

CHAPTER 5

IMPROVING ACCESS TO FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

5.1 Chapter 2 showed the high priority we give to improving access to facilities for those who do not have a car available or who choose not to use a car. Our LTP objective for this is:

Improving access to facilities including employment, education, health care, and food shopping, particularly where the analysis shows the greatest levels of social exclusion.

5.2 We have a two-part strategy for providing this improved access. The first focuses particularly on the access needs of people on low incomes so that we ensure we make targeted improvements for them. Leicestershire is a relatively affluent county but, despite this, there are pockets of deprivation in some of the urban areas. For example, five 'super output' areas are within the bottom 20% nationally for levels of multiple deprivation and five have been identified as having levels of deprivation for education, skills and training within the bottom 10% nationally. Here, low incomes, and for some people disability as well, cause particular difficulties in gaining access to work, to education, to health facilities and to shops. The access difficulties reinforce deprivation and make it harder still for people in these circumstances to improve their position.

5.3 The second part of our strategy is a development of work we have been undertaking over a long period to bring about general improvements to access by public transport, walking and cycling. This helps the many people living across the county who do not have access to a car, particularly those on low incomes, elderly people and teenagers. It also gives improved choice for those who do have a car available and thus contributes to tackling congestion and pollution and improving personal health.

5.4 The Accessibility Strategy has been developed jointly by Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council as the problems and issues of accessibility are experienced by people and organisations across our administrative boundaries. Many people cross the authorities' boundaries on a daily basis for education, work, shopping or health services and so it is sensible to consider accessibility for both areas. Many of the partner organisations we have been working with consider Leicester city and Leicestershire as a whole area, albeit with distinctive issues between rural and urban areas.

5.5 Our overall strategy is therefore a combination of the general and the specific. To describe it fully, this chapter is split into main sections as follows:

- **Accessibility in context** - how accessibility supports the wider objectives of our partners and ourselves.
- **Targeted improvements** - a description of our analysis of current accessibility relating to social deprivation, our engagement with partners to assess their concerns, and from that the preparation of priorities for action.

- **Improving access for all** - a description of our continuing work to improve access for all and of our plans for further improvement.
- **Our Accessibility Strategy Action Plan** - takes the priorities for action previously described and turns them into a specific action plan for the LTP2 period.

ACCESSIBILITY IN CONTEXT

OUR VISION FOR ACCESSIBILITY

5.6 The following paragraphs show how our strategy can support the wider work of our partners and ourselves. Working within these objectives, and particularly those of our Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, we have defined the following vision for accessibility:

‘Working with partners to ensure that scarce transport resources are directed to those groups and individuals most likely to suffer from social exclusion and where improving accessibility will be of the greatest benefit to society as a whole.’

5.7 The final paragraphs of this section, following the analysis below of wider links, describe the aspects of the accessibility context, including our hourly bus services network, specific issues affecting Central Leicestershire, the links with the planning process, and how we will ensure accessibility work is integrated into our work at the operational level. The section concludes with a brief description of the new techniques of accessibility mapping.

5.8 The overall objectives for the accessibility strategy in meeting our vision are as follows:

- To identify potential neighbourhoods and groups that may suffer from social exclusion.
- Through accessibility to mapping identify the levels of accessibility to services.
- To build relationships with relevant organisations to understand their perspective on accessibility.
- To compare the distribution of people at risk of social exclusion with levels of accessibility.
- To consider other barriers to accessibility such as cost of travel, provision of information and safety and security; then to develop an action plan of achievable interventions that are financially sustainable and effective in improving accessibility

LINKS WITH OTHER PARTS OF OUR LTP STRATEGY

5.9 Measures that contribute to tackling congestion by making alternative modes more attractive will also contribute to improving accessibility, though the focus of investment will be different depending on which is the lead purpose. Thus Chapter 4 on congestion details our work on bus quality corridors, on rail services and on cycling, all of which contribute to improved access even though their main function is to provide a more attractive alternative to the car and so help to tackle congestion. This chapter describes our wider work on buses and our strategies for walking and community safety.

5.10 The link between congestion and accessibility objectives in respect of bus services is particularly strong. Research shows that people are attracted to 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 tackle congestion, is based on this; but so is our strategy for using buses to improve accessibility: there is no point providing bus services if they are not attractive to users. We are therefore tackling 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. Much of this work is described in the present chapter, though it applies equally to the investment in bus services detailed in Chapter 4.

5.11 There are other links also, for example our work on road safety and on reducing the impact of traffic will contribute to making walking and cycling safer and, perhaps almost as important, will also make it perceived to be safer; this will increase its effectiveness in improving access. Similarly, the effective maintenance of footways and cycleways will make walking and cycling more convenient and so contribute also to the access objective.

LINKS WITH OUR WIDER OBJECTIVES AND THOSE OF OUR PARTNERS

Community Strategy

5.12 Our work on accessibility must support our wider priorities. The key focus for these is in our Community Strategy together with our Local Area Agreement. Consultation in preparing the community strategy showed that the priorities for Leicestershire people concerned children and young people, traffic and transport, and crime and community safety. Relevant priorities for action in the Community Strategy include:

- Provision of access centres (one-stop shops) at key sites
- Vitality of market towns and rural centres
- Access to services by people with mobility and sensory disabilities
- Access to evening leisure by young people
- Access to essential services in rural areas
- Addressing issues in deprived areas of Coalville and Loughborough.

Local Area Agreement (LAA)

5.13 As detailed in Chapter 2, the aim of the LAA is to improve the way in which government works with local authorities and their partners to improve public services. The LAA has been developed through the **Leicestershire Together** LSP. The LAA provides a co-ordinated approach to developing proposals to meet local priority outcomes and targets. A total of 16 separate funding streams from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), the Home Office etc have been identified as being pooled or aligned to support LAA outcomes. The Leicestershire LAA identifies seven LAA blocks, or themes, as follows:

- Older People
- Healthier Communities

- Children and Young People
- Stronger Communities
- Safer Communities
- Cleaner and Greener
- Economic Development.

