

APPENDIX B – BUS STRATEGY

B.1 This appendix is the Leicestershire County Council Bus Strategy for 2006-2011. The strategy forms an integral part of the second Leicestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP2), as required by section 110 of the Transport Act 2000. A provisional LTP will be produced in July 2005 and a final LTP in March 2006.

B.2 We have prepared the strategy in line with guidance produced by the Department for Transport (DfT) on Preparing Bus Strategies, Second Local Transport Plans and Framework Accessibility Strategies. It also takes account of the guidance issued by the Bus Forum Task and Finish Groups, particularly with regard to service stability and the emerging guidance on bus punctuality through bus punctuality improvement partnerships.

B.3 The aim of the strategy is to define the framework within which a detailed action plan for bus improvements is developed. The action plan is already substantially in place, having been developed and refined through the first LTP and a Best Value review in 2002. Consultation took place when the best value action plan was developed and consultation on the complete draft bus strategy took place in spring 2005. This included local bus operators, district councils, neighbouring county councils and local user groups. We have updated the strategy to take account of comments made during consultation and will consult further when we consult on the provisional LTP in autumn 2005.

BACKGROUND

B.4 Most bus services in the urban parts of the county are operated commercially, predominantly by Arriva Midlands and Kinchbus but also First and other companies. Most rural services, and some in urban areas, are operated under contract to the County Council by a wide variety of companies. The proportion of contract services has increased steadily to the extent that the County Council now spends around £3m a year supporting services carrying 2.8m out of the 15.3m passengers a year carried countywide.

B.5 Key partnerships are:

- with Leicester City Council in the delivery of a joint strategy for exploiting the capacity of buses to help reduce congestion in Central Leicestershire
- with First, Arriva and Kinchbus in a Quality Bus Partnership for Central Leicestershire with the same objective
- with Kinchbus, Arriva, Paul Winson and Charnwood Borough Council in a Quality Bus Partnership having the same aims for Loughborough
- with Arriva, Stagecoach and Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council in a Quality Bus Partnership having the same aims for Hinckley
- with the main bus operators and Leicester City Council for the implementation of a countywide Bus Information Strategy.
- With all the district councils, community transport operators and other local groups in the East and West Leicestershire Rural Transport Partnerships

B.6 LTP2 is based around delivering six objectives. These are:

- Tackling congestion
- Improving access to services
- Reducing road casualties
- Improving air quality
- Reducing the impact of traffic
- Maintaining transport assets.

B.7 Bus services are key to delivering the congestion and accessibility objectives and the bus strategy sets out how this will be achieved. It is based on a Best Value Review (BVR) of public transport completed in 2002. This included comprehensive public consultation including questionnaire surveys, discussion groups, reviews of previous consultation and attitudinal surveys.

B.8 The BVR focused on improving service provision and resulted in an action plan with 26 agreed recommendations. Implementation began late in 2002 and is now substantially complete. Many of the actions, however, require further development over the long term, as set out in this strategy.

THE STRATEGY

B.9 Bus services contribute significantly to the achievement of two of the six LTP2 objectives, as described below.

HELPING TO REDUCE CONGESTION

B.10 We aim to reduce congestion by:

- reducing the need to travel (for example by working on school and company travel plans and better locating new development)
- making best use of existing road space (for example by improving our traffic signal systems)
- improving the alternatives to the car (principally by encouraging cycling and improving bus services).

B.11 Buses help because, when well loaded, they use much less road space per passenger than do cars. A central aim of the strategy is to make buses more attractive so that more people will choose to use them in preference to cars.

HELPING TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO SERVICES

B.12 Many people do not have regular access to a car or do not drive for other reasons. Public transport helps these people access services and facilities. A central aim of the strategy is to improve that access. Government now requires a specific accessibility strategy in the LTP, including access improvements to specific facilities for people on low incomes. Our strategy provides that focus and also ensures that the access role of public transport for the community at large is properly sustained.

