance, which differs depending on the age range of the child.<sup>208</sup> Schools are required by law to open for 190 days a year, and the school day has to be divided into relatively equal sessions with a break of at least 30 minutes between them. Guidelines state that the weekly amount of teaching time should be about 21 hours for younger pupils and about 25 hours for secondary school students; this amount excludes Religious Education and assemblies.<sup>209</sup>

4.19.3 In relation to staggering school times the local authority cannot set the hours of the school; only governing bodies can do so by going through a legal process involving public consultation with parents and the local authority.<sup>210</sup>

4.19.4 A concerted co-ordination of staggered opening and closing times by different schools in Kent can potentially be implemented through clusters of schools.

4.19.5 In September 2003, in order to move from a competitive model to one of shared responsibility, all 617 LEA schools agreed to be grouped into 22 collaborative clusters, where each cluster served a defined geographical area.<sup>211</sup> The largest cluster, Dartford, subsequently sub-divided to form two smaller clusters, resulting in the current total of 23 clusters.<sup>212</sup>

<sup>206</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>207</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>208</sup> Ian Craig, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 9 February 2006.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> The Kent Primary Strategy, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

4.19.6 School clusters in Kent vary in size between 18 and 42 schools. Each cluster has an elected board of headteachers, which sets and monitors the work of the cluster. To support good communication within and between clusters the local authority developed a dedicated electronic extranet site, "Clusterweb", shared between the local authority, schools and staff. The site provides constant access to key educational resources and supports each cluster in sharing best practice, news and information.<sup>213</sup>

#### **4.20 Benefits Associated with Staggering School Times**

4.20.1 Several benefits can be associated with staggering school times. By staggering school times it is possible to spread the school travel peak into less congested travel times.<sup>214</sup> Reduced car congestion can also result in a decrease in accidents, injuries and casualties on the roads in Kent. For example, according to a report that leading motor insurer "More Than" produced in 2004, staggering school times across the country could prevent over 300 casualties a year.<sup>215</sup>

4.20.2 Not only can the initiative reduce congestion, pollution and accidents, but it can also reduce school transport costs. By staggering school times of all schools in Kent on an area basis, it may be possible to save up to £500,000 a year in school transport costs.<sup>216</sup>

4.20.3 Mr Williams, Managing Director of ARRIVA bus operator, supports the scheme, pointing out the potential benefits. He confirmed that by extending the peak period, and with the co-operation of schools within a specified area, it was feasible to organise two or three school runs out of each bus and driver. This would allow the bus company to charge KCC lower prices for school transport.<sup>217</sup>

4.20.4 Mr Southgate, Managing Director of Stagecoach bus operator, appears to agree with Mr Williams. He stated that with co-ordinated starting and finishing times, vehicles could be used twice and the number of buses could be reduced, leading to savings. He gave the example of the Marlowe Academy, which had a finish time of 5.00 pm, enabling buses to be used twice.<sup>218</sup>

4.20.5 Both representatives of the two bus companies pointed out that in order to bring about meaningful financial benefits, it was necessary to stagger school times between 45 and 90 minutes, depending on the location of the school.<sup>219</sup>  
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<sup>213</sup> The Kent Primary Strategy, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>214</sup> Travelling to School: An Action Plan, Department for Transport and Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

<sup>215</sup> More Than Motoring Risk Report, produced in association with the Centre for Economics and Business Ltd, 2004

<sup>216</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>217</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>218</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

4.20.6 Mr Ferguson, from the KYCC, also endorsed the positive potential impact of such an initiative, although he expressed concerns about the initial reaction of pupils facing earlier or later journeys to school.<sup>221</sup>

4.20.7 Responses from headteachers of schools in Kent were mixed, and ranged from enthusiasm for the scheme to disagreement.<sup>222</sup>

#### **4.21 Difficulties Associated with Staggering School Times**

4.21.1 Together with all these benefits, it seems that difficulties can also be associated with staggering school times. It may be challenging to orchestrate a co-ordinated timetable between schools in rural Kent, even within cluster areas. Evidence in a home to school transport report produced in Buckinghamshire in 2003, showed that it was easier to run a co-ordinated system in concentrated, urban areas.<sup>223</sup>

4.21.2 Co-ordination issues can also emerge if single schools staggered their own timetables without a concerted mechanism that included other schools. For instance, a school in Kent unilaterally changed its starting times, causing severe problems with the public transport network.<sup>224</sup>

4.21.3 Also, written evidence from several schools in Kent consulted by the KCC Committee indicates that the proposal of staggering primary and secondary school times could encounter resistance from parents. The main reason seems to be that many parents organise their working hours around school times, and changing schools' timetables would affect their work patterns.<sup>225 226</sup>

4.21.4 The issue of staggering school times is complex; several benefits can result, but not without difficulties. Further investigation, involving both school clusters and bus operators in Kent is necessary, in order to determine the most beneficial outcome, taking into account Government and KCC's policy of operating extended school days.

#### **Recommendation 16**

**To carry out further investigation, through bus companies and school clusters, into the staggering of starting and finishing times of primary and secondary schools in Kent in order to reduce car congestion and school transport costs.**

<sup>221</sup> Steven Ferguson, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

<sup>222</sup> See written evidence from Graham Chisnell, Deal Parochial CEP school, 2006

<sup>223</sup> Report on the Committee's Investigation of Home to School Transport, Buckinghamshire County Council, 2003.