5.14 The preparation of the Local Area Agreement included the prioritisation of key themes. These include supporting communities and the provision of better access to services.

5.15 As later paragraphs will show, the two strands of the strategy will improve access to one-stop shops, market town and rural centres. It also helps to tackle congestion, an important focus for the improvement of journey times, especially into the city centre. The regeneration of the city and other county sites will create job opportunities. It is important that our accessibility work addresses these issues. Our plans to expand community transport will produce improved access for people with disabilities, older people and those experiencing rural isolation. We have specific initiatives to assist evening leisure access for young people. Our bus services policy has already produced large improvements to access in rural areas and will be further developed. Our specific focus on access for those living in deprived areas will help those in parts of Coalville and Loughborough.

Medium Term Corporate Strategy

5.16 As detailed in Chapter 2 our second full Medium Term Corporate Strategy (MTCS) sets out the County Council's own plans, taking account of the Leicestershire Community Strategy. The Strategy includes a range of specific priorities and commitments under three overarching aims, which are to:

- Improve quality of life for people;
- Improve quality of life in communities;
- Improve services so they are high quality and value for money.

5.17 The accessibility strategy demonstrates how we are improving access to services and working with our partners to finalise projects that will secure improvements.

Local Development Frameworks

5.18 Our work on improving accessibility links strongly with the decisions our district councils will be taking in their new local development frameworks on the location of future housing, employment and other development. This relationship is explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Health

5.19 Rural areas of Leicestershire are characterised by an older age profile and so a consequent higher level of demand for care and healthcare. In these areas, recruitment by providers is difficult and health authorities will face a growing challenge in providing efficient and high quality services to dispersed rural populations.

5.20 The provision of healthcare in Leicestershire is set to alter significantly in the life of LTP2. The centrepiece of the strategy is to reconfigure the three existing major hospitals in the county, the Leicester Royal Infirmary, Leicester General and Glenfield hospitals, to create three hospitals that offer specialist services. The Pathfinder PFI scheme, the largest project of its kind outside London, will substantially alter existing journey patterns, with patients often needing to attend more distant hospitals. Coupled with constraints on parking, particularly at the Royal Infirmary, access to hospital has been a major consideration in the development of our Action Plan. Working closely with our partners in the LAA and the health sector, we plan to deliver a range of interventions that will help rural residents to access hospitals, including Hinckley Sunnyside Hospital, Lutterworth and Coalville Community Hospitals. These include the provision of additional transport services and the co-ordination of healthcare appointments to fit them.

5.21 Primary and community healthcare will also be changing throughout the County as new community hospitals, medical and local treatment centres are created. These will offer new locations for GPs together with more sophisticated diagnostics facilities that will remove the need for patients to wait for referral to a main hospital thus speeding up the assessment and treatment of conditions. Although co-locating GPs into new purpose-built centres could increase the distance patients have to travel, the ability to diagnose and treat more people in the community will reduce longer journeys to the principal hospitals within the area. Our planned expansion of community transport and targeted marketing of accessibility options, together with our work with district councils to integrate accessibility in their Local Development Frameworks will help to address any barriers to accessibility that arise from the planned changes.

Employment

5.22 Patterns of employment within Leicestershire have altered as traditional industries such as textiles and manufacturing have contracted and new opportunities in services, retail finance and distribution have expanded. Overall employment levels are high, but the distribution of job seekers and job opportunities is not well matched. Whilst comparatively high levels of unemployment exist in Leicester, many of the new job opportunities are being created on the edge of the city area close to M1 junction 21 and at semi-rural locations such as Nottingham East Midlands Airport, Magna Park near Lutterworth, Ashby and Bardon near Coalville. Information from Job Centre Plus shows that vacancies at some of these sites are difficult to fill as job seekers without access to cars would find it difficult to travel, especially as many jobs involve shift work. Our Action Plan details our plans to address these barriers. It includes the promotion and support of site-specific travel planning, including the associated marketing, together with planning for future developments through the Local Development Frameworks.

Education

5.23 We have a statutory responsibility to provide free transport to school for some pupils and go beyond that in providing for all primary aged children living more than two miles from school and all secondary aged children living more than three miles, including those attending denominational schools. For children living under these distances we provide a number of “school special” buses, and others can use normal public bus services. Others walk or cycle to school but many are taken to school by car. The environmental and safety disbenefits of the latter we are tackling through our school travel planning work, described later. In contrast to this, however, children who do not have bus services available and who cannot be taken by car often have significant access difficulties. Our work on safe routes to school is designed to help combat this.

5.24 At the age of 16 learners who wish to continue studying at their current school may continue to use home to school transport if originally eligible, although a contribution to the cost of the transport will be sought. Those who opt to switch to a college or another school may experience longer and more expensive journeys, especially if they live in a rural area or wish to study a more specialist subject away not provided at their nearest college. Whilst the DfES and Learning and Skills Council would wish to see more variety of course provision, especially to encourage non-academic learners to participate to further education, this could lead to longer journey times and more transport barriers to be overcome. We are working with the Learning and Skills Council and other partners in the Accessibility Forum to tackle these issues.

Local Centres

5.25 Market towns and other rural centres have an important role to play in providing access to services to their immediate area and the surrounding rural settlements. Centres that provide town centre attractions such as shops, post offices, banks, chemists, as well as local services including local authority service shops and further education establishments, will be a priority for maximising accessibility. Our planned work will be in partnership with the LAA Stronger Communities programme to design and deliver appropriate services that meet the needs of local people.