B.13 A wide range of measures is available to meet these two objectives for the strategy. Each is described under either the congestion or accessibility heading but many contribute to both. For example, the centrepiece of rural public transport provision is the hourly services network. This is provided essentially to improve access, but regular frequency and high standards of operation are designed also to attract people to use the bus instead of cars.

CONGESTION

THE QUALITY OF THE WHOLE JOURNEY EXPERIENCE

B.14 There is compelling national and local research to show that people who have the choice will only use buses if the whole journey experience is of a uniformly high quality. Our strategy for making buses an attractive alternative to the car, and so helping to reduce congestion, is based on this. It requires us to tackle bus information, the quality of bus stops and terminals, measures to improve the speed and reliability of the bus journey, the quality and standard of the bus itself, and the service provided by the bus driver. The measures described below, with improvements to bus stop and terminals described in the section on improving access to services, are designed to address each of these aspects.

B.15 Since May 2001 we have been carrying out annual surveys of contracted bus services to provide a whole journey experience audit picking up the aspects noted above. Our major commercial bus service partners in initiatives to improve the whole journey experience – Arriva, Kinchbus and First – carry out similar audits on their commercial services.

B.16 Most of our efforts in this field go into improvements to conventional bus services. Park and ride, however, also has an important part to play and is considered at the end of this section.

ROLE OF THE QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIPS

The County Council can directly influence only some aspects of the service mix. To secure a comprehensive improvement we work in partnership with the commercial bus companies and other local authorities in Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs). In the second LTP we have prioritised our work on reducing congestion in the places where it is worst, namely Central Leicestershire and Loughborough. The QBPs for these areas are therefore central to our efforts. In Central Leicestershire particularly, the work needs to be, and is, fully integrated with the efforts of Leicester City Council.

A third QBP covers Hinckley. The scope for bus company investment here is less, since bus routes are generally less profitable, but we intend to maintain this QBP in pursuit of the small-scale but nevertheless valuable improvements in service which can be made. Sections below say more about the work of the QBPs.

B.17 **Action 1** – We will continue to develop the QBPs as the key agency for delivering improvements in overall bus service quality.

CENTRAL LEICESTERSHIRE BUS CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

B.18 These are the single best way of improving most aspects of the bus journey at once. Bus lanes and other priority measures, including selective detection of buses at

traffic signals, reduce journey times and help iron out unreliability caused by traffic congestion. Improvements to bus stops, including raised kerbs, shelters where appropriate and real-time information, help improve the waiting environment. Linked investment by the bus companies, in new buses and ideally in improved service levels, enhances the quality of the bus journey itself. Customer care training for drivers, and service promotion, round out the package.

B.19 Although securing co-ordinated investment by public and private sector partners is not easy, the results can be impressive. For example, the project on the Arriva service 126 corridor between Leicester and Loughborough in 2002 produced a 26% increase in passengers over the first 12 months. We believe available funding will be sufficient to enable us, jointly with Leicester City Council and the bus companies, to improve one radial corridor into Leicester in each of the 5 years of the plan. The LTP specifies which corridor will be improved in each year.

B.20 Action 2 – We will continue our programme of bus corridor schemes in Central Leicestershire, in partnership with Leicester City Council and the bus companies. We plan to complete one scheme during each year of the second LTP.

OTHER MEASURES TO IMPROVE BUS RELIABILITY AND PUNCTUALITY

B.21 Market research consistently shows reliability and punctuality near the top of the list of required bus service attributes for potential customers. Much of the improvement in this area must come from bus company partners in scheduling services to take proper account of likely traffic conditions and in day by day operational management thereafter. We can help, however, by taking steps both to remove delay points affecting all traffic and to protect buses specifically from traffic congestion.

B.22 The bus corridor partnership schemes described above not only speed buses up but also help to improve their reliability. We are assessing the potential for further bus priority schemes in Loughborough, where there are not the long 'corridor' routes to be found in Central Leicestershire but there may be the potential for shorter lengths of bus priority.