<sup>224</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>225</sup> See written evidence from schools, 2006.

<sup>226</sup> Ian Craig, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 9 February 2006.



## 5. Technology and Integration

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In the previous chapter the report has given an account of the investigation by the Select Committee of methods of student movement that could result in significant reductions in the use of personal cars for home to school transport. The Home to School Transport Select Committee also considered the way technology system and integration strategies can affect school transport in Kent. More specifically, it considered the use of technology systems to improve the efficiency of school transport. It explored initiatives regarding the integration of school transport with other service providers. Finally, the Committee investigated opportunities for cross-border co-operation with neighbouring authorities in providing school transport.

### 5.1 Technology Systems and School Transport

5.1.1 The company providing school transport technology to KCC is Trapeze. The company aims at providing safe, cost-effective transport services to mainstream, special schools and colleges.<sup>227</sup> Its innovative school transport technology helps planning, funding and service delivery. The components that Trapeze offers include: optimal routing, timetabling and scheduling; student and operations management; tender and contract management; route monitoring, customer service and reporting.<sup>228</sup>

5.1.2 The particular database system that KCC purchased from Trapeze is called “Routewise”. The intelligent system performs a variety of tasks. For instance, it holds the name and address of pupils, their historical routes, and it enables postcode searching.<sup>229</sup> This makes it possible to identify the transport means available to each school in Kent and the number of pupils in a designated postcode area, ensuring an efficient allocation of transport.<sup>230</sup>

5.1.3 The Committee also heard evidence about the methodology in relation to the procurement of school transport in Kent. KCC officers dealing with mainstream education transport entered details in the database to inform their colleagues in KCC’s Commercial Services section that a pupil was eligible to free transport. The intelligent software was used to identify the most economical way to provide school transport for the pupil. For example, after receiving a request for free school transport for a student, Commercial Services officers first investigated whether there was already a form of transport available in the area with spare capacity.<sup>231</sup>

5.1.4 Mr Harlock, Commercial Services Director, indicated that he was yet to come across to any other intelligent system that was more effective than Routewise.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Trapezesoftware.co.uk.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

5.1.5 The Select Committee investigated the school transport intelligent software adopted by KCC, and was satisfied with the current practice.

### **Recommendation 17**

**To continue to monitor technical developments which may be of use in the provision of school transport to a higher appropriate standard.**

## **5.2 Integration of School Transport with Other Service Providers**

5.2.1 Section 2.1 outlined that the Transport Act 1985 encourages local authorities to co-ordinate school and social services transport in order to provide best value for money from the expenditure on public transport.<sup>233</sup>

5.2.2 The “East Kent Direct” project is a recent partnership between Kent County Council, Kent Ambulance Trust, East Kent hospital trusts and the East Kent Primary Care Trust, to explore ways of integrating resources and services, and sharing knowledge and experience in order to maximise efficiencies in transport services. The Project is based on an established scheme operating in Hertfordshire.<sup>234</sup>

5.2.3 Within Hertfordshire, a number of local authorities, the National Health Service, and other local transport organisations created a collaborative structure called “Herts Transport Direct”. The aim of this project was to set up one point of contact – a hot line – to co-ordinate all transport services in Hertfordshire and allocate the most suitable means of transport according to specific needs.<sup>235</sup>

5.2.4 As David Neilan, Hertfordshire Community Transport Officer explains, the scheme ensures high quality transport and information. In addition, it ensures that the appropriate transport is provided to residents; some people might be ferried to hospital by ambulance when it would be more appropriate for them to travel by passenger transport and save the ambulance service for emergency calls.<sup>236</sup>

5.2.5 The single point of access in Hertfordshire was developed by examining the dial a ride and volunteer car schemes, non emergency ambulances and social services transport.<sup>237</sup>

5.2.6 The East Kent Direct project, which is currently being developed, is jointly funded by KCC Social Services, the Kent Ambulance Trust and Primary Care trusts in East Kent.<sup>238</sup> <sup>239</sup> The Project’s objective is to achieve greater integration in the planning and provision of transport services, exploring ways

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<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> Trauma and Orthopaedics Interview, Kent County Council, 4 February 2005.

<sup>235</sup> Shaping Your Local Health Service, East Sussex County Council and Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>236</sup> [www.hertsdirect.org](http://www.hertsdirect.org).

<sup>237</sup> Shaping Your Local Health Service, East Sussex County Council and Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>238</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>239</sup> Accessibility Strategy for Kent, Kent county Council, 2006



of providing a single point of access to transport information, and improve the accessibility and quality of services at KCC's disposal.<sup>240</sup>

- 5.2.7 The project is currently tackling several objectives. These objectives, for instance, include: the production of travel information brochures detailing transport and services to each of the hospital sites in East Kent; a wider promotion of the service in the local press and libraries; the exploration of the alignment of East Kent Social Services transport co-ordination to Commercial Services, in order to provide additional procurement and generate greater efficiencies; training and information sharing, in order to perform a variety of tasks, including driving, moving and handling, and health and safety.<sup>241</sup>
- 5.2.8 The project will address 4 longer-term workstreams once the restructuring processes stabilise after April 2006. These include exploring: the potential to expand the service in the future to include journey mapping and booking procedures; the co-ordination of voluntary car schemes to maximise efficiencies; the pooling of taxi requirements through joint agreements.<sup>242</sup>
- 5.2.9 The Select Committee endorses and supports the East Kent Direct Project, which endeavours to provide a single point of access to co-ordinated transport information.