Housing

5.26 In many rural areas of Leicestershire affordable housing to buy or rent is in short supply. The lack of housing for people on lower incomes will have the effect of reducing the number potential of employees for key local businesses and services. The Leicestershire Rural Partnership is helping to address this issue through its Rural Housing Enabler programme. We will work to support this project where possible by helping to ensure transport access complements this provision.

Summary

5.27 The links between our accessibility strategy and the wider objectives of ourselves and our partners are summarised in the table below. Our strategy has been drawn up in close partnership with Leicester City Council and the links shown in this table are consistent for both councils.

Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting travel options to employment sites. • Working with district councils to integrate accessibility options in the planning process through Local Development Frameworks
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting and expanding school and college travel plans. • Promoting travel training and targeted programmes for students with special educational needs.
Social Care and Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport to Health and local centres project. • Promoting and improving travel options, including fares. • Improving and promoting walking and cycling routes.
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with partners including district councils to ensure that accessibility is integrated into future development planning
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the work of the Rural Housing Enabler by accessibility planning for new sites. • Working with district councils to provide information that will assist with integration of accessibility planning within the LDF process. • Working with the LAA to support the Stronger Communities programme.
Other LTP2 areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion strategy including Quality Bus Partnerships, supporting Park and Ride; Flexi Fare tickets; improved walking and cycling routes; school and workplace travel plans; LDFs. • Safer Roads; • Lighting improvements; traffic calming; • Footpath maintenance

OUR HOURLY BUS SERVICES NETWORK

5.28 We 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 in a more cost-effective way 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 and more limited services.

5.29 That network is now in place (see Figure 2.3). It is a mixture of commercial and contract services, which allows us already 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. In the last year passenger numbers have increased by 14% on a like for like basis on our contracted services forming part of the hourly network. Paragraphs later in this chapter illustrate how we intend to consolidate this network, improve access opportunities in the evenings and on Sundays, and also further improve access for the remaining 5% of Leicestershire people.

IMPROVING ACCESS IN CENTRAL LEICESTERSHIRE

5.30 In a number of places round the edge of the county, Leicestershire people have access needs to facilities in adjoining counties. Sometimes these needs are best met by bus services jointly supported by the two adjoining authorities, joining up at the operational level which has been in place for many years and will continue.

5.31 The same issue applies across the boundary with Leicester, but far more intensively. Very many county people need access to city facilities and the density of the bus services network is such that most routes serve both county and city people. We have therefore for many years operated bus services in an integrated way, helped by a trading agreement in which the County Council manages services on the City Council's behalf.

5.32 We also work jointly with Leicester City Council in planning our walking and cycling networks. In particular, the large expenditure we propose on extending the Central Leicester cycle network in this LTP period is designed to integrate with substantial improvements made by Leicester City Council in previous years.

5.33 Our more focussed work on access for those from deprived areas is being carried forward through partnerships with key service providers. This work will be developed through the LAA to ensure the delivery of appropriate services. Leicestershire County and Leicester City Councils have developed a joint Action Plan which includes measures to address the wide variety of accessibility needs of both county and city residents.

ACCESSIBILITY AND THE PLANNING PROCESS

5.34 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 will be used to help guide development location decisions.

5.35 We are developing further guidance on public transport provision in association with new developments, to improve access, make the development more sustainable and generate sufficient patronage to deliver commercial operation at the end of any period of planning obligation support. Such provision can include 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. Working with the district councils, we will seek transport assessments that set clear and realistically achievable modal split targets for public transport use.

5.36 Our Action Plan includes plans to work closely with our district councils to maximise the accessibility opportunities in future planning applications. We have already worked with Charnwood Borough Council to design and develop mapping work that will assist them with their local development framework. This pilot scheme will help to inform them as to the accessibility issues pertaining to specific sites. We will monitor and evaluate its success and, should this prove to be a useful tool in accessibility planning, we will offer this service to our other district councils. A representative from Charnwood Borough Council will be a member of the Accessibility Forum as part of our work to bring accessibility planning into the mainstream and build stronger links with our local planning partners.

DELIVERING OUR ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY

5.37 We will work with our partners in the Accessibility Forum to ensure that our accessibility strategy is properly delivered. Partnership work is vital, but a large part of the delivery responsibility will remain with us. These paragraphs describe how we will ensure this happens.

5.38 Our accessibility strategy work will become an integral part of our management of tendered bus services, both urban and rural, including those funded by Rural Bus Grant. We will achieve this by planning the responsibilities for the accessibility strategy in respect of public and community transport in our newly restructured Integrated Passenger Transport Unit.

5.39 The current criteria for tendered bus services are derived from our Best Value review of public transport. The delivery of the hourly service to 95% of Leicestershire residents is complete and now in the review phase. This includes the implementation of a targeted marketing programme that has already brought considerable success in increasing passenger journeys. The accessibility strategy will inform the knowledge and aspirations of local communities that will help to direct effective interventions in timetable alterations and marketing initiatives in the future. Rural Bus Grant will continue to be used to support both the hourly services network and the complementary deep rural services.

5.40 The prioritisation of resources will be based on the delivery of the Best Value policies, informed by the accessibility strategy analysis. Overall, we plan to continue to provide very substantial revenue funding, as described later in the LTP.

5.41 The inclusion of accessibility strategy analysis in other programmes, for example travel planning, walking and cycling, will be underlined through representation of the relevant specialists on our Accessibility Forum. For example, a representative from Sustrans will be invited to join the forum to advise on local cycling issues. Representatives from our travel planning team will be invited to advise on best practice and help to design our new travel planning projects.

