

6. TACKLING CONGESTION

6.1 Tackling Congestion

Congestion is a key issue for the people of Hertfordshire as set out in Section 2. A MORI Poll (2005) highlighted congestion as a main concern of residents (56%) that needed to be dealt with. The county's settlement pattern of small and medium sized market towns results in a complex pattern of movements between destinations complicated by the addition of through traffic from outside the county resulting in congestion. Historically, the county has experienced very high and growing volumes of traffic but recently annual growth has been less than 1% per year. As a consequence of high traffic volumes traffic congestion is a real problem for businesses and the general public. It leads to journey delays, air pollution, noise and disruption for everyone. Parking can also be difficult for those travelling into the main towns. As more people come to own cars, and households have more than one car, the problems will only increase.

The County Council continues to be interested in the Transport Innovation Fund which seeks

to tackle congestion issues. Hertfordshire has specific congestion issues due to a lack of east-west routes, the high number of market towns generating inter-urban movements and a high level of through traffic to London and would welcome discussions with the DfT on this issue. Currently, the Congestion Action Plan detailed below is the cornerstone of tackling congestion in the county.

The County Council has developed a congestion action plan to gain a better understanding of the situation and possible hotspots to tackle. Monitoring has been undertaken through the use of congestion reference flows that track capacity of the network against actual flows. This is an effective starting point but needs to be supported with new data formats measuring vehicle delay. Maps showing both congestion hotspots and congestion reference flows can be found in Section 2.

Key Actions being undertaken by the County Council through the implementation of the Congestion Action Plan includes:

Action	Key Elements
Make a clear policy statement that recognises that there is no single solution to the problem of congestion.	Congestion is one of the 'shared priorities' of the LTP.
Develop appropriate strategies to address the problems posed in particular hotspots around the county.	Report on hotspots was reported to Transport Panel in March 2005. The list of hotspots is being fed into the development of the Area Transport Plans (see figure 2.5, Section 2).
Focus further policy and campaign work on local solutions, or amelioration, and on changing attitudes and behaviours.	Work on-going to 'embed' TravelWise philosophy into the design and development of all highway schemes. Meetings taking place with Herts Highways.

Action	Key Elements
Ensure that land use strategies are compatible with congestion management and minimisation.	Responses to Development Plan are made to meet districts' timetable.
Review the Section 106 agreement procedures to ensure maximum and consistent benefits are negotiated for road improvements.	Agreed that a detailed S106 framework to be developed and included in development plans or SPD. Full review of Development Control Manual postponed until Development Control team reorganisation is complete.
Review parking policy guidance at county/district level.	Current parking standard set out in SPG25. Further work is required on the residential parking standard.
Continue to prioritise safety of pedestrians and transport users.	Process underway - e.g. pedestrian priority routes will be developed in the Eastern Herts Area Plan.
Develop telematics strategy for county.	Work will be undertaken to see how a strategy can be delivered through existing programmes. For example, the use of Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) system data in bus priority schemes, measuring the performance of implemented schemes and providing a multi-modal response to congestion issues.
Develop speed strategy for county.	Speed Management Strategy agreed. Will now be implemented through the Area Plan process.
Review and revitalise the HCC travel campaigns.	Contract let with Geronimo for 2005/06. 'Ride and Seek' cycle treasure hunts were held on off-road routes in August/September 2005. A walking campaign with a tie in with shoe retailers was held in September 2005. Further pedestrian, bus and rail campaigns to follow later in the year. Campaign provides more active joint-working between TravelWise and PTU.
Further develop school travel plan programme.	155 new plans were agreed in 2004/05, and measures have been put in place to help ensure continued school interest once their plan has been agreed e.g. 'STAR' programme for pupil volunteers, and HCC support and recognition for adult volunteers.
Extend Business TravelWise links and influence the wider business sector.	Continued meeting of Business TravelWise group, and more active involvement with individual businesses/employment areas now taking place e.g. participation in the Stevenage 'Encourage' programme.

Action	Key Elements
Continue to develop and broaden the county cycling strategy.	Cycling networks being identified in all current Area Plans.
Create motor cycle forum for county.	Discussions have been held with motorcycle representatives. The idea of a regional forum has been explored, but there was little interest from other authorities. It is now hoped to set up a forum in Summer 2006 - currently awaiting list of possible invitees from motorcycling representatives.
Provide more targeted information for bus/rail users.	Measures set out in the Intalink Business and Marketing Plan published in January 2005.
Incorporate bus priority measures into area transport plans.	Measures are being considered as the plans are developed.
Maximise use of bus quality partnerships particularly in relation to integrated ticketing services.	Overall policy set out in Bus Strategy.
Secure better bus infrastructure through S106 agreements.	Full review of Development Control Manual postponed until Development Control team reorganisation is complete.
Improving accessibility and increase patronage to public services through more user-friendly public transport facilities.	Included in Bus Strategy and Accessibility Strategy.
Incorporate into reviews of school transport schemes means to implement bus priority measures.	ACS actively involved in development of school travel plans.