### **Recommendation 18**

**To support the East Kent Direct project in an effort to supply a more co-ordinated, integrated and efficient allocation of transport services which meet the needs of Kent residents.**

### **5.3 Cross-Border Co-operation**

- 5.3.1 Co-operation and information sharing between KCC and neighbouring authorities has also the potential of bringing about more efficient and cost-effective school transport.
- 5.3.2 Cross-border collaborative structures with East Sussex, Surrey and Medway are already in place in order to maximise the utilisation of transport.<sup>243</sup> For example, vehicles from Rye in East Sussex are used for trips to Tenterden.<sup>244</sup>
- 5.3.3 It appears that even greater benefits could be achieved. This is possible if different authorities shared the same transport technology, and if one single organisation administered and utilised a central, co-ordinated database.<sup>245</sup> The main benefit is that, by sharing one database and by operating on a larger scale, transport costs would be shared and reduced.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> East Kent Direct Reference Group, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

- 5.3.4 Several authorities were contacted in order to investigate their transport structures and strategies and in order to explore the potential for further co-operation. The authorities that responded were Medway Council, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council and Hertfordshire County Council. All authorities appeared to be in the process of investigating or implementing new transport systems, therefore the information they could provide was limited by incomplete transport structures and experiences.
- 5.3.5 Medway Council explained that they adopted an outdated “Dataease” database, which was inherited from KCC. They indicated that the system was unable to handle their increased needs. For example, budget forecasting functions were not performed by their software.<sup>247</sup>
- 5.3.6 Medway officers pointed out that Medway Council was considering the purchase of a new system capable of handling home to school transport more effectively. Medway Council considered the intelligent system used in Kent attractive to them, and appeared to welcome the idea of further cross-border collaboration.<sup>248</sup>
- 5.3.7 East Sussex County Council officers explained that the Council was carrying out a comprehensive admission and transport review. They regretted that they could not provide an extensive and final response, as they had not investigated school transport in detail yet.<sup>249</sup> Nonetheless, East Sussex County Council appeared to be inclined to pursue further co-operative transport strategies.<sup>250</sup>
- 5.3.8 Hertfordshire County Council outlined that their new, unfinished structure HAPS (Hertfordshire Advanced Passenger System) was designed to replace approximately 16 different systems within their Passenger Transport Unit (PTU). HAPS would derive the benefits of a single database for virtually all PTU activities.<sup>251</sup>
- 5.3.9 The system adopted in Hertfordshire included different “modules” that performed diverse transport related activities. The largest module had been for mainstream education transport and included new features to simplify ticket and student ID issues as well as handling payments.<sup>252</sup>
- 5.3.10 Modules needing completion included a Forecast Changes Log, electronic registrations and concessionary fares. Hertfordshire County Council did not provide a firm response about their views on collaborative strategies.<sup>253</sup>
- 5.3.11 West Sussex County Council was also in the process of implementing a “Mobischool” system, taking effect from 1 April 2006. It was explained that the new GIS and database systems promised to provide a fully networked system

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<sup>247</sup> Medway Council, 11 January 2006.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> East Sussex County Council, 2006

<sup>250</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 17 January 2006.

<sup>251</sup> Hertfordshire County Council, 2006.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

with 10 parallel users as opposed to the stand-alone arrangement currently adopted.<sup>254</sup>

5.3.12 The scope of the system was to provide route schedules, maps, specific reports, an automated planning system, letter writing facilities and pass production, with an interface into their financial system. Mobischool would include all primary, secondary, tertiary and SEN pupils. It could also allow for future expansion to comprise Social Services and public transport services.<sup>255</sup>

5.3.13 West Sussex County Council officers were unable to predict accurately how effective their system was going to be. They also indicated that they were not planning technology sharing.<sup>256</sup>

5.3.14 The Home to School Transport Select Committee in KCC investigated opportunities for cross-border co-operation with other authorities. The potential for further collaboration exists. However, further investigation into innovative arrangements and strategies is necessary, in order to create a more cost-effective transport system.

#### **Recommendation 19**

**To continue to support cross-border collaboration with neighbouring authorities and to promote the initiative of a shared, co-ordinated transport database aimed at maximising the utilisation of school transport, and creating a more cost-effective transport system.**

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<sup>254</sup> West Sussex County Council, 10 January 2006

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> West Sussex County Council, 10 January 2006



## 6. Exploring Pathfinder Opportunities

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An effective school transport system is essential in order to reduce dependence on private cars and promote a sustainable transport network. The schools White Paper “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All” (October 2005) proposes an overarching duty on local authorities to assess the travel and transport needs of all pupils, and to support safe and sustainable travel to school. One of the initiatives encouraged by the Paper is the setting up of “Pathfinder authorities” to implement innovative solutions to home to school transport.