MEASURING ACCESSIBILITY

5.42 Research carried out on behalf of the government has led to a new approach to measuring the ease of access to particular facilities. We have used the government-sponsored 'Accession' mapping software, coupled with analysis of public transport routes and services, to estimate the percentages of people within defined journey times of particular facilities. This is being used on a countywide basis, to show how successful we are being in providing good public transport links to facilities. We have also used it to assess the ease of access for the targeted groups of people we wish most to help.

5.43 We have incorporated this into our accessibility strategy through the following stages:

- Stage 1 - Strategic accessibility assessment including initial strategic level assessment explaining indices of multiple deprivation, identifying locations of key facilities, identifying current transport provision, identifying partnerships and identifying key issues, challenges and opportunities.
- Stage 2 - Local accessibility assessments including subject-specific consultations, use of Accession and input from public and stakeholder consultations
- Stage 3 – Option appraisal including identifying my options and appraising these in terms of value for money, resources and priorities
- Stage 4 – Developing action plans with our partners to address issues raised in the LTP, set out a realistic schedule for tackling identified priorities and provide more developed and detailed actions for year 1 of LTP2. Phasing of action plans for years 2 to 5 also identified
- Stage 5 – Performance monitoring and evaluation.

TARGETED IMPROVEMENTS

The accessibility strategy

5.44 The wider context for targeted improvements to access is set out at the start of this section. To help achieve that, we have prepared an accessibility strategy, including an action plan for implementation over the LTP2 period. The action plan will ensure that we take the necessary steps, with appropriate partners, to improve access to essential facilities for people from deprived groups. The stages in preparing our accessibility strategy have been to:

- Identify neighbourhoods and groups that may suffer from deprivation
- Through accessibility mapping, identify their ease of access to services
- Liase 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.
- Hold a consultation event with relevant partners
- Secure partnership arrangements with the Local Area Agreement for the design and delivery of relevant projects.

5.45 We used consultants to do much of this initial work for us, in a joint project with Leicester City Council. County and City Council officers have continued with the second stage of the development. The first stage prioritised access to four key facilities, namely work, education, health facilities and shopping. Following consultation with the LAA and other partners, these have been slightly expanded to include work, education and training, health and well being, food shopping and local centres. This will maximise the co-working potential with our partners.

IDENTIFYING AREAS OF DEPRIVATION

5.46 We have used a number of indicators to identify the county's areas of concentrated deprivation. These have included the information from Village Appraisals and Parish Plans, provided by the work of our partners at the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire and Rutland) and independent data gathered by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership at their annual conference and programme development days, both held in 2005. We have also used data from less formal consultation with our community transport providers through a series of meetings. Finally we have also included the Local Area Agreement indicators and the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004. The latter combines indicators across seven domains into a single deprivation score and rank for each 'Super Output Area' in each district. Each Super Output Area includes a population of approximately 1500 people. The attributes are as follows:

- Income deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Health deprivation and disability
- Education, skills and training deprivation
- Barriers to housing and services
- Living environment deprivation
- Crime.

5.47 The table below shows the 10 most deprived Super Output Areas in Leicestershire and indicates their position in relation to the national figures, with the lowest percentage figure representing the area with the highest level of deprivation. In addition, Figures 5.1 to 5.3 illustrate the countywide picture for areas of low car ownership, areas with high levels of people seeking job seeker's allowance, and areas with high levels of children eligible for free school meals.

INDEX OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION					
SOA	Ward No	Ward	District	National Ranking	National % ranking
E0102	5699	Loughborough Hastings	Charnwood Borough	3344	10.3%
E0102	5934	Greenhill	North West Leicestershire	3594	11.1%
E0102	5932	Greenhill	North West Leicestershire	4037	12.4%
E0102	5725	Loughborough Storer	Charnwood Borough	5056	15.6%
E0102	5717	Loughborough Shelthorpe	Charnwood Borough	5232	16.1%
E0102	5700	Loughborough Hastings	Charnwood Borough	7402	22.8%
E0102	5949	Measham	North West Leicestershire	8011	24.7%
E0102	5844	Earl Shilton	Hinckley and Bosworth	8230	25.3%
E0102	5718	Loughborough Southfields	Charnwood Borough	8657	26.7%
E0102	5930	Coalville	North West Leicestershire	8683	26.7%

Figure 5.1
AREAS OF LOW CAR OWNERSHIP

Figure 5.2
CLAIMANTS OF JOB SEEKERS ALLOWANCE

Figure 5.3
ENTITLEMENT TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS

5.48 Our initial investigations and mapping lead us to conclude that we should focus our work on improvements for access to key facilities for seven areas:

- Central Loughborough (parts of Hastings and Southfields ward)
- North Loughborough (parts of Storer ward)
- South Loughborough (parts of Shelthorpe ward)
- Greenhill, Coalville
- Measham
- Coalville
- Earl Shilton.