B.23 We can also make smaller scale improvements to help buses through congestion, for example by providing short bus-only links or giving buses priority at key junctions. In other cases there will be no opportunity for bus priority but we can invest to ease traffic congestion for all traffic, with consequent benefits for bus services affected.

B.24 The main bus operators in Central Leicestershire have given agreement to the delivery of a Punctuality Improvement Plan. Many of the measures included in this bus strategy will support the delivery of punctuality and reliability improvements. Monitoring and review systems need to be agreed as the next stage of this process in identifying whether more urgent projects need to be designed as part of the delivery of the LTP.

B.25 Action 3 – We will:

- a) Identify and implement small-scale bus priorities which can help buses through congested traffic, focussing our efforts mainly in Central Leicestershire where congestion is worst.
- b) With partners in the Loughborough QBP, review opportunities for bus priorities in Loughborough.

- c) Identify and implement other improvements which help all traffic but have particular benefits for buses.

THE BUS INFORMATION STRATEGY

B.26 We have adopted a bus information strategy, agreed with bus company partners and Leicester City Council in July 2003. The strategy recognises the need for high quality information, properly updated and delivered through a variety of media. The implementation of the strategy by all partners is already producing marked improvements.

B.27 The County Council's responsibilities within the bus information strategy are now integrated within this bus strategy. Amongst our main commitments are to:

- Maintain the bus services database for the Traveline telephone and on-line enquiry service, with full contribution to the costs of these
- Maintain the County Council website providing comprehensive local public transport information
- Provide and distribute high quality timetable leaflets for all contract services
- Provide full guides to the hourly services network, one for the whole county and one for Central Leicestershire
- Provide guides to the services in main urban areas, delivered door to door at six-monthly intervals
- Provide and maintain bus-stop displays at all main bus stops served by contract bus services
- Provide permanent on-street displays giving comprehensive local bus information in all Leicestershire town centres and in all railway stations
- Provide data for the national Transport Direct initiative

B.28 We have joined an agreement with bus companies and local authorities across the East Midlands to change bus timetables only on 6 standard dates each year. This helps to ensure effective publicity for changes and reassure passengers.

B.29 We also operate a continued programme of promotion and marketing for the hourly services network, as noted under Accessibility.

B.30 **Action 4** – We will meet fully our commitments under the bus information strategy

REAL TIME INFORMATION

B.31 We have a partnership with Leicester City Council, Arriva, First and Kinchbus to introduce the Star-trak real-time information system and associated Star-text text-messaging. It is already in operation on 24 routes in the county and is widely welcomed by passengers. The system is costly and relatively labour-intensive to introduce and run, so needs to be applied to the most important routes. We will continue to invest to this end, focussing on quality bus corridors as they are introduced and on other areas where we are making substantial investment in bus stop facilities. In each case a partnership with the relevant bus company is required, the County Council funding the

bus stop displays and the supporting central control system while the bus company funds the in-vehicle equipment.

B.32 Action 5 – We will continue to invest in and develop the Star-trak system in partnership with the bus companies and Leicester City Council.

TICKETING AND FARES

B.33 The lack of flexible fares systems remains a disincentive to bus travel. Development has been much delayed by bus company concerns over national competition legislation but we have been working over a number of years to try to overcome these obstacles locally. Progress is now accelerating; for example:

- A multi-operator ticket was introduced in Central Leicestershire in 2004.
- We are working with bus company partners to try to extend this countywide and are introducing weekly and monthly tickets for services on the contracted services hourly network in late 2005 as a pilot
- We are working with East Midlands Airport and other local authorities in the region on plans to offer improved bus ticketing for workers and passengers travelling to the airport, with the possibility of promotional pricing to help address the airport's currently very low proportion of people travelling by bus.
- We will keep under review the use of smartcard ticketing technology.

B.34 Action 6 – We will continue to work with partners to deliver more flexible ticketing arrangements for services throughout Leicestershire.