### 6.1 The White Paper and School Transport

6.1.1 As outlined in Chapter 2, the provision of school transport in England and Wales is governed by the 1944 Education Act and subsequent legislation, which stipulate the eligibility criteria for free school transport.<sup>257</sup>

6.1.2 A local authority currently has a duty to provide free transport for a child where the home to school walking distance measured by the nearest available route is two miles or more for a child under eight, and three miles or more for a child over eight.<sup>258</sup>

6.1.3 Many local authorities provide discretionary free school transport in addition to the statutory requirements. In Kent, the policy provides free school transport for pupils attending the nearest denominational school of the same denomination as the pupil, if the pupil lives beyond the statutory distance. In addition, free school transport is extended to those pupils attending their nearest selective school, if they live beyond the statutory walking distance and if they live within a selective scheme of education.<sup>259</sup>

6.1.4 The White Paper proposes to extend the entitlement to free transport for disadvantaged children – that is, children eligible for free school meals or in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit – to any of the three nearest, suitable secondary schools, where these schools are within 2 and 6 miles away.<sup>260</sup>

### 6.2 The Pathfinder Pilot Scheme

6.2.1 The White Paper also states that greater access to subsidised school transport can help reduce car use on the school run and reduce environmental pollution and car accidents. In this context, the Government intends to develop and support “Pathfinder” pilot schemes.

6.2.2 Pathfinder authorities will be able to make reasonable charges for the transport arrangements they make. These charges can only be introduced

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<sup>257</sup> Home to School Transport for Mainstream Pupils, Kent County Council, 2002.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>260</sup> White Paper “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All – More Choice for Parents and Pupils”, October 2005.

when pupils change school.<sup>261</sup> Certain categories of children will be excluded from charges. For example, those eligible to free school meals and maximum level of Working Tax Credit; pupils requiring transport because there is no safe walking route; pupils with SEN and other disabilities that prevent them from walking even short distances to school.<sup>262</sup>

6.2.3 There are specific mandatory features to be eligible for Pathfinder status. Travel and transport arrangements must reflect parental preference; this can include banding arrangements. The local authority must demonstrate it is reducing car use for school transport purposes. Transport arrangements must be organised for pupils living 2-3 miles from school.<sup>263</sup>

6.2.4 Optional features are also mentioned. These include transport solutions tailored to rural schools; pupils participating in extra curricular activities; wider use of staggered school times; more technology in school planning; closer integration between education, health care and social services transport.<sup>264</sup>

6.2.5 Potential Pathfinders will have to design schemes for approval and bid for additional central government funds to support this offer.<sup>265</sup>

### **6.3 Kent and Pathfinder Opportunities**

6.3.1 Chapter 4 reported that over the past 20 years a number of changes have taken place in the way children travel to school. Today in Kent 78% of households own one or more cars. Government projections predict that this figure will increase and that traffic in England will grow by 26% between 2000 and 2010, with an average increase of 2.6% per annum.<sup>266</sup>

6.3.2 In urban areas in term time nearly one in five cars at 08.50 am is on the school run. In the last 10 years the proportion of car journeys to school has nearly doubled, from 16% to 30%. The average length of the journey to school for secondary school pupils has gone up by well over a third.<sup>267</sup>

6.3.3 Sometimes local circumstances make walking and cycling impractical systems of travelling to and from school. In such situations the provision of school buses seems to be the best realistic alternative to private cars.<sup>268</sup> An innovative provision of school transport by bus can help reduce congestion; innovative measures are required in Pathfinder specifications.

6.3.4 Working towards Pathfinder targets can also help in tackling important issues resulting from the statutory requirements in the 1944 Education Act. The distance-based system to determine free transport eligibility relies on

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<sup>261</sup> White Paper "Higher Standards, Better Schools for All – More Choice for Parents and Pupils", October 2005.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Provisional Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-11, 2006.

<sup>267</sup> Travelling to School: An Action Plan, Department for Transport and Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

<sup>268</sup> Improving Bus Services, School Travel Plans, Kent County Council, 2005.

assumptions which originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century about a reasonable walking distance for a child.<sup>269</sup> These thresholds are viewed by both local authorities and parents as unrealistic; few children would walk more than a mile to school.<sup>270</sup>

- 6.3.5 In addition, distance-based eligibility means that parents on lower incomes may have to pay for their children to travel to school, while parents on higher incomes may be excluded from school transport expenses.<sup>271</sup>
- 6.3.6 According to the “School Organisation and Transport Best Value” report carried out by KCC in 2002, consultation with internal stakeholders indicated that these anomalies in the provision of free school transport resulted in considerable dissatisfaction with the lack of support to non-entitled children.<sup>272</sup> Indeed, 20% of parents maintain that school transport should be free.<sup>273</sup> In relation to these issues, it is perhaps interesting to note that evidence collected in 2005 showed that the UK had the lowest provision of subsidy for bus services per head in Europe, and was funded largely by fares.<sup>274</sup>

#### **6.4 Pathfinder Opportunities in a Selected Area**

- 6.4.1 The exploration of becoming a Pathfinder authority - with the potential benefits that can result – could reasonably take place in East Kent. The East Kent area includes the Districts of Canterbury, Dover, Thanet, Ashford and Shepway. As a whole, East Kent is characterised by greater deprivation and social problems than West Kent; analysis of Deprivation Indices (IMD) 2004 indicates that Thanet is the most deprived district in Kent.<sup>275</sup>
- 6.4.2 The pilot scheme can be limited to secondary school pupils, aged 11 to 16 years. The main reason for not investigating the effects of the scheme on mainstream transport in primary schools results from the fact that its costs are relatively low compared to secondary school transport. The forecast cost for all mainstream primary school transport for 2005/6 is about £1,250,000, out of a total school transport budget of about £13million per year.<sup>276 277</sup>
- 6.4.3 All students aged 11 to 16 years in a selected area could be provided with an annual pass paid for by KCC. The bus pass would be flexible, allowing students to travel any time of the day during weekends and in the summer when schools are closed.
- 6.4.4 Canterbury District has a high level of about 30 per cent of 11 to 16 year olds attending secondary schools within the District receiving free home to school transport from KCC. This is primarily because about 50% of the 120,000 residents live along the Herne Bay/Whitstable coastal strip with close access

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<sup>269</sup> [www.travelwise.org.uk](http://www.travelwise.org.uk)

<sup>270</sup> Best Practice for Increasing Bus Use for Journeys to School, Department for Transport, 1999.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>272</sup> School Organisation and Transport Best Value, Kent County Council, 2002.