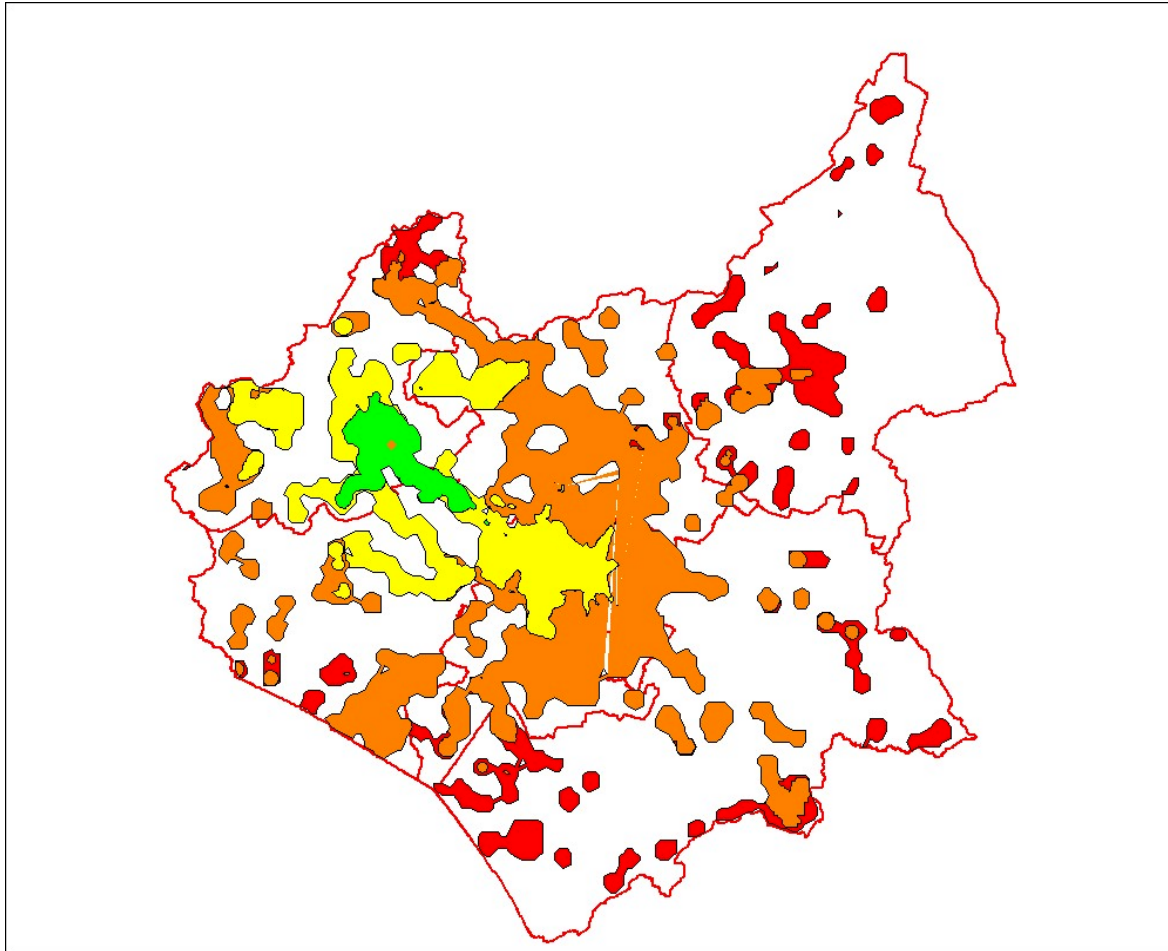
5.49 Subsequent consultation with partners has confirmed that these areas should receive focus, together with additional areas to be determined through the LAA process. These are described in detail in the accessibility action plan.

5.50 We have used mapping software to measure access times to defined key facilities for people in the initial seven areas, as shown in the table below. The table shows conspicuously that many of the most deprived wards have very good access on foot to most essential facilities. It highlights the relatively less accessible facilities, for example to employment from Earl Shilton, where our efforts may need to be concentrated. Even here, however, levels of access are already high, and our partners have confirmed that specific action plans for people in concentrated areas of deprivation may be of relatively little benefit in Leicestershire compared to our more general accessibility work which provides for people with accessibility problems across the county. However, our action plan does include projects that will promote the existing facilities in these areas alongside further consultation work with local communities. An example of outputs from Accession is attached in Figure 5.4

ACCESS TIMES BY BUS OR WALKING FROM TARGET AREAS Percentages of all households (households without car)								
Target area	Post 16 education		Employment		Hospitals		Supermarket	
	0-30 mins	0-60 mins	0-20 mins	0-40 mins	0-30 mins	0-60 mins	0-15 mins	0-30 mins
Central Loughborough	96.7 (97.4)	97.7 (98.2)	97.7 (98.2)	97.7 (98.2)	95.7 (96.6)	97.7 (98.2)	92.7 (94.2)	97.7 (98.2)
North Loughborough	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
South Loughborough	96.5 (98.0)	98.2 (100)	94.8 (97.1)	98.3 (99.1)	89.6 (94.1)	91.3 (99.0)	84.4 (91.2)	98.2 (99.0)
Greenhill	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
Measham	93.2 (89.5)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	86.4 (79.0)	100 (100)	89.8 (84.3)	100 (100)
Coalville	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
Earl Shilton	100 (100)	100 (100)	86.0 (87.0)	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)	95.3 (95.7)	100 (100)

Figure 5.4 – example of accession output

Coalville Hospital Accessibility – Monday 7 to 10am, 800m maximum walking distance



Journey Time Contour Key: Green = 0 to 30 min, Yellow = 30 to 60 min, Orange = 1 to 2 hours, Red = More than 2 hours

ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIPS

5.51 Jointly with Leicester City Council, we initially held discussions with all primary care trusts in Leicestershire and Leicester and with the University Hospitals of Leicester trust. We have similarly discussed our strategy with the district councils, with the Job Centre Plus offices for city and county, and with the seven further education colleges in the county and city as well as the Local Education Authorities through the Post 16 Education Transport Partnership. The last named is a consultation forum involving the Learning and Skills Council, the local colleges of further education, schools, the Connexions service and the diocesan education service. It discusses issues facing young people in Leicestershire aged 16 and over in accessing further education and training and makes recommendations to the Local Education Authority. Discussions with all our partners so far have involved the sharing of information, and understanding of the process of improving access.

