

TITLE:

Creating the road less travelled at the University of Leeds



DATE: **November 2009**

SUMMARY

Leeds University embrace the health benefits of walking and cycling whilst alleviating congestion through the use of public transport in their new travel plan. Integrated into an overall environmental management plan and designed for staff, students and visitors, the plan incorporates a points system to gauge the needs of each individual applying for a parking permit, producing encouraging results.

INSTITUTION PROFILE

UK's 2nd largest university with 8,800 staff and 30,500 students from over 130 countries
Member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities
Annual research income exceeds £101m
Main campus, student residences

EAUC COMMENT

Leeds University provides a great example of long term travel planning. With plenty of incentives to travel green, Leeds targets its disincentives in the right place - the cars with the largest CO₂ emissions. The EAUC praises Leeds' work with students and staff and acknowledges the importance of incorporating travel into institutions' sustainability strategy.

THE PROBLEM

In 2003 the University of Leeds identified the need for a travel plan in its new Environmental Policy as part of its wider strategic approach to environmental management. The idea was to take an integrated approach to travel and to provide incentives to encourage changes in the mindset and behaviour of people in order to reduce their reliance on private transport for commuting and business travel.

Both staff and students needed to be targeted to reduce the university's environmental impact. The travel plan was also needed to enable new building developments to obtain planning approval.

The university recognised that encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport would provide health benefits for staff and students, reduce congestion and demand for car parking as well as reduce pollution from vehicles.

Since its launch in 2003 the travel plan has been revised twice to take account of changing needs and new technology.

THE APPROACH

The Travel Plan was first approved June 2003. It was developed following consultation with staff and students, the local council and Yorkshire's regional travel plan network. It provided the framework, finance and staffing resources for a new infrastructure programme.

Income would come from increased staff car parking permit charges. As part of the travel plan charges would start to be based on vehicle CO₂ emissions in late 2005. This provided funding for a new Transport Co-ordinator and £130k p.a. to deliver:

- online travel surveys
- new cycle storage and showers
- travel guides
- a car sharing scheme
- a car club
- discounted travel cards
- an active travel project (with Sustrans and National Lottery funding) focusing on travel in an active way e.g. by bike or walking



Students were banned from parking on campus and staff members have to apply for a parking permit. Staff applications are dealt with on a basis of need that is defined through a points system. This requires details of existing public transport options, any child passengers and car share opportunities.

OUR GOALS

- Change the university's culture to ensure environmental needs feature strongly in decision-making about travel.
- Set targets for consecutive three year periods of:
 - reductions in single-occupancy driving by 5%
 - increases of staff walking/cycling levels and use of public transport by 5%
- Put in place practical and easy-to-use sustainable travel programmes and infrastructure
- Get the information to staff & students, monitor progress, obtain feedback and improve year-on-year

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

Obstacle

- No previous programme to build on
- No staff or financial resources
- Getting people to change their travel habits
- Communicating the changes to staff and students
- How to prove the new Travel Plan was working and continuously improve it

Solution

- Widespread consultation helped identify local needs and opportunities
- Other travel plans were also looked at.
- Support was obtained from the local council and Metro, the organisation which co-ordinates public transport in West Yorkshire
- Increases in staff parking costs provided enough budget for a dedicated post and infrastructure changes to make travelling other than by car much easier
- Both carrots – in the form of new choices for commuting e.g. discount travel cards, new cycle networks and pool cars for business travel– and sticks – increases in car parking charges – were used
- Range of communication methods needed: personal contact, environmental co-ordinator network, website, staff magazine articles, annual travel guides, staff induction, displays, events
- Monitoring through on-line surveys provided feedback

PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

Since the launch of the Travel Plan in 2003:

- an ongoing investment programme with £150k/year has been developed
- staff and student car usage has decreased by over 30% since 2004
- staff and student train usage has increased by over 70% since 2004
- staff bus usage has increased by 11% since 2004
- staff cycling levels have increased by 60% since 2004
- walking levels have increased by 16% for students and 30% for staff since 2004
- Two full-time transport posts have been created – Sustainability Officer responsible for the Transport Plan management and Active Travel Project Manager responsible for the *UTravelActive* project
- Car parking charges are banded on CO₂ vehicle emissions with the highest costing £336/year from a pre-plan rate of less than £100/year

- More than 400 people have registered with the university car sharing scheme potentially saving c. 190 tonnes of CO₂ / year (www.leeds.ac.uk/estate_services/environment/driving.htm)
- Pool cars are available for business travel and 129 members have joined the corporate scheme, using two on-campus cars, and those located at other Leeds and UK city sites
- Two Estates vans fuelled by LPG have been purchased with support from the Department for Transport
- Car mileage for business travel has reduced, and at the same time expenditure on rail travel has exceeded car mileage claims
- The number of West Yorkshire MetroCard holders has increased from 183 to 568 in February 2010
- Cycle parking has increased by 60% to nearly 900 spaces including over 80 lockers, four caged areas and three internal storage areas
- New showers have been installed at eight locations and are now available in all key buildings
- 270 bicycles were bought through the cycle to work scheme and cycling increased from 23% to 70% for the participating group
- The **UTravelActive** project has engaged with 900 people, of which 110 students hired out the 100 new Velocampus bicycles available throughout 2008/09

LESSONS LEARNT

- Make it strategic. You will probably have to make changes to the campus and to the facilities you provide in order to change people's travel habits, but this needs to be part of a wider thought process, not piecemeal
- Get buy in from staff & students at all levels. After all, they are the ones who need to change their behaviour
- Provide lots of choices to help make the change. Carrots and sticks are both necessary
- Don't only talk about travel, include other aspects that will attract interest for example, healthy lifestyles, reducing CO₂ emissions, reducing congestion and pollution, saving money
- Develop initiatives in partnership with local organisations, funding programmes and sustainable travel networks

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Useful links

University of Leeds' Travel Guide

<http://tinyurl.com/pmzqqb>

University of Leeds cycle maps

<http://tinyurl.com/pjqkqc>

U Travel Active project

<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/uttravelactive/>

University of Leeds Environment department pages

www.leeds.ac.uk/environmental

Sustrans Active travel projects

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/what-we-do/active-travel/active-travel-projects>

including Leeds' project

<http://www.sustrans.org.uk/what-we-do/active-travel/active-travel-projects/leeds-universities-uttravelactive>

West Yorkshire Travel Plan Network

<http://www.wytravelplan.com/>



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