<sup>273</sup> Attitudes to School Transport, Department For Transport, 2003.

<sup>274</sup> Trauma and Orthopaedics meeting, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>275</sup> Provisional Local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-11, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>276</sup> Julia Seaward, Head of Transport, Kent County Council, 2006.

<sup>277</sup> Jenny Young, Head of Admissions and Transport, Kent County Council, 2006.

to only 2,460 secondary school places for the 9,916 students. Consequently, as about 5,000 students from the coastal strip need secondary school places, about 2,500 need to travel over 3 miles to attend a secondary school.<sup>278 279</sup>

- 6.4.5 As KYCC representative Mr Ferguson and representatives of Stagecoach and ARRIVA bus operators informed, non-entitled pupils had to pay the full bus fare for travelling before 09.00am, while entitled pupils travelled free of charge. In addition, free school transport did not give young people sufficient travel flexibility, as it restricted the entitlement to only one journey to and from school, Monday to Friday. Also, entitlement to free travel was currently valid only until 6.00pm maximum, limiting the ability of students to participate in after school activities.<sup>280 281 282</sup>
- 6.4.6 It appears that the ability of using a bus pass outside school hours would have several benefits. Both Mr Ferguson and Mr Southgate pointed out that if young people were encouraged to travel by bus, they would be more likely to maintain the habit until adulthood, reducing the use of cars and sustaining bus companies.<sup>283 284</sup> Indeed, Mr Southgate explained that he would welcome an agreement to enable entitled children to use their season pass any time, as there were seats available off-peak and the add-on costs would be relatively low.<sup>285</sup>
- 6.4.7 A similar initiative is already being implemented in London. Everyone under 16 can travel free of charge on London's buses and trams. By making a one off £5 payment, all children aged 11 to 15 years can purchase an "Oyster Photocard" that, when touched on an automated card reader, allows them to travel free of charge on buses and trams. Children aged under 11 do not need a photocard to travel free of charge. Children aged 14 or 15 years can use the Photocard to travel free during the summer holidays.<sup>286</sup>
- 6.4.8 Both ARRIVA and Stagecoach representatives pointed out that, although the technology used in London was not easily affordable, a cashless system would be very welcome, as it speeded up the service and provided greater security for drivers.<sup>287 288</sup>
- 6.4.9 Another gain resulting from a potential expansion of bus services to accommodate an increase in 11 to 16 year olds is that it would benefit the community at large, as more services would be available. Indeed, some public bus services exist only because they are made profitable by school transport use. For example, the number 59 service to Grafty Green would not operate off-peak if scholars were not using it during peak times.<sup>289</sup> This

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<sup>278</sup> Please note: Community College, Whitstable: 1,013; Herne Bay High School, Herne Bay, 1,447.

<sup>279</sup> Annual Update School Organisation Plan, Kent County Council, 2005.

<sup>280</sup> Steven Ferguson, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

<sup>281</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>282</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>283</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>284</sup> Steven Ferguson, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 2 February 2006.

<sup>285</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>286</sup> Transport for London, 2006.

<sup>287</sup> Paul Southgate, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 20 January 2006.

<sup>288</sup> Heath Williams, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 30 January 2006.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*



potential expansion could be particularly beneficial to Kent's senior citizens, as from 1 April 2006 they will be entitled to free transport.<sup>290</sup>

6.4.10 Also, an increase in students travelling by bus could allow KCC to exercise greater bargaining leverage. For example, KCC would have the ability to influence the type of vehicle and the choice of greener fuels used by bus companies.<sup>291</sup>

6.4.11 Finally, a pilot scheme featuring an extended, subsidised provision of school transport would provide a more equitable system, supplanting outdated statutory requirements and current discretionary policies.

6.4.12 An innovative school transport scheme such as this is important because, as the KYCC put it, "access to affordable, regular, reliable and safe public transport is probably the biggest factor to affect the quality of the life opportunities available to young people across Kent..."<sup>292</sup>

#### **Recommendation 20**

**To explore the possibility of becoming a Pathfinder authority, by providing all students aged 11 to 16 years living in a selected area of Kent with an annual bus pass in order to evaluate bus usage and consequent reduction in car use.**

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<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> Kevin Harlock, Home to School Transport Select Committee, 3 February 2006.

<sup>292</sup> Transport and Young People in Kent, Kent Youth County Council, 2006.