5.52 Most of our partners, unsurprisingly, have identified first the more general access issues that affect them, particularly where premises are relatively inaccessible other than by car. Thus, for example, there is a general concern at the inaccessibility by public transport of new community hospitals in Loughborough, Hinckley and Lutterworth. There is also concern at the difficulty of reaching major employment sites at Nottingham East Midlands Airport, Magna Park near Lutterworth and the Corby industrial estates; and at the difficulty of reaching the relocated Stephenson College in Coalville. As part of our work to improve general accessibility, described below, we will work with our partners to help overcome these problems. Some of these issues may also become relevant for the specific action plans for socially deprived groups that we will develop. Further details are contained within the action plan.

5.53 Our partners have given their preliminary views on accessibility planning in written comments. The examples set out below show both the importance of accessibility planning and the strong inter-relationship between city and county.

“ Sorting out transport is one of the key enablers that decide whether people can take up a job. Jobcentre Plus is keen to work with partners to improve the service we offer to both job seekers and employers in this regard. This would have the impact of:

- Helping open up jobs to people from disadvantaged areas and
- Addressing labour market shortages and the risk of wage inflation if jobs were to remain unfilled.

“This is particularly an issue with Leicester, with generally low unemployment in the county and higher than average unemployment in the city. There are clearly gaps in the network, for example around Magna Park, but there may also be issues where we can improve people’s awareness of transport availability. Perception can be as big a barrier as what is actually on the ground.” Keith Burn, General Manager, Jobcentre Plus

“ We are engaged in a major capital project which will enable healthcare facilities in Leicester to be modernised, and support co-working to ensure that our plans can accommodate public transport links that will serve our wide community. The modernisation project, (Pathway project), also has scope for strategic regeneration of employment in the county, requiring a wide variety of construction skills, over a six to seven year period, which will depend on public transport links to enable the local population to gain access to training establishments, and then to work sites. The opportunity to work co-operatively with other colleague organisations in Leicestershire, to develop public transport strategies, is a long held aspiration of the UHL, and we welcome this initiative and give it our full support.” Rob Pinsent, Director of Facilities, University Hospitals Leicester NHS Trust

“ The Post 16 Transport Partnership would like to assist in improving accessibility to further education by reviewing its policy on helping learners with their travel costs, providing better information on journey planning such as the new post 16-19 page on our web site, providing independence training for learners with Special Education Needs and looking at what is required for them to be able to use public transport. I believe it is important that all the departments working on transport in whatever form should be in contact with each other and be able to see the bigger picture to maximise accessibility to education. This work is leading that philosophy.” John Thatcher, Leicester City Council

“ At meetings of the Post 16 Transport Partnership the development of the accessibility strategy, as part of the second Local Transport Plan, has been discussed. Many of the barriers to accessibility such as lack of services, journey time, travel cost, safety and information have already been identified through the work of the partnership. The Post 16 transport fund has also enabled us to seek student opinion and discuss with consultants about ways of improving existing systems. This enabled us collectively to look at policy issues in an innovative way, taking into account the problems for students at ground level. We look forward to the outcomes of the consultation on the accessibility strategy, anticipating that it will help to introduce more effective, targeted support for students.” Ruth Ewiwile, Loughborough College

“ At a time when planning is now charged with delivering sustainable development (however defined), one of the problems that local planning authorities face when preparing their Local Development Framework is in being able to measure sustainability and a general concern about resources. I believe that the accessibility planning that we discussed will be of considerable use in both respects. Firstly, in terms of sustainability, for the first time we will be potentially able to compare a range of possible development sites on an equal basis to assess which sites contribute most from an accessibility point of view. Secondly, by working with the County Council we will be able to maximise resources. I see the role of the District as being to provide, wherever possible, background information, such as site locations, to support the accessibility assessments and to validate the results where possible.” Ian Nelson, North West Leicestershire District Council

“ Through the development of the Primary Care Trust’s (PCT’s) Strategic Service Delivery Plan, the Trust is proposing a major re-organisation of the way in which new services are delivered. The redevelopment of two sites, one in South Wigston and one in Lutterworth, will enable local people to gain access to a new range of specialist diagnostic procedures in their local area thereby reducing the need to travel to hospitals in the city. Whilst more local services are to be welcomed the Trust is still keen to examine how access to these new sites can be maximised particularly for groups that have limited mobility. We look forward to further development of a local accessibility plan for the two sites identified for development to ensure that any barriers to access can be identified and addressed through a joint action plan.” Richard Bailey South Leicestershire Primary Care Trust

5.54 Consultation conducted during autumn and winter 2005 has established the best methods of delivering sustainable projects that help to improve accessibility. This will be through the formation of an Accessibility Forum that will monitor the progress of projects and advise on future priorities. The forum, led by the County Council, will comprise inter alia Leicester City Council, LAA representatives, Primary Care Trusts, JobCentre Plus, community representatives, service users, bus company representatives and community transport representatives. The Forum will not just identify access issues but will also set up project teams to work together to provide solutions. In the health area we are already working together on shared transport for clinic appointments, as noted later in this section, and we believe there is scope for expanding this initiative considerably.

5.55 We propose to expand community transport provision to enable increased journey capacity to local centres. This will provide access to health appointments, food shopping, personal business and leisure activities for rurally isolated and mobility impaired residents. It will improve their access to services and help to ensure that the local centres continue to be lively, viable places. We will achieve this through capital

investment from the County Council, partnership working with the community transport providers and through the Leicestershire Rural Partnership. Equally, we already provide a number of bus services for school and college pupils, over and above those required by statute, with the County Council funding transport for approximately 3800 students not entitled to transport assistance and further education colleges funding a further 400. We will explore further how we can develop this transport to improve access in the most cost-effective way possible.