6.2 Tackling Congestion Through Transport Planning

Hertfordshire takes a holistic approach to transport supply and demand when developing its Area-based Transport Plans and countywide strategies. Typically, an Area Plan includes a balance of:

- capital projects which can include, reallocation of road space from one mode to another, bus priority measures, transport

interchanges, parking measures, telematics, motorcycle, pedestrian and cycle measures, and in limited cases capacity improvements;

- revenue initiatives, such as parking management, bus service and network reviews;
- softer measures such as education and promotion for example through TravelWise initiatives that influence travel choice, such as Safer Routes to School, Business

TravelWise, Bike Safe for motorcyclists, cycle training, travel diary work and publicity campaigns.

The County Council works closely with the District Councils integrating land use planning and transport planning. In Watford, for example, supplementary planning guidance has been introduced:

- to cover the area in and around the proposed Watford Junction Interchange improvements;
- to balance housing development / conversions against parking provision within the central Watford 'Green Zone'.

Parking management remains a key demand management tool and, in advance of securing Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) powers each District has reviewed its on-street and off-street parking strategy inline with County Council policies. All ten district councils are now operating DPE. With DPE powers the district councils are able to co-ordinate both on-street and off-street parking effectively and introduce controls that the constabulary would otherwise be unable to enforce. The districts in the south-west and west of the county, which have held DPE powers for some time, continue to implement their strategies, which tend to focus on encouraging short term off-street parking in commercial centres at the expense of commuter parking, backed up by comprehensive on-street controlled parking zones. Furthermore, parking facilities for cycles and motorcycles, in town centres and at services and facilities act as a carrot to encourage access by different transport modes for residents.

Walking and cycling for journeys can tackle congestion. These modes also have health, environmental and social benefits for the user and are one way of reducing journeys by car.

Cycling is a healthy and sustainable alternative to the car as a means of transport. It is clean, cheap and energy-efficient and as such it is well suited to journeys under five miles in areas which are relatively flat. Hertfordshire's topography is suitable for cyclists but rising traffic levels have acted as a deterrent to making trips by cycle. The County Council is committed to providing cycling facilities throughout Hertfordshire to help encourage a modal shift away from the car. In the accompanying Long Term Strategy, is a Cycling Strategy and the LTP contains a cycling target. Cycling facilities are also delivered through a number of other programmes in the LTP and county strategies, for example, STAG Programme and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Walking trips have the lowest impacts on the environment and are crucial for local journeys and supporting the use of public transport. Reducing the number of short journeys by car can reduce congestion and walking can be a viable alternative.

The County Council will:

- Encourage walking as a mode of transport for short journeys;
- Encourage the pedestrianisation of shopping areas, where appropriate, either fully or partly, to improve the local environment by reducing the domination of motor vehicles.

At the scheme design stage, the county council is developing a "User Audit", which will ensure that the needs of all users are met. Design guidance is also being developed, which ensures that priority measures for one type of user are not unreasonably detrimental to another.

6.3 Tackling Congestion Whilst Meeting The Needs Of All Users

The County Council assesses the needs of all road users through a comprehensive range of consultation and engagement initiatives ranging from the strategic to the very local. At the strategic level, MORI surveys are conducted annually and there are standing stakeholder and user groups that are consulted regularly about the LTP strategies and their implementation.

The Corporate Plan will tackle the causes and impact of congestion. This falls under the Road Traffic Reduction Act (1997) which requires the County Council to tackle traffic growth. The County Council is also required to deal with congestion under the Traffic Management Act (2004). The Corporate Plan will measure success through the following performance indicators:

- % of residents who expressed an opinion and believe the County Council has been successful in tackling levels of road congestion over the past year;
- % of schools with approved travel plans;
- Number of passenger journeys made annually on local buses;
- Integrated Works Programme monitoring;
- LTP2 average vehicle delay indicator;
- New congestion indicator as part of Congestion Action Plan;
- Business TravelWise.

Typically, local Area Plans are developed and their implementation steered with the assistance of forums made up of transport stakeholders and a cross section of the community. Extensive use of real planning

techniques is used to engage the full, local community. Where it is feasible, Area transport planning processes are integrated with community strategy development processes.

The Area planning process involves the planning of priority networks for the different modes, which are superimposed over each other and potential conflicts resolved. Route integrity planning is undertaken at this stage. The aim is that each corridor is assigned clear, prioritised objectives.