## **Appendix 1 – Evidence**

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### **Witnesses who gave evidence to the Select Committee:**

**1. 17 January 2006**

Mr Kevin Harlock, Commercial Services Director, Kent County Council

Mrs Jennifer Young, Head of Admissions and Transport, Kent County Council

**2. 20 January 2006**

Mr Paul Southgate, Managing Director, Stagecoach Bus Operator, and  
Mr Tim Pomfret, Schools Liaison Officer, Stagecoach Bus Operator

**3. 30 January 2006**

Mr Simon Dolby, Chairman, Kent and Medway Walking Bus Group

Mr Heath Williams, Managing Director, ARRIVA Bus Operator

**4. 2 February 2006**

Mr David Joyner, Sustainable Transport Manager, Kent County Council

Mr Steven Ferguson, Kent Youth County Council

**5. 3 February 2006**

Mrs Jennifer Young, Head of Admissions and Transport, Kent County Council

Mr Kevin Harlock, Commercial Services Director, Kent County Council

**6. 9 February 2006**

Dr Ian Craig, Assistant Director – Operations, Kent County Council

**List of written evidence received:**

Mrs J Bramwell, The Bradbourne Secondary School

Graham Chisnell, Headteacher, Deal Parochial CE Primary School

Eric Easton, Eastonways coach and bus company

Roger Funnell, Transport Officer, Hertfordshire County Council

Mrs. Sue Hope, Headteacher, The Ripple Primary School

Catherine Karunaratna, Headteacher, The Downs CE Primary School

Mark Miller, Group Manager Transport Co-ordination, West Sussex County Council

Graham Stabbs, Headteacher, Warden House Primary School Deal

Richard Sutton-Smith, Headteacher, Claremont Primary School

Dave Tucker, Operations Manager, Streamline Taxis

Geoff Walters, Medway Council

Leon Williams, Governor, St Margaret's at Cliffe Primary School

## Appendix 2 – Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

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### Terms:

Cluster	A collaborative group of schools serving a defined geographical area.
Direction of pupils	There are different reasons for directing a pupil to a particular school. For example, if a child has recently moved to the area and it is too late to apply through the normal admission process. If a local authority directed a child to a specific school, then the authority would have to pay for the school transport.
Green Travel Plans	A Green Travel Plan consists of a series of measures leading to agreed targets and a monitoring regime in respect of encouraging the use of sustainable transport, as well as promoting a more efficient use of the car.
Kentcarshare	Kentcarshare is a free and secure internet-based car share system that allows people to register their journeys and find drivers or passengers to share one-off or regular journeys.
Kentschoolrun	Kentschoolrun is a dedicate schools car share matching system. Kentschoolrun is part of the “New Ways to School” initiative, promoted by KCC’s School Travel Planners.
Nearest Appropriate School	The nearest appropriate school is the geographically nearest school that is suitable to a child’s age, ability and aptitude. In particular places there may be more than one school that can be regarded as “nearest appropriate” for transport purposes
Pathfinder	Initiative encouraged by the White Paper “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All” (October 2005), to implement innovative solutions to home to school transport.

Routewise	School transport database system used by KCC.
Schemes of Education	Secondary schools in Kent are organised around different systems, called “schemes of education”. There is a large area with grammar schools and all-ability schools. Although this arrangement for secondary education applies to most of Kent, there are some exceptions. For example, there are some parts of the county where 11 is not the normal age to transfer to secondary school, or where pupils do not usually take part in the 11+ assessment for admission to grammar school.
School Travel Plan	A School Travel Plan helps parents and children understand the harmful effects of the increased use of cars on our health and safety, and can help children begin to travel independently. The need for these plans emerges from the fact that more children travel to school by car, resulting in less exercise, less understanding of where they live and less experience of making journeys of their own.
Walking Bus	A walking bus is the name for a supervised group of children walking to or from school. It is made up of at least two adult volunteers, who act as a ‘driver’ and a ‘conductor’ and escort the children. Adults and children all wear high-visibility waistcoats.

**Abbreviations:**

GTP	Green Travel Plan
HAPS	Hertfordshire Advanced Passenger System
KCC	Kent County Council
KYCC	Kent Youth County Council
LPP	Local Parking Plan
LTP	Local Transport Plan
NAS	Nearest Appropriate School
PTU	Passenger Transport Unit
SEN	Special Education Needs
VSPS	Vacant Seat Payment Scheme





