



# Plymouth Passenger Transport Strategy

## Education and Social Services Transport Strategy

**Plymouth City Council**

**Local Transport Plan 2**

**2006-2011**



# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Objectives	5
<b>2. Education Transport</b>	<b>6</b>
Statutory and Discretionary Duties	6
Factors Affecting Transport to School in Plymouth	7
Implementing the Audit Commission's Report	9
Other Proposals for Education Transport Provision	10
<b>3. Social Services Transport</b>	<b>11</b>
Current Provision of Social Services Transport In Plymouth	11
Proposals for Social Services Transport Provision	12
<b>4. Targets and Monitoring</b>	Error! Bookmark not defined.

## List of Tables

Table 2.1 Summary of Proposed Education Transport Measures	10
Table 3.1 Summary of Proposed Social Service Transport Measures	13

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Morning Peak Traffic Flows in Plymouth	7
Figure 2.2 Levels of Concessionary Fares	8
Figure 2.3 Student Enrolment Numbers	8
Figure 3.1 Trips Organised For Social Services Recipients and Clients Eligible for Transport	11
Figure 3.2 Average Cost of Transport per Individual in Care 2003-2005	12



# 1. Introduction

## Objectives

- 1.1 The primary purpose of Plymouth's Educational and Social Services Transport Strategy is to ensure that the transport needs of the City's more vulnerable residents are thoroughly addressed.
- 1.2 The objectives of the strategy are threefold:
  - To reduce social exclusion throughout the City through increased transport opportunities for the most vulnerable members of society;
  - To make efficient use of resources including existing infrastructure in providing educational and social services transport;
  - To make educational and social services transport more sustainable.
- 1.3 This strategy is closely aligned with the Community Transport Strategy.

