



BEDFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Bedford's Active Travel Strategy (2011 - 2021)

December 2010



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Cycling and walking provide easy opportunities for many people to improve their health by incorporating physical activity into virtually every aspect of their lives, for both business and pleasure. Active travel also offers significant environmental benefits, as the replacement of even a small proportion of car journeys by cycling and walking will contribute to a reduction in the levels of congestion and emissions.
- 1.2 Poor health and obesity, congestion and accessibility in Bedford Borough all represent significant challenges for the Council and there is a recognised need to promote better health and well-being in its residents. At a time when public finances are under increasing pressure, the potential of low-cost, sustainable measures, such as walking and cycling, are attractive and effective ways of tackling these challenges.
- 1.3 Consequently this Strategy represents a crucial element of the Local Transport Plan, as it aims to increase levels of physical activity in travelling, while at the same time reducing congestion and improving air quality.

2.0 National Context

- 2.1 There are a number of barriers to people walking and cycling more. They can be physical barriers, but they can also be personal – ingrained habits or perceived barriers.
- 2.2 Safety concerns are often cited as reasons why people do not walk or cycle more. We know that vehicle speed is an important factor in road safety and that lower vehicle speeds make streets more pleasant and safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 2.3 Physical Activity
 - 2.3.1 Walking and cycling can bring major health benefits and an improved quality of life. The 2008 Health Survey of England revealed that two-thirds of adults in England do not attain the Chief Medical Officer's (CMO) recommendations for physical activity (at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity at least 5 times a week) and almost as many are classed as overweight or obese. Around 27 million adults are not getting the recommended amount of activity – in particular only 20% of men and 17% of women between the ages of 65 and 74 meet the CMO's recommendations. It is estimated that this costs the Country £9.8bn a year. Without action, nine out of ten adults and two-thirds of children would be obese by 2050.
 - 2.3.2 Regular walking and cycling activity of 'moderate intensity' can bring major health benefits and an improved quality of life to residents. People who are regularly active in this way reduce their risk of developing major chronic diseases by up to 50%, and the risk of premature death by 20-30%. Regular

physical activity can help all of us to lead healthier, happier lives, irrespective of age.

- 2.3.3 Adults can achieve the recommended level of activity with 30 minutes walking or cycling five times a week, and by embedding activity into their daily lives - through cycling to work or walking to the local shops – it is likely to be sustained.
- 2.3.4 Active travel by working age people is a particularly appealing route when they have money and time barriers to taking more physical activity, and even walking or cycling to work meetings can bring real health benefits and often be quicker and more reliable than driving.
- 2.3.5 For older people walking is particularly effective in maintaining independence and good health, and can promote social interaction which leads to an improved sense of wellbeing and quality of life. Walking is a natural, accessible and essential way of travelling and an essential part of most journeys. Shorter and more predictable journey times are possible when walking short distances of up to one mile.
- 2.3.6 For young people, there are many opportunities for involvement in active sports, but it is also important to embed at an early age the concept of active travel as a means of getting to different activities. In particular, the journey to school is ideal for walking and cycling for most children.
- 2.3.7 With walking and cycling being an easy way for many people to get more active and improve their health, PCTs and local transport teams should be working closely to ensure that local transport plans support local health objectives.
- 2.4 Emissions from road transport are a major contributor to poor air quality across the country but it is recognised many of these journeys or part of these journeys could be made on foot or cycled, reducing emissions and improving air quality.
- 2.5 The last Government's Low Carbon Transport Strategy (2009) alongside its Low Carbon Transition Plan, set out its plan for reducing transport emissions by 14% from the 2008 level by 2020 which included details of programmes of raising awareness of 'low carbon' travel options and investments in initiatives to promote walking and cycling.
- 2.6 The Sustainable Travel Town project, which ran from 2004 – 2009 in Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester produced a significant shift from the car to more sustainable modes, including walking and cycling, and demonstrated the potential for active travel policies to deliver significant health benefits and exceptional value for money.
- 2.7 In 2005, the national Cycling Towns programme was established and in 2009 the first results were announced. These were very positive with cycling having increased by 27% on average across all the towns.

2.8 These initiatives provide evidence of the benefits of cycling and walking schemes as well as demonstrating how they can be delivered at low cost but with high value outcomes.

3.0 Local Context

3.1 This Strategy supports a number of local strategies, policies, plans and programmes including:

- The Bedford Borough Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 – 2021
- Bedford Borough Council's Corporate Plan
- The Healthy Bedford Borough Strategy – Time to Change 2010-2015
- The Bedford Development Framework (Replacing 2002 Local Plan)
- Outdoor Access Improvement Plan
- *Green Wheel (emerging 'rim' of cycle routes around the fringes of the built-up area of Bedford with 'spokes' leading to the Town Centre)*

3.2 Poor health and obesity, carbon levels, poor air quality, congestion, accessibility and road safety are all particular challenges for the Borough Council.