SCHOOL AND WORKPLACE TRAVEL PLANS

B.35 Our work on school and workplace travel plans is described fully elsewhere in the LTP and improved bus services can play a significant part in making the plans successful. We have 5 specialist staff liaising with schools and large employers on the preparation and delivery of plans and have already been able to negotiate a number of public transport infrastructure and service improvements.

B.36 We already carry to school 1,600 children over and above those for whom we are legally required to provide transport. We do so by running 'schools special' buses and by making use of spare seats on the buses we hire in for carrying entitled children. We are also working within the 16 Plus Partnership to improve access to education opportunities for 16 to 19 year olds.

B.37 Action 7 – We will work with schools and employers in the context of travel plans to review bus service provision and make improvements wherever feasible.

CUSTOMER CARE AND PASSENGER SECURITY

B.38 Larger bus companies provide in-house training for staff in customer care: we compliment that by using training providers to offer courses for smaller companies' drivers. So far, 80 drivers have undertaken this training through our initiative. We are also piloting an 'essential skills' course for 15 drivers in 2005, in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council and Loughborough College. In this training, particular attention is given to the needs of disabled customers.

B.39 Passenger security, both on the vehicle and at bus stops, is a primary concern. We consider this issue in the design and location of bus stops and shelters, work with the larger bus companies on specific campaigns where security has proved a problem, and follow up any reported individual instances to ensure pointers to future action are fully assessed.

B.40 **Action 8** – We will continue our work to ensure high standards of customer care by drivers and to safeguard the security of passengers.

PARK AND RIDE

B.41 Our plans for park and ride in Central Leicestershire, developed over a number of years jointly with Leicester City Council, received a major setback in 2004 when government turned down our bid for funding and the Inspector for Leicester's Local Plan Inquiry ruled against the proposed Aylestone site. We are therefore left with the existing, highly successful, site at Leicester Forest East and a new site at Birstall which will be constructed at the expense of developers of the adjacent new housing development, with completion expected in late 2010.

B.42 Park and ride is by far the most effective way open to us to reduce car use on radial routes into Leicester. The Leicester Forest East and Birstall schemes will contribute significantly but they leave some of the busiest approach routes to the city unserved. The City and County Councils have therefore started a further review of potential park and ride sites, with the intention of deciding on a further site before the final LTP is published. This requires first a technical evaluation then public consultation in autumn 2005.

B.43 A new park and ride site, with its associated bus corridor works, could be funded through a major scheme bid. However, its provision is so fundamental to the success of the Central Leicestershire strategy for reducing congestion that we believe greater funding certainty is needed than is possible by this means. We therefore intend to fund it from the LTP block allocations, with total cost split 50/50 between the City and County Councils and up to £2m of developer funding. The finance tables contain our best estimate of what that cost will be, though clearly those figures may need substantial revision when the site location is finalised and better cost estimates are available.

B.44 We do not believe there is a case for park and ride outside Central Leicestershire in the second LTP period. It is however possible that a service for Loughborough may be justified soon thereafter and we will keep this under review in the context of Charnwood Borough Council's new Local Development Framework.

B.45 **Action 9** – We will complete our review of the case for further park and ride in Central Leicestershire and consult in autumn 2005 on any proposals emerging.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO FACILITIES

B.46 We have a well-developed strategy for improving accessibility, set out in the 2002 Best Value review. This is described below, following a description of complementary work now under way to refine the strategy and include a more specific focus on social deprivation.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW FRAMEWORK ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

B.47 The provisional LTP contains a framework accessibility strategy, an outline plan which will lead to the development of specific action plans for implementation over the LTP period. These action plans will ensure that we take the necessary steps, with appropriate partners, to improve access to essential services for people from deprived groups. The stages in preparing our framework accessibility strategy have been to:

- Identify neighbourhoods and groups that may suffer from deprivation
- Through accessibility mapping, identify their ease of access to services
- Liaise with other relevant organisations – particularly the health authorities, education authorities and job centre plus – to understand their perspective on accessibility
- Consider other barriers to access such as cost of travel, provision of information and safety and security
- From all the above, make initial judgements on priorities for action.