## 2. Education Transport

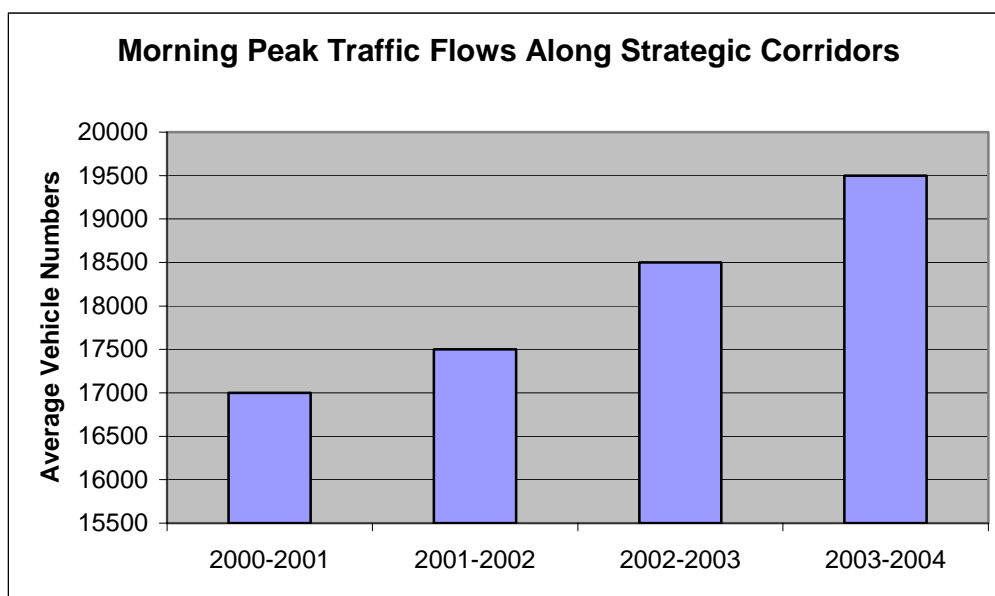
### Statutory and Discretionary Duties

- 2.1 The Department for Children's Services (Transport and Allowances Team) and the Department for Development (Client Transport Team) jointly administer schools transport in Plymouth. Children's Services are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the transport policy and provide the budget whilst Client Transport plans the transport provision and the contracting of vehicles.
- 2.2 Plymouth City Council has the following statutory duties in relation to transporting students to and from school:
  - Local education authorities (LEAs) provide free transport for pupils who live beyond the 'statutory walking distances' to ensure that pupils are able to attend school. The 'statutory walking distances' are 3 miles from the 'nearest suitable' school (2 miles for the under eights). In Plymouth there are few children in these categories.
  - LEAs also provide free transport for pupils up to the age of 19 where it is specified in their statement of special educational needs (SEN). Transport is usually by bus or taxi and may include an escort. SEN responsibilities absorb by far the largest share of Plymouth's education transport budget.
  - LEAs currently have a duty to lead a local Post-16 Transport Partnership for which funding is received from the Department of Education and Skills (DfES). Policy for post-16 transport provision in Plymouth is published on the DfES website.
- 2.3 Under the existing legislation, local education and transport authorities have considerable discretion to offer free or subsidised transport to pupils not entitled to statutory free travel. In Plymouth subsidies for children who are not entitled to free school travel are provided through concessionary fares on commercial services.
- 2.4 The concessionary fare scheme provides a maximum fare of 60 pence for a peak time journey to or from school or college. The City Council began phasing out this scheme in 2003 so that as of September 2005 pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 are no longer receiving this benefit. Concessionary travel for children who receive free school meals and for those in the 16-19 age group is planned to continue.
- 2.5 DfES funding is currently used to extend the provision for pupils with SEN to the 19-21 age group.
- 2.6 The Government's 2005 Schools White Paper includes proposals to extend rights to home to school transport. Legislation will enable parents of disadvantaged pupils to have free transport to any of the three suitable schools closest to their home within a radius of 2-6 miles.
- 2.7 It is also suggested in the White Paper that greater access to subsidised school transport could reduce car use on the 'school run' and make an important contribution to the environment and road safety. Local Authority pathfinder projects are proposed to test the impact of extending the offer (2.6) to all pupils. These projects may include a subsidised charging regime for better-off families.

## Factors affecting Transport to School in Plymouth

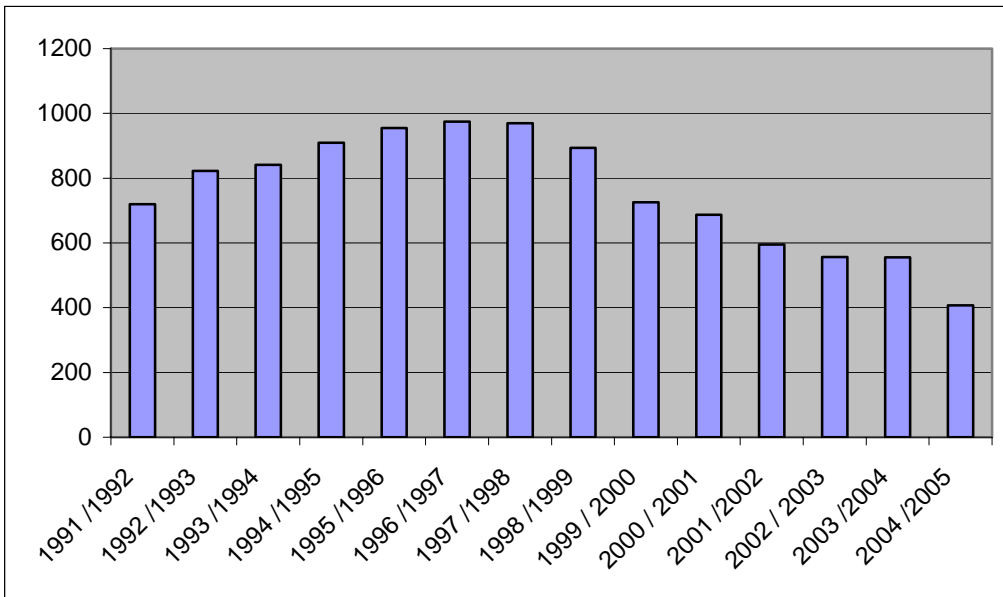
2.8 Plymouth has a highly developed and accessible public transport network. This network already provides facilities to transport most students. Despite this a significant increase in parents transporting pupils to and from school by car has been observed. Figure 2.1 shows that automatic traffic counter (ATC) sites throughout the City have recorded a steady increase in morning peak period traffic.