3.3 As only one adult in nine in the Borough is thought to be physically active (as defined in 2.3 above), there is a need to encourage physical activity in order to help reduce obesity levels and sickness.

3.4 In 2009, Bedford Borough declared a new area wide Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) which incorporated two previous local areas. Increased cycling and walking will reduce vehicle emissions and so form an important part of the AQA Management Plan.

3.5 Cycling and Walking

3.5.1 Bedford Borough is well suited to Active Travel as the landscape is characterised by a gently undulating topography and plateau areas, divided by broad shallow valleys which lend themselves to walking and cycling.

3.5.2 The level of cycling into Bedford in 2009 was approximately 2.8% of all vehicles and has remained at about that level for several years, but evidence from the Cycle Demonstration Towns programme shows that there is potential to significantly increase levels of cycling by a programme of general and targeted initiatives.

3.5.3 Beginning in the 1980s, a network of approximately 75kms of cycle routes has been created in the Borough, forming a sound basis from which to encourage more cycling.

3.6 Travel Planning

3.6.1 The concept of travel planning is well established in the Borough, where most schools have travel plans which identify how the school plans to encourage

more pupils and staff to walk or cycle or use mass transport and so reduce the numbers of pupils travelling to school by car.

- 3.6.2 Travel planning principles and methods are readily transferrable to major organisations, businesses, community groups (e.g. Parish Councils) and households (as individual travel planning) with the Council's support.
- 3.6.3 A travel plan has been developed for accessing the two Bedford rail stations and its recommendations are currently being implemented while many of the larger organisations in the town already have travel plans e.g. the University, College, Hospital and Highways Agency.

3.7 Road Safety

- 3.7.1 The principle that appropriate training should be offered to anyone being asked to take on a task that they are not familiar with is well established and this applies equally to Active Travel, particularly cycling.
- 3.7.2 The Borough Council's Road Risk Advisory service carries out this function in the community, in particular for school pupils who, at every stage in their lives are likely to use the public roads as pedestrians, cyclists and drivers, by providing road safety education, training and promotion (ETP) e.g. Stepping out Safely, Road Safety Talks, Bikeability cycle training, DriveIQ and Xccelerate courses.
- 3.7.3 Child pedestrian casualties fell by 66% between 2004 and 2008 while child cycle casualties have remained static, but adult pedestrian and cyclist casualties have risen during the same period. This clearly shows the need for the Borough Council to continue to develop and deliver a focused Road Safety ETP programme in the whole community and to embed casualty reduction in all the work it does related to roads and transport in order to make active travel a safe option for all.
- 3.7.4 There is evidence that the more people cycle the safer it becomes – the 'safety in numbers' effect. A 91% increase in cycling in London since 2000 has been accompanied by a 33% fall in casualties, while cycling in the Netherlands increased by 45% between 1980 and 2005 but cycling fatalities fell by 58%

3.8 Accessibility

- 3.8.1 Access to goods and services and social inclusiveness are essential to providing a strong sense of community. This requires equal opportunity and access to facilities including healthcare, employment, education and shopping. Currently 86% of households in the Bedford Urban area are within 400m of a quarter hourly bus service and 71% of rural households are within 13 minutes walk of an hourly bus service suggesting that active travel combined with public transport can also be a viable alternative to the private car and should be encouraged.

4.0 Vision, Key Aims and Approach

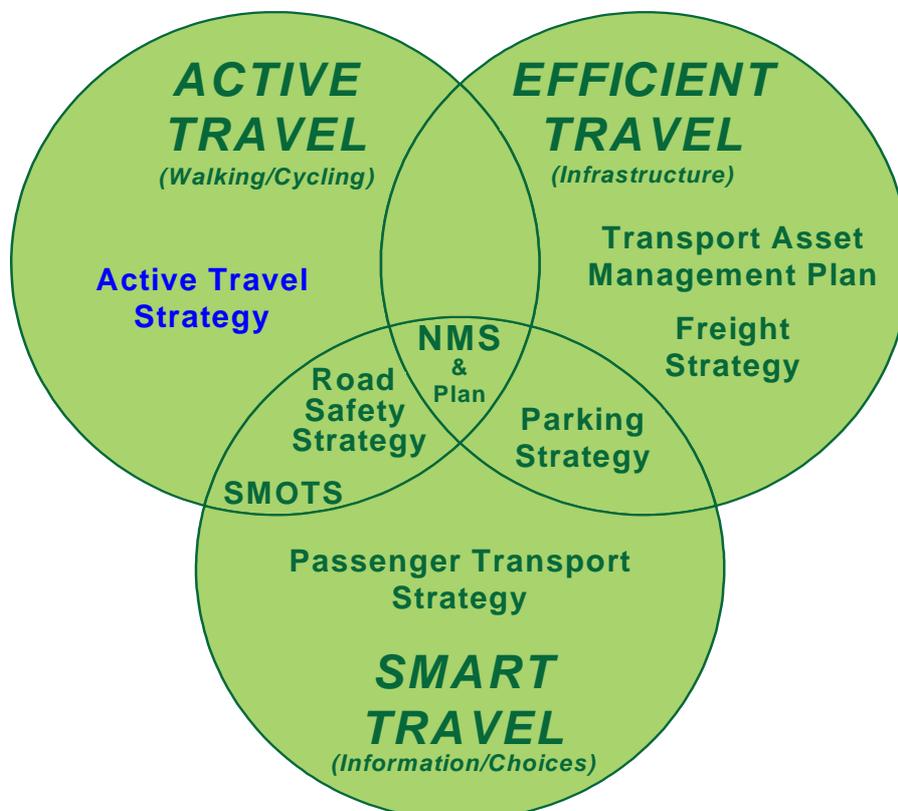
4.1 In this Strategy, we acknowledge that the potential benefits of physical activity in travel are huge, encompassing improvements to health, wellbeing, accessibility, congestion, air quality and climate change. Our vision is therefore:

‘To create an environment and culture in which walking and cycling are seen as the natural choices of travelling because they are convenient, safe, comfortable, healthy and attractive’.

4.2 Over the next 10 years, to get more people walking and cycling, the Borough Council will employ three approaches, often combined together in programmes and schemes:

- Promotion, Marketing, Training and Information
- Getting the Built Environment Right
- Integration of Active Travel with Community and Public Transport Services.

4.3 The diagram below shows how Active Travel is at the heart of our transport strategy and is therefore a critical element of the Council’s Local Transport Plan - LTP3.



5.0 Delivery

5.1 Objective

- *Increase the number of trips undertaken by active travel modes for all purposes*

5.1.2 Our single objective encompasses the Department for Transport's plan to make cycling the preferred mode of local transport in England in the 21st Century and to get more people walking while reflecting local (Borough) conditions and objectives.

5.1.3 Performance Indicators and targets will be developed from the objective, guided by the Delivery Plan, to enable work to be monitored.

5.2 Delivery Plan

Active Travel Delivery Plan	
PM1	Provide road safety education and training for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages.
PM2	In conjunction with health services, undertake local promotional and marketing campaigns and events to encourage people to walk and cycle more.
PM3	Ensure active travel and smarter travel information is widely available to the public
PM4	Promote and support the development of Travel Plans and take up of the Cycle to Work Guarantee.
BE1	Improve the Highway network to enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.
BE2	Standardise, improve and update walking and cycling route signing and information.
BE3	Develop a high quality cycling network to eliminate gaps, ensure continuity and increase access to the Rights of Way network (including the Green Wheel), essential services, employment opportunities, green spaces and leisure services.
BE4	Increase provision of secure and sufficient cycle parking in the town centre, at or within easy reach of every public building and cycling generator.
PC1	Improve the integration of public transport services (buses and trains) with walking and cycling routes

6.0 Resources and Partnership Working

6.1 Working in partnership will be vital to the successful service delivery, particularly in times of financial constraint. Partnership working plays an important part in the implementation of all measures to increase active travel,

as we can achieve more by working together in a joined up way. The following are some examples of organisations that we work in partnership with:-

- Healthcare sector
- Tourism and Leisure Service Providers
- Pedestrian support and campaign groups
- Cycling promotion and campaign groups
- Cycle training organisations
- Road Safety support and campaign groups
- Public and Community Transport Operators

6.2 We will also work closely to achieve our objectives with the Bedford Borough Partnership and other Borough Council service providers, such as Planning, Development Control, Children's and Adults' Services, Rights of Way and Access and Partnerships.

7.0 Revenue Budget

7.1 Active Travel initiatives are currently funded from a number of different sources and budgets. The main revenue sources within the Borough Council are in the Environment & Sustainable Communities Directorate e.g. footway/cycleway maintenance, road safety, walking/cycling initiatives, rights of way and green spaces improvements and in Adult Services for sports activities.

7.2 There may also be opportunities to source funding from partners like the Primary Care Trust. However, at the time of writing, public expenditure is being reduced and all of these sources are likely to become restricted.

8.0 Capital Budget

8.1 For the year 2010 -2011 the current capital budget for sustainable transport schemes was approximately £180,000 but this formed part of the Integrated Transport block allocation from Central Government which has already been cut by one third nationally in 2010 and is to be cut by a further third following the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2011-12. In future, we anticipate having to bid for additional funding for active travel initiatives from the new Local Sustainable Transport Fund or rely on growth and development related funding.