B.48 We have used consultants to do much of this initial work for us, in a joint project with Leicester City Council. In taking the work forward we have followed government guidance in prioritising access to four key facilities

- Work
- Education
- Health facilities
- Shopping.

B.49 We are currently working on this, using accessibility mapping software to ensure there is a sound analytical base for planning, and liaising with key partners in health, education, employment and the bus companies so that solutions can be delivered in partnership. It is clear that improved public transport services will be key to bringing about improvements.

B.50 Proposals under consideration include locating bus stops to give easier access to essential facilities, improved walking and cycling links, changes to the scope and timing of bus services, and working with the voluntary sector to deliver more cost-effective transport provision where demand is low.

B.51 We set out these parts of the strategy in more detail in the body of the LTP.

B.52 **Action 10:** We will set out a framework accessibility strategy in the provisional LTP and develop that further in the final LTP.

THE HOURLY BUS SERVICES NETWORK

B.53 The County Council carried out a best value review of public transport in 2001. Previously, most rural and many urban bus services were already operated under contract to the County Council, but the pattern of services, dictated perhaps more by history than current need, did not maximise access opportunities. In the review, we concluded that we could use existing resources to provide an hourly daytime bus service within an 800 metre walk of 95% of all Leicestershire people. In doing so, we would transform access opportunities, because hourly bus services provide a range of access

opportunities – whether for shopping, work, education or health – which were not possible with the previous more limited services.

B.54 That network is now in place. It is a mixture of commercial and contract services which allows us to provide a very high level of public transport access. As such, it lies at the heart of our strategy for improving access both generally and specifically for those on low incomes. The network includes:

- A strategic network providing the key inter-urban links, both radial from Leicester and orbital round the County, including orbital services through Central Leicestershire;
- Other hourly services linking strings of communities to main centres.
- Local feeder services, often using small vehicles, linking in to the county towns and hence to the main services network

B.55 Introducing the network has increased by 40% the proportion of rural residents with an hourly or better bus service available, compared to the government target of a 33% increase by 2010. This has come at a price, however, with sharp increases in bus contract prices leading to a current total support cost of around £3m a year. If the network is to be affordable in the long term, our efforts must now focus on ensuring the highest quality standards and on effective promotion, so that patronage continues to increase and subsidy costs are controlled. There have been considerable successes already, with promotional effort increasing ridership by 25% plus on specific routes. Our programme of service inspections against defined standards, with penalties against contractors who do not perform, is proving successful in raising service standards. We must build on both these activities to ensure continuing increases in patronage.

B.56 We also support many evening and bus services on routes on the hourly services network. These have an important role in providing access for part-time and shift workers and for young people's leisure activities but they are costly to subsidise: bus services are more expensive to operate at these times and they are relatively lightly used. These services have not yet been reviewed but will be, to maximise the targeted access they provide.

B.57 Many of the Council's hourly network services also serve settlements to major centres outside Leicestershire. We will continue to work with neighbours to provide the best pattern of services to generate increasing patronage and meet relevant accessibility needs of those residents. We will seek support, and contribute to, services which meet those identified needs.

B.58 Action 11 - We will:

- a) Work to secure network stability for the hourly services network so that Leicestershire people have dependable bus services to plan around
- b) Help to secure this by continuing and improving our partnerships with our contractors to drive up service standards, and by developing further our continuous programmes of service promotion
- c) Review all evening and Sunday bus services with the intention of maximising the targeted access they offer within the limits of what is affordable.

COMPLEMENTARY PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

B.59 31,000 people, 5% of the County's population, do not have immediate access to an hourly bus service. We have been working to ensure that the communities affected have services appropriate to meet their access needs. To secure this, there is close local consultation with community representatives and existing service users, to arrive at a consensus as to the best access solutions. This process has resulted not only in the continuation or introduction of conventional bus services but also in the introduction of innovative service types particularly suited to places where there is limited demand. Examples are shared taxi services, community minibuses and rural dial-a-ride.