**Figure 2.1 Morning Peak Traffic Flows in Plymouth**



- 2.9 Increased morning traffic flows can be attributed a number of factors including increased economic activity within the City. However a substantial proportion of morning car trips are associated with the school run.
- 2.10 Finite resources and the increasing costs of statutory provision mean that discretionary provision has been decreasing steadily and now accounts for very little of Plymouth City Council's spending on home to school transport. Parents whose children live beyond what they consider a reasonable walking distance are increasingly choosing to drive them to school. The same is true of pupils who do not attend their nearest suitable school.
- 2.11 The reduction in the provision of concessionary fares to students is shown in Figure 2.2. The Council's policy of phasing out concessionary fares to young people is likely to have been a contributing factor in reducing the number of people travelling to school on public transport.
- 2.12 The decision to reduce concessionary fares provision was taken in the context of the packed local environment in Plymouth. Most students in the City live in close proximity to their local school; therefore, it was argued, there is little need for the Council to fund transport costs.
- 2.13 The decline in the use of sustainable modes of transport for home to school travel, which includes not only the bus and train but also walking and cycling, is part of a broader social trend fuelled by the growth in car ownership throughout the country.

**Figure 2.2 Number of Plymouth Students Receiving Concessionary Fares**

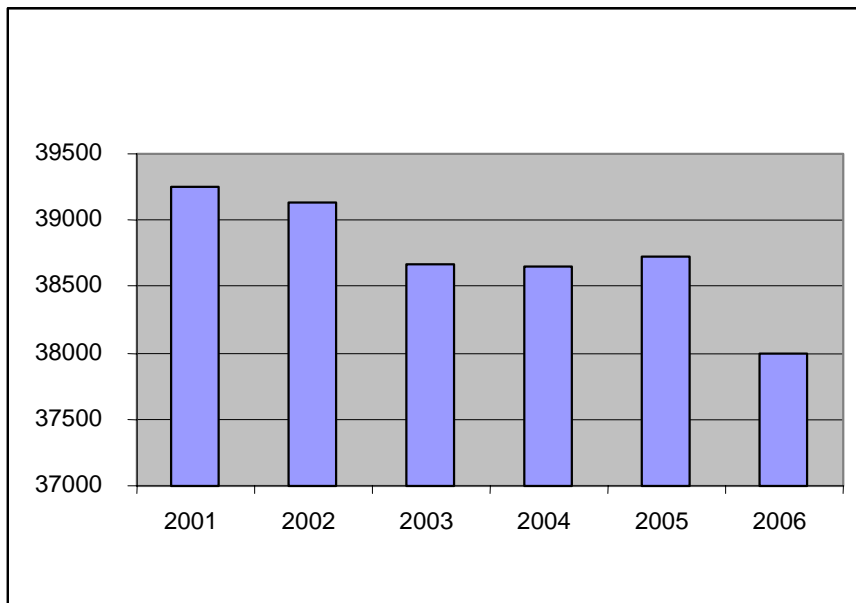


2.14 A study conducted by the Audit Commission of School Transport in Plymouth (August 2004) noted that Plymouth’s high level of schools transport spend was putting at risk the Authority’s delivery of other non-delegated services. The most significant costs result from the high level of pupils with statements of SEN, most of whom are placed in special schools.

2.15 The number of students enrolled in Plymouth schools steadily declined during the first LTP period, as Figure 2.3 shows. A continuing decrease will impact on the provision of schools transport within Plymouth.

2.16 Measures need to be implemented that ensure that the decline is met with policies that ensure efficiency and a robust level of schools’ transport provision that meet the needs of all pupils.