EVIDENCE FROM PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Health

5.56 Through the meetings with the PCTs and Hospital Trusts covering the City and County a variety of access issues were raised. There are many current issues that need to be addressed together with future implications connected with the improvements in the way health services will be provided in the future. Amongst the changes that will have implications on accessibility are the introduction of:

- Choose and book – enabling patients to have a wider choice of hospitals for treatment and consequently the potential for a greater variety of journeys.
- Amalgamation of GP's surgeries into new health centres – whilst some GPs in the future may be located farther away from patient's homes, the ability to receive diagnostic and minor injury services could reduce the need to attend a general hospital.
- Introduction of specialisms at University Hospital of Leicester (UHL) sites – patients may no longer be able to receive a wide range of treatments from their nearest hospital in Leicester and so the need to travel further to a hospital that offers specialist treatment and care may arise.

5.57 The health sector is organised thus:

Strategic Health Authority (SHA) The Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland SHA covers the area and develops strategies for local health services and manages and improves performance within the health sector.

Acute NHS Trust hospitals. The main hospitals in Leicestershire are located in Loughborough, Coalville, Hinckley, Melton, Market Harborough and Lutterworth, together with the University Hospitals of Leicester (UHL). The NHS Trust provides a range of medical and surgical treatment and care, including inpatient, outpatient, emergency and planned care.

Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) There are currently three PCT's covering Leicestershire: Melton, Harborough and Rutland: South Leicestershire; North West Leicestershire and Charnwood. These are due to be reduced to one in a planned reorganisation. The role of the PCT's is to plan and commission health services appropriate to the local communities. The PCT's receive central government funding to provide services. The PCT's also advise General Practitioners in respect of current policies and provide a range of direct services such as health visitors and occupational therapy.

5.58 Through the Transport to Health initiative, led by Leicestershire County Council, we have been working with the PCT's and the NHS Trusts to address transport to health

care issues. This project is explained in detail in the action plan. Other examples of current joint working include the following:

- **NHS Trust: UHL Booking Centre** - University Hospitals Leicester introduced a new outpatient appointment booking system in 2002. This includes making arrangements for transport for those patients who need it. The Transport to Health Initiative is a partner in this project. We have been working with the UHL booking centre manager and her staff during the planning and delivery of the new booking system to ensure that community transport is an integral part of transport provision for patients. We plan to expand and develop this project further during LTP2. Details are contained in the action plan.
- **NHS Trust: Pathway Project** - UHL have been successful in securing funding for a £700 million five year programme to improve the three Leicester sites. The programme includes refurbishment of existing buildings, new build and a realignment of services. Accessibility issues are being considered by UHL and we will continue to work with them to identify, plan and deliver appropriate solutions.

Employment

5.59 A series of meetings was held with JobCentre Plus, engaging with staff at a variety of levels. Managers contacted area offices to discuss where transport and access problems had been encountered in matching job seekers with job opportunities. Problems and issues raised including the following:

- Whilst many areas with a high proportion of job seekers are close to employment areas, the jobs on offer may not suit those seeking work.
- A number of sites where job opportunities exist are difficult to access by public transport, as they are located away from urban areas.
- Many of the opportunities available to job seekers in growth sectors such as distribution require shift work that again makes the use of public transport difficult.

5.60 These issues have been subsequently confirmed during further consultation with our partners. Our planned programme of work integrates with the Local Area Agreement programme and our aim will be to improve access to employment and training for residents. This will support the local communities by increasing the viability of the areas through increased economic prosperity. We will work with partners to help deliver better skilled workers and attract businesses which can offer better paid employment. Some sites that offer new job opportunities, for example Nottingham East Midlands Airport and Magna Park, have particular access barriers to some workers. We are working with employers to address these barriers.

5.61 In particular the Kickstart project will address accessibility issues at Nottingham East Midlands Airport. The operation of NEMA currently supports around 9,100 full time jobs. It is estimated that by 2030 this figure could rise to 26,800 jobs, an increase of 295%. NEMA's projections suggest that airport related companies will in future find it increasingly difficult to secure the supply of labour they require; anecdotal evidence suggests that recruitment problems and skills shortages are already becoming important issues for the airport. Labour supply problems at NEMA are likely to be exacerbated by the surface transport infrastructure, the seasonality of some airport work, a lack of awareness of employment opportunities and a limited strategic understanding of airport related skills needs. However, based on a strategic study, joint funded by the airport and the adjoining

local authorities, an encouraging start has been made with Kickstart funding being used to improve radically the direct bus service to Loughborough. The proposed new East Midlands Parkway station will help with this objective and, in the much longer term, there may be a case for a fixed rail link direct to the terminal building and other airport employment locations.

5.62 In order to maximise the forward planning opportunities for new employment sites, we are working with our district and borough councils through the local development frameworks to ensure that accessibility is an integral part of future planning. Further details are contained in the action plan.

5.63 We recognise that low travel horizons can sometimes be a barrier to potential employees. The Social Exclusion Unit report stated transport to be a barrier for 38% of people looking for work. On a local level, the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership surveyed employers in 2004. 12% of companies in Leicestershire and Leicester City cited transport as a barrier to recruitment. One way that we plan to reduce these barriers, whether real or perceived, is through our travel planning work project. Working with employers, we will develop area-based information that will inform prospective employees on accessibility options.

Education

5.64 The provision of home to school transport by the County Council for those over the defined prescribed walking distances from school, together with our work to help the access for those not eligible for assisted transport, means that access to education is not generally a significant problem. Pupils who live in the Vale of Belvoir currently have to attend upper schools (14 to 19) in Melton and so journey time is considered an issue. A solution under consideration for this and other reasons is to extend the existing High School in Bottesford up to the age of 19 thereby reducing the need to travel.