## Appendix 3 - Maps

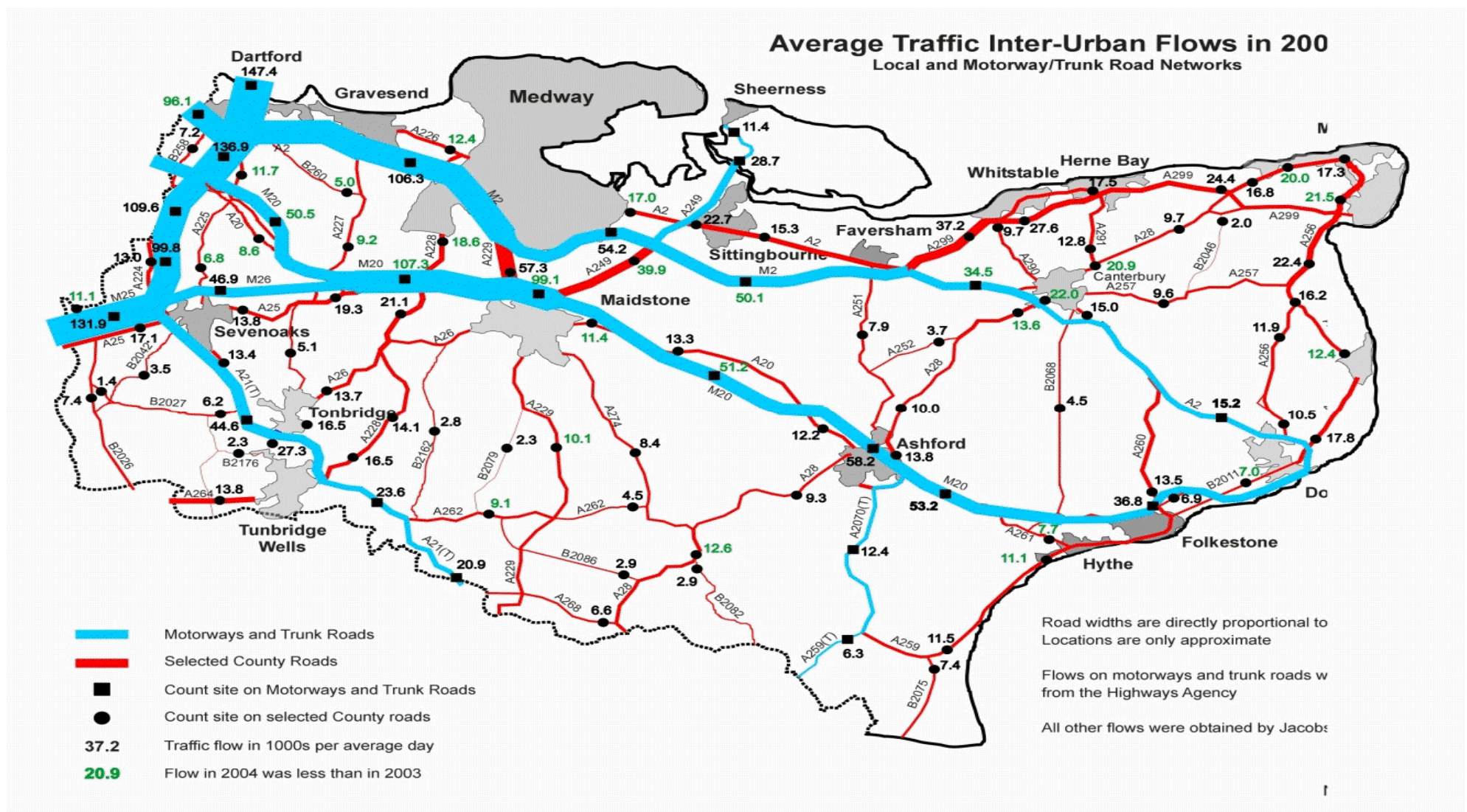


Figure 1: Kent Average Traffic Flows (2004)