**Figure 2.3 Number of Student Enrolled in Plymouth Schools**



## **Implementing the Audit Commission's Report**

- 2.17 The Audit Commission's report recommended a number of measures to help strengthen and improve the provision of education transport in the City. This strategy is intended to deliver the recommendations made in the Audit Commission report.
- 2.18 The effect of the decision to phase-out concessionary fares for schoolchildren will be evaluated and a future concessionary fares policy developed in the light of the proposals for schools transport in the 2005 Schools White Paper.
- 2.19 A working group will look at measures to reduce the cost of transport provided for children with SEN, particularly those attending special schools, where the Audit Commission identified a tendency to over-provide. The therapeutic benefits to be gained by encouraging children to achieve greater independence will be taken into account. In future written guidance will be provided to clarify the principles of provision and the costs of transport will become more important when considering the options for pupil placements.
- 2.20 Checks will be put in place to ensure the continued suitability of the transport being provided for each child including annual reviews by schools which will be fully informed on costs.
- 2.21 The Council will examine the long-term impact on school transport provision of declining pupil numbers, increased SEN inclusion and changes in school organisation. The need for additional management information will be considered.
- 2.22 The LEA will hold regular meetings with the client transport team and its requirements in terms of management information will be specified in the service level agreement.
- 2.23 Information about the transport requirements of pupils and changes in their needs will be communicated to the client transport team in a timely manner. The Council will take steps towards undertaking route planning reviews for escorts to ensure best use of their time. Joint-working with schools will ensure pupils with SEN have access to out-of-hours activities.
- 2.24 Measures will be taken to improve financial monitoring in schools transport. The budget will be based on relevant specified information and expenditure analysed on a regular basis.
- 2.25 Ways of improving the quality of the Schools Transport service will be considered. These may include the introduction of driver training, better information for parents, quality monitoring of vehicles, improving the efficiency of CRB checks, better monitoring of complaints and performance and regular customer satisfaction surveys.

## Other Proposals for Education Transport Provision

- 2.26 In future contracts for the provision of schools transport will be all encompassing. Tenders will be awarded so that a single operator runs all the taxis used for education transport and economies of scale are achieved.
- 2.27 The continued roll out of Real Time Passenger Information throughout the City will provide the technology for the utilisation of GIS scheduling software to better plan and route services to serve schools and other educational establishments. The use of scheduling software will be part of the contract with the service provider.
- 2.28 The Council will undertake a study to assess whether school start and finish times are coordinated in the most efficient manner. This study will determine if savings could be made to the schools' transport budget for subsidised services (including taxis) by adopting a system of staggered start and finish times.
- 2.29 In order to increase the use of passenger transport among students it will be important to employ School Travel Plans as a policy mechanism to encourage alternative modes.
- 2.30 The Council will appoint a Travel Plan Coordinator to oversee the development of 'soft measures' within the City. The officer will be responsible for assisting members of the community with personalised travel planning. This officer will work with schools and parents to assess the feasibility of using sustainable transport for trips to school.
- 2.31 The continued roll out of Real Time Passenger Information throughout the City will provide the technology for the utilisation of GIS scheduling software to better plan and route services to serve schools and other educational establishments.
- 2.32 Plymouth City Council intends a wider role for the 'Smartcard' scheme in the LTP2 period. An initial roll out of school travel 'Smartcards' involved 4,000 students. It is the Council's intention to expand the scheme to include an additional 18,000 pupils. The Council will work with its partners Plymouth Citybus Ltd and First Group to see that this becomes a reality. More information about the scheme is included in the Bus Strategy.