5.65 Whilst support to students to access post 16 education is discretionary, both the City and County have active Post 16 Transport Partnerships that seek to reduce the barriers to post 16 education and improve the choice available. In contrast with access to upper schools (14-19), where students over the age of 16 can use home to school transport, students who choose to study at a college of further education will be more reliant on the use of public transport. It follows that the choice of course available to a student will be wider if they can conveniently access a college of further education.

5.66 Other issues that have been raised through the post 16 partnership include:

- Journey time barriers caused to students who choose to study a specialist course only offered at one or a limited number of sites
- Some services suffer from peak hour overcrowding and learners can experience delays in getting to college if buses are full or delayed by congestion
- Providing transport for Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities is expensive
- For low-income households the cost of travel could be a barrier despite the eligibility of many to receive an Educational Maintenance Allowance of up to £30 per week

- Lack of familiarity with public transport services and ticketing schemes could limit the travel horizons of some and so limit the choice of course or institution. This could be a particular issue for learners choosing more vocational subjects who prefer to study closer to home
- Existing support to learners is limited to those living over 3 miles from their nearest college. A parental/student contribution is required up front and this could deter those in receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance, which is paid weekly. Travel passes are less flexible than commercially available operator tickets
- Crime and the fear of crime can deter some groups of learners from using public transport, particularly those attending evening courses.

5.67 Following the publication of the Schools White Paper in "Higher Standards, Better Schools for All" by the Department of Education and Skills in October 2005, Leicestershire County Council, along with all local authorities, is required to reassess the transport needs of pupils and to promote safe and sustainable modes of travel to school.

5.68 Our accessibility strategy will support the ongoing work of the school travel plan team for pre-16 pupils. We will do this by promoting this work within our Accessibility Forum. For post 16 pupils we will work with our partners to plan and deliver a range of improvements, including monitoring and evaluating the pilot unlimited travel pass scheme, raising awareness of the barriers faced by passengers with special educational needs, and designing and delivering site- specific travel plan information for post- 16 colleges. Full details are included in our action plan.

5.69 As part of our aim to ensure accessibility is considered an integral part of new developments, we will work with our partners to ensure that accessibility issues are fully considered in the planning of new schools and colleges in Leicestershire. We will achieve this by liaison with the relevant County Council departments and through our work with our borough and district councils in their local development framework process.

Food

5.70 We have worked jointly with Leicester City Council to determine our definition of local centres. We agreed that these include towns, villages or neighbourhoods that include shops that sell fresh fruit and vegetables together with a range of healthy food, competitively priced. By concentrating our accessibility projects in this way we will be helping to ensure that people have access to healthy food, and in some cases access to physical activities at local leisure centres. Our planned improvements to Rights of Way and cycle routes will encourage physical exercise. This work will complement the aim of the Director of Public Health in Leicestershire to address the issue of obesity. A survey commissioned in 2002 by the Health Authority revealed that approximately three quarters of adults did not eat the recommended daily five portions of fruit and vegetables or participate in physical exercise, such as walking or swimming, for thirty minutes five times a week.

5.71 Our Accessibility Action Plan includes targeted marketing and publicity to promote public transport, walking and cycling. We will work with our partners in the LAA Stronger Communities Programme to further identify improvements at a local level. We will plan and deliver projects that help to provide a solution, as appropriate.

OTHER BARRIERS TO ACCESS

5.72 Later paragraphs in this chapter illustrate our work in reducing the cost of travel for some groups through concessionary travel schemes. They also show our work on improving travel information through the bus information strategy and the contribution of community safety lighting within a package of measures to improve safety and security.

5.73 We will consider travel information, and safety and security, further in the context of the individual action plans. Cost of these is a more general issue and one to which there is no easy solution, yet it is a major barrier for many. Travel concessions for elderly and disabled people are key for these groups, and the government-funded introduction of free travel for elderly people from April 2006 will help further. However, all others, apart from children under 16, must pay full fares on public transport. In further work with our partners we will explore any possibilities for reducing cost to selected public transport users. Our Action Plan includes plans to work with our partners to extend the Flexifare ticket that was introduced in Leicestershire in 2005.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

5.74 Our targeted improvements are detailed in the Action Plan. Key priorities include:

- Assisting with the development of the Bus Information Strategy
- Producing site-specific travel information
- Promotion of existing walking and cycling routes
- Working with employers
- Expansion of countywide community transport.

IMPROVING ACCESS FOR ALL

A specific target

5.75 A relatively small number of local centres across Leicestershire, Leicester and adjoining counties provide a high concentration of essential facilities which Leicestershire people depend on, as illustrated in the table below.

DEFINED LOCAL CENTRES AND FACILITIES								
Location	College	Sixth Form	Super market	Post office	Bank B. Soc	Chemist	Help Point	Service Shop
Leicester City	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Ashby		•	•	•	•	•	•	
Coalville	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Hinckley	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Loughborough	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Birstall		•	•	•	•	•	•	
Quorn		•	•	•	•	•		
Shepshed		•	•	•	•	•		
Syston		•	•	•	•	•	•	
Melton Mowbray	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Oadby		•	•	•	•	•	•	
Wigston	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
Lutterworth		•	•	•	•	•		•
Market Harboro'		•	•	•	•	•		•
Nuneaton	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Oakham	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Corby	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Grantham	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Rugby	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Swadlincote		•	•	•	•	•		

5.76 All provide the essentials of further education, good food shops, post office, bank, chemist and a range of employment opportunities. Many in the county have the additional benefits of help points and service shops. Access to these centres is therefore a good measure of our success at improving access for all. Our local measure for accessibility, described in Chapter 12, is therefore the percentage of people within 30 and 60 minutes' travel time by walk or bus from one of these centres. A similar measure, but including all people in the city and the county, has been adopted in the Central Leicestershire LTP. Figure 5.5 illustrates this.