B.60 Our work in this area has been facilitated by the county's two Rural Transport Partnerships, covering the east and west sides of the county respectively. These have enabled a joined-up approach with the initiatives of district councils, community transport providers and others and have also helped us to access Countryside Agency funding for specific initiatives. The responsibilities of the Countryside Agency are to be transferred elsewhere but we intend to continue developing the work of the rural transport partnerships as a key means of helping better access solutions in the rural areas.

B.61 The first round of improvements to rural services was made in parallel with the introduction of new hourly bus services elsewhere. As a consequence, there has not been the time for as thorough an investigation of priority needs and best value solutions as we would have wished. We will therefore reassess services for all these communities over the 5-year period of the LTP, working at greater length with the local communities. We expect as a consequence to introduce more 'small vehicle' services and to reduce conventional bus services, and believe this will increase access opportunities without increased cost. We will develop processes for service monitoring and review further and introduce these at the same time.

B.62 These are general-purpose services. In parallel, we are already active in a number of initiatives to improve transport availability for specific purposes. An example is a pilot initiative run in partnership with health authorities and voluntary sector service providers. This is proving successful in making it easier for those without their own transport available to access health appointments. We will seek continued funding for this in the short term and integrate it into our wider work on accessibility in the longer term

B.63 Action 12 – We will:

- a) Review and improve services to small rural communities in a 5-year programme, looking for access solutions, often using small vehicles, which will maximise access opportunities within affordable limits
- b) Continue to develop the work of the East and West Leicestershire Rural Transport Partnerships
- c) Sustain our access to health initiative and integrate it with our wider work within the framework accessibility strategy

TRANSPORT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

B.64 We have for many years supported special services for people who have difficulty using conventional bus services. Most of these are operated on our behalf by voluntary transport schemes using volunteers' cars and community-owned minibuses. A target in the Best Value review to expand the service to provide countywide coverage has been

achieved, helped by the introduction countywide of a zonal fares scheme. We do, however, need to help recruit more drivers if supply is not to be rationed by lack of driver availability. We also need to continue working with the voluntary sector to support best practice in scheme management and the maintenance of high quality standards. The service carries approximately 90,000 passengers a year.

B.65 New low-floor buses help many people with mobility impairments. All new buses are now of this type and many routes in the county, including some contract services, already have low-floor buses. If raised kerbs are provided at bus stops, access to the vehicle is nearly level, further improving accessibility. The Council has already installed over 225 raised kerbs at stops across the county and we will continue with these programmes in LTP2.

B.66 People with learning disabilities can often find it hard to use public transport. We have already taken initiatives in customer care training for bus drivers to make them more aware of the needs of disabled customers, and in our bus information strategy are giving particular attention to simplicity and clarity in presenting timetable information. In providing transport for people with learning difficulties we already support individuals in the use of normal bus services, rather than specialist transport, wherever possible: we will develop this work further through the LTP period in consultation with our disabled customers.

B.67 Action 13 – We will work with voluntary sector providers to maintain service standards, develop new service management initiatives and recruit more volunteer drivers, as well as continuing to develop all our services for improved access by disabled customers.

BUS STOP UPGRADES

B.68 Raised kerbs help those with mobility impairments but also contribute to making buses more accessible for many others, including parents with children in buggies. We plan an intensified programme, funded from LTP capital, matching the new infrastructure to the spread of routes operated by low-floor buses. We will also continue to invest in new bus shelters, for which we now have a countywide maintenance contract to ensure that they are kept to high standards. Bus stop improvements include better standards for the display of timetable information and, where appropriate, the provision of Star-trak real-time information: both these are described in the congestion section. We implement bus stop upgrades with a four-level hierarchy, the levels being determined by type and level of usage. Standards range from full shelter, lighting and seating down to a basic bus stop flag, hardstanding and timetable case.

B.69 This investment will be mainly carried out at the same time as we implement bus corridor projects but we will also, within available resources, invest elsewhere within Central Leicestershire or Loughborough where the services are operated to high standards and improved infrastructure could contribute to increased patronage. We will also continue our small-scale programme of grants for joint-funded bus shelters in rural communities.