**Table 2.1 Summary of Proposed Education Transport Measures**

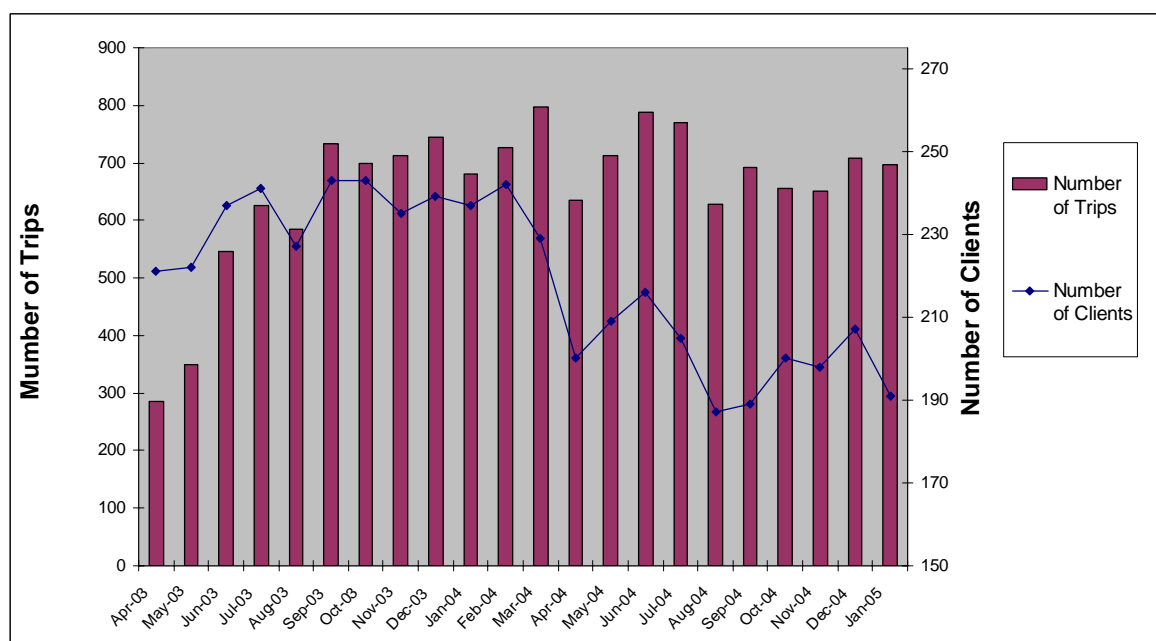
Measure type	Time scale
Implement recommendations of Audit Commission	Short Term
Award all encompassing contracts to operate service	Short Term
Assess school start and finish times.	Short Term
Implement School Travel Plans	Short Term
Better information for parents and pupils through personalised travel planning'.	Short Term
Appoint a Travel Plan Coordinator.	Short Term
The utilisation of GIS scheduling software to better plan and route services.	Medium Term
Expansion of the Smartcard scheme.	Medium term

### 3. Social Services Transport

#### Current Provision of Social Services Transport In Plymouth

- 3.1 There are two parts of the Social Services transport service - provision for adults and provision for children.
- 3.2 Adult Social Services manage their own routes, drivers and vehicles. The Client Transport team's only involvement is in the maintenance of the vehicles.
- 3.3 Childrens' Social Services have requirements for transporting children in care, for example to the Maya Centre in Wolsely Road and Ringmore Way Centre in West Park where they can have parental contact. They also have need for transport to school for some children in foster care.
- 3.4 Social Services transport is predominately provided by private hire, taxi and private coach operators. Routes for transporting clients are based on the origin (generally the client's home) and destination (generally an institution or school). Approximately 220 routes are in existence for transporting clients within Plymouth.
- 3.5 There has been a general increase in trip numbers for people in care over the last two years. This has been accompanied by a slight reduction in the number of clients registered to use the service from over 240 in September 2003 to around 190 in January 2005. During this period the number of trips provided by the Council has remained fairly constant at around an average of 700 per month. The combination of the two factors is represented in Figure 3.1.