The LTP consultation has highlighted the difference of regular and irregular congestion and the perceptions of different users of the network, as to what constitutes congestion. This area of defining congestion is very difficult and will be a key aspect that this LTP will address. For example, one respondent said that '*Congestion is not moving at the rate you would like to move*' (Stakeholder, LTP Conference, January 2006). This issue of the perception of congestion is monitored through the MORI poll carried out by the Council.

6.4 Network Management and Hertfordshire Highways

The County Council laid the foundations of its approach to satisfying the requirements of LTP2 and the Traffic Management Act in October 2002 when it formed Hertfordshire Highways, a strategic alliance with consultant Mouchel Parkman and contractor Amey LaFarge. Hertfordshire Highways was set up with the aims of, inter alia:

- Embracing a more customer led service through the introduction of a call centre, which has resulted in a three-fold increase in communications from the community.

- Introducing an asset management approach to improving and maintaining the highway network.
- Creating long term forward works programmes that enable maintenance and improvement schemes to be co-ordinated and integrated to achieve economies of scale and minimisation of repeat visits to the same section of highway.
- Implementing an annual Integrated Works programme managed by dedicated programme managers. Collectively, they produce a continuous rolling programme, in which financial, design and construction resources are smoothed out and balanced together with road space availability.
- Creating an independent team that administers the NRSWA notice monitoring and inspection service.
- Publishing all highway activities, including programmed public utilities works, on the Web www.hertsdirect.org/actweb/roadworks

Whilst the structure within Hertfordshire Highways was set up to remove the traditional silos that managed maintenance and different types of improvements independently, it has been recognised that there is a need for an over-arching network management function within the more urban areas of Hertfordshire.

A pilot project has been set up covering Watford, involving the creation of a 'virtual' team made up of key personnel, dispersed across the county, but who work together to engage in local service delivery, strategic service management, development control, together with input from enforcement agencies including the police and Watford Council.

The team, which has a dedicated network management budget, is responsible for:

- identifying and co-ordinating initiatives to ensure that the priority of movement about the network is maintained;
- mitigating the impact of incremental causes of congestion now and in the future;
- providing a more co-ordinated response to planning applications;
- providing a more focused input to the Borough Council led Traffic Summit group;
- a network operational assessment of future improvement scheme proposals;
- overseeing Before & After studies;
- engaging neighbouring authorities and other departments within the county council, which have an impact on traffic movement;
- producing regular information bulletins.

6.5 Network Management Duty

The new Traffic Management Act 2004, provides powers to the Highway Authority to ensure expeditious movement for all highway users on the network. This LTP will play a key role in co-ordinating and implementing this power. The County Council has appointed the Assistant Director (Transport Management Group) as the Traffic Manager for Hertfordshire. He is currently leading a number of initiatives to build upon the existing foundations and meet the challenges of the Traffic Management Act. These include:

- Undertaking a gap analysis of the requirements of the TMA versus the services already provided by Hertfordshire Highways.

- Reviewing team functions and reporting structures to ensure that the road space management system is applied, monitored and enforced with parity and that managers have sufficient independence from the council's own scheme programme managers.
- Reviewing the network hierarchy.
- Assessing the draft guidance for Parts 3 and 4 of the Act regarding Permit Schemes and Street Works, with a view to identifying an appropriate road space management system and developing an accompanying business plan.

6.6 Tackling Congestion by working with other authorities

Hertfordshire County Council works with neighbouring authorities at the policy level by participating in regional groups. At an operational level Hertfordshire Highways:

- Exchanges monthly bulletins with the Highways Agency and meet on a quarterly basis.
- Meets the police and District Councils on a monthly basis.

These relationships will be strengthened to meet the challenge of the TMA, particularly to ensure third party functions such as:

- enforcement is managed to promote the efficient flow of traffic.
- street cleaning and refuse collection are managed to minimise the disruption to traffic flow.

6.7 Summary of Key Actions for the next 5 Years.

- Clearly define what is congestion means in Hertfordshire.

- Establish a baseline and a target to ease congestion in the county.
- Develop and implement the Congestion Action Plan.
- Understand the potential of the Transport Innovation Funding and develop bids if appropriate.

Targets and Indicators That Deliver the Congestion Shared Priority

Indicator	Definition
Congestion	New indicator to be developed (see section 11.3)
Change in area-wide traffic mileage	Change in area-wide traffic mileage
Changes in peak period flows	Changes in peak period traffic flows to urban centres (Watford & St Albans/Hatfield)
Mode share of journeys to school	Percentage of pupils who travel to school using sustainable modes

The following indicators also support the delivery of the congestion shared priority:

Principal road condition
 Non-principal road condition
 Unclassified road condition
 Safety Indicators
 Rights of Way
 Speed compliance
 Public transport patronage
 Bus punctuality
 Accessibility
 Cycling trips
 Air quality
 School travel plans
 Abbey Line