B.70 Action 14 – We will invest in extensive programmes for the provision of improved bus stops and bus shelters.

INTERCHANGES

B.71 Easy interchange makes the bus much more useful for journeys further afield. Interchange can be improved by better location of stops, improved waiting accommodation and critically by clear information and signing. This applies to interchange between buses, at rail stations with rail services and at East Midlands Airport. We have already prioritised interchanges for improvement and have made many improvements, often in partnerships with district councils and sometimes with rail industry companies. These have particularly focussed on interchanges in the county towns.

B.72 We will continue this programme through the LTP period, and plan to include a major improvement to access at Loughborough rail station, in partnership with the borough council, private sector developers and the rail industry. Our proposed major scheme bid for Loughborough will include substantial upgrading of bus interchange facilities in the town centre. Elsewhere, as well as improving interchange at Melton Mowbray rail station, we will turn our attention to interchanges in the smaller urban areas where improved facilities will further improve access to bus services.

B.73 **Action 15** – We will identify in the LTP a priority list for improvements to bus interchanges and implement these to a defined programme during the life of the second LTP.

CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL

B.74 Leicestershire has a comprehensive scheme of concessionary travel for elderly and disabled people. This offers half-fare travel well above the minimum standards defined by government, an alternative choice of travel vouchers usable on buses, trains and taxis for those living in the more rural areas, and free or flat-fare travel passes for people with some types of disability. The district councils pay half the cost of the scheme with the County Council funding the remainder. Concessions are currently provided for 67,000 elderly and 11,000 disabled people.

B.75 We are discussing with our district partners how to introduce free travel for all pensioners from April 2006, following the recent government announcement on funding. Thereafter we will continue to work with district council partners to maintain the comprehensive travel scheme, keeping administrative arrangements under regular review for cost effectiveness and working to ensure that there are no barriers to eligible people claiming concessions.

B.76 **Action 16** – We will work with our district council partners to maintain the comprehensive travel scheme, keeping administrative arrangements under regular review for cost-effectiveness and working to ensure that there are no barriers to eligible people claiming concessions.

ACCESSIBILITY AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

B.77 Careful consideration of the location of new development can help to reduce access difficulties and at the same time make transport overall more sustainable. The County Council's guide to developers, newly revised in 2004 as "Highways, Transportation and Development", makes these links clear. The new techniques of accessibility mapping can be used to help guide development location decisions.

B.78 We are producing a guide to what public transport should be provided in association with new developments to make the development sustainable and generate sufficient patronage to deliver commercial bus operation at the end of any period of

planning obligation support for public transport. This can include the provision of new bus services, diverted bus services, prepaid season tickets for new residents, green travel plans, and bus stop infrastructure such as level access kerbs and new bus shelters. We will seek transport assessments which set clear modal split targets for public transport use and are realistic in how these are to be achieved.

B.79 Action 17 – We will develop further guidance on the public transport and accessibility requirements of development and make that widely available

FUNDING

B.80 The County Council spends approximately £2.7m a year supporting contract local bus services, £0.4m a year for accessible transport, £0.15m a year on publicity and promotion and £0.8m a year for concessionary travel. In addition, government rural bus grant of £0.87m a year is spent to help support services in rural Leicestershire.

B.81 Countryside Agency funding has contributed significantly in the past to the work of the county's two Rural Transport Partnerships. There is currently a hiatus with the winding up of the Agency but we will continue to pursue all appropriate sources of external funding which will help deliver the bus strategy.

B.82 We will seek developer contributions where significant development is proposed and bus services would not otherwise be provided on a commercial basis. Generally, subsidy is required to pump-prime services over the life of the development or up to five years

B.83 Action 18 – We will continue to seek appropriate external funding to add to the continued funding for the bus strategy supplied by the County Council.

IMPLEMENTATION

B.84 The actions noted in this strategy form the basis for implementation.