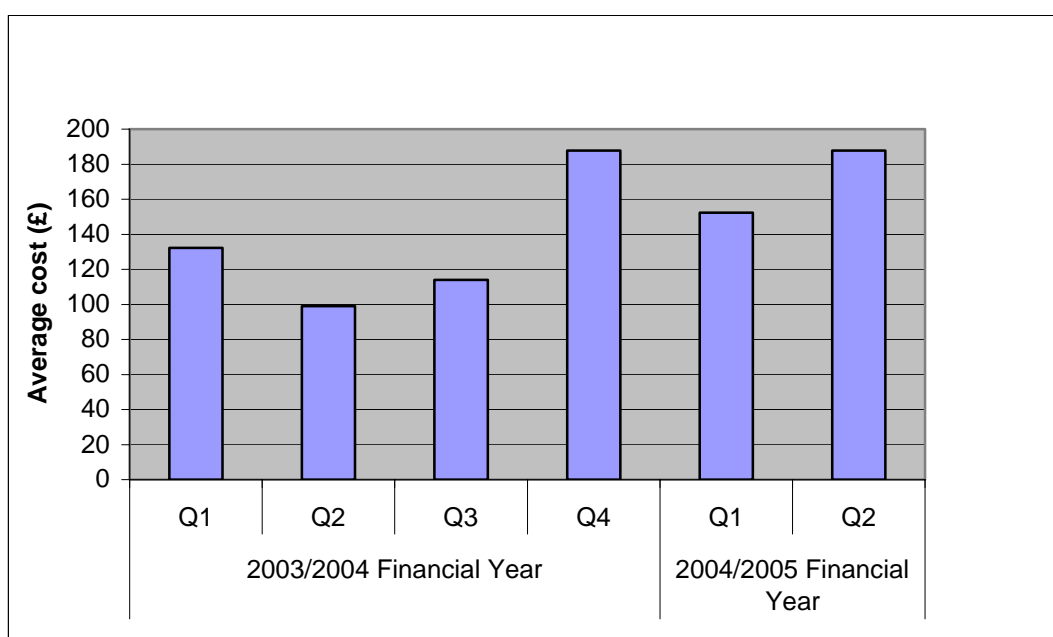
**Figure 3.1 Trips Organised For Social Services Recipients and Clients Eligible for Transport**



- 3.6 The increase in the number of trips per client is likely to have been facilitated by improved liaison between officers in charge of transport operations and the Council's social care team.

- 3.7 Transport costs for Social Services clients are largely incurred through the use of taxi services or through direct funding of carers, such as foster parents. Plymouth City Council currently pays foster parents a sum of money to cover the cost of transport for children in their care. When additional funding is given for taxi provision there is a risk of the authority paying twice.
- 3.8 As Figure 3.2 shows, the average quarterly cost of transport for a child in care has steadily increased over the last eighteen months. It is recognised that in some instances the Council may not be obtaining a 'value for money' service.

**Figure 3.2 Average Quarterly Cost of Transport for a Child in Care 2003-2005**



### Proposals for Social Services Transport Provision

- 3.9 A set of guidelines will be put in place to set clear parameters for Council officers to assess transport needs on an individual basis. It is the Council's intention to develop guidance for social services transport similar to that currently in place for education transport.
- 3.10 The Council is currently consulting on a policy whereby each carer will be appraised for the transport services they provide. As they grow older and their transport requirements change each client will be assessed to determine whether they are receiving an appropriate level of transport provision from the Council.
- 3.11 A personalised journey planning (PJP) service will be offered to clients. The appraisal will look at the carer's (or care centre's) home and work locations to determine if non-car modes of transport could be used. Public transport services available to the carer and the person in care will be assessed. It is essential that the suitability of public transport for the individual in care be evaluated fully.

- 3.12 Funding will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Foster carers will only be paid for the transport they provide and will not receive an automatic payment.
- 3.13 Taxis and private hire vehicles play a central role in providing transport for people in care. Approximately 98% of all social services trips made by young people are by taxi. The Council will work with taxi and PHV operators to reduce costs per client and improve efficiency. It is proposed that, as for education transport, one all encompassing contract for the provision of all social services transport will be awarded to a single operator.
- 3.14 As in educational and community transport, a need exists to better coordinate the scheduling and planning of trips to make more efficient use of resources. Currently no formal coordination tools such as GIS mapping are in place. The use of scheduling software will better coordinate booking and scheduling of trips.
- 3.15 The Council will investigate ways of working with taxi and PHV operators to improve fuel efficiency and reduce harmful emissions. The Taxi and PHV Strategy contains further details.

**Table 3.1 Summary of Proposed Social Service Transport Measures**

<b>Measure type</b>	<b>Year in LTP2 when measure should be implemented</b>
Develop a set of guidelines to assist those in charge of social transport to assess cases more effectively.	Short term
Utilise guidelines and personalised journey planning to better assess the needs of carers and clients.	Short Term
Work with taxi operators to improve the management of transport for people in care.	Short Term
Incorporate GIS scheduling software with social services transport to better coordinate booking and scheduling of trips.	Medium Term
Work with taxi and PHV operators to improve fuel efficiency and reduce harmful emissions	Medium Term