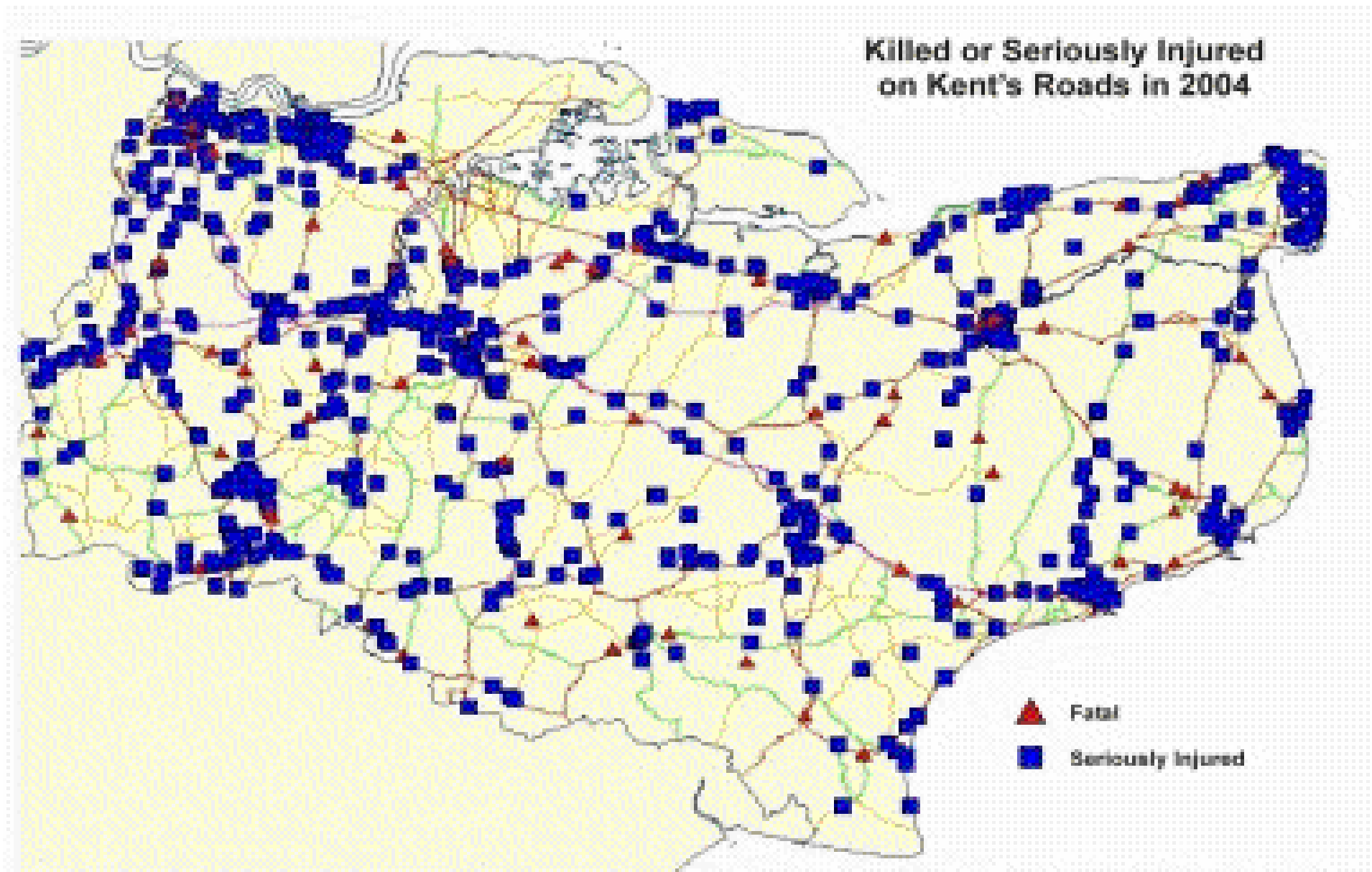


Figure 2: Killed or Seriously Injured on Kent's Roads (2004)



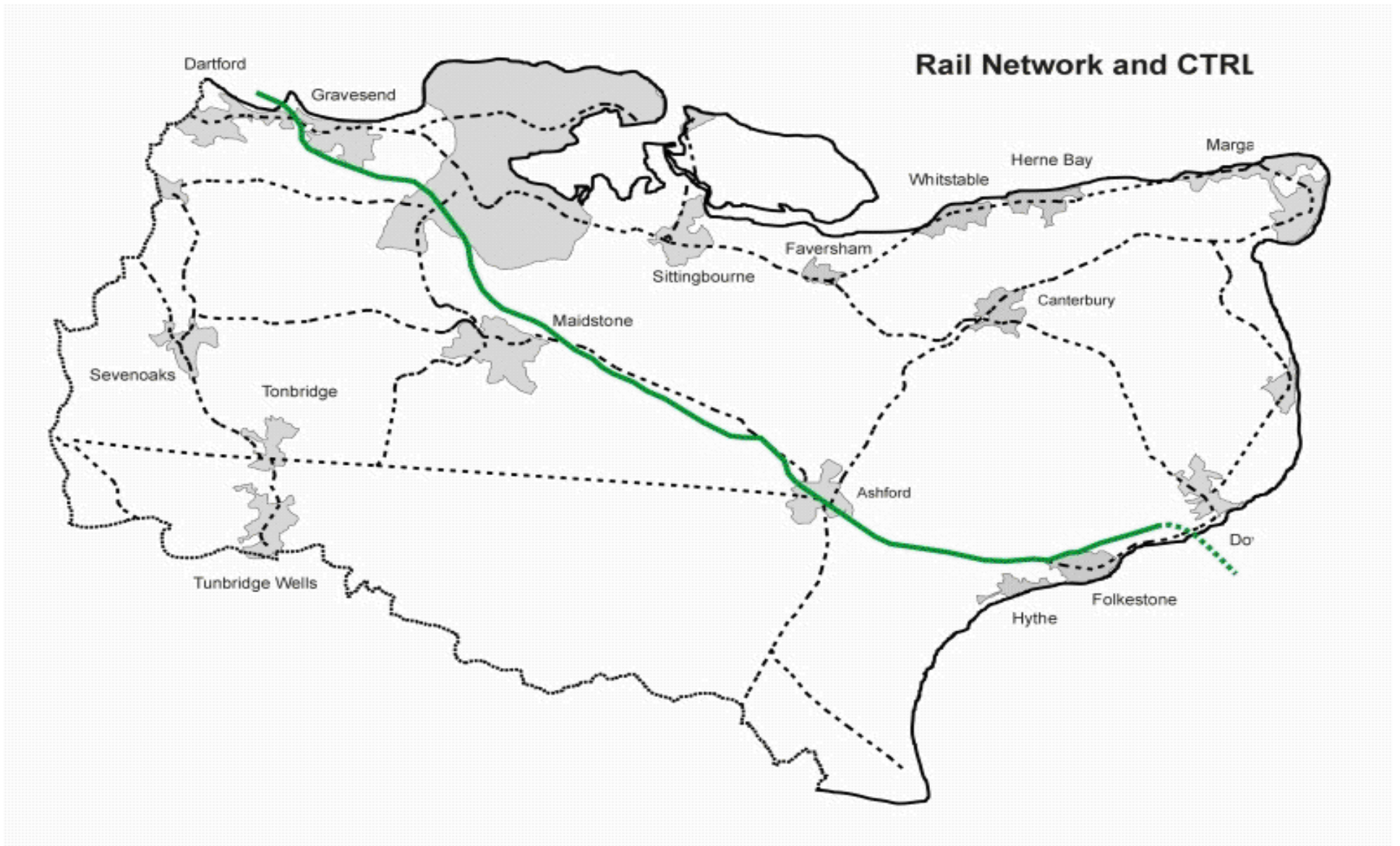


Figure 3: Kent Rail Network (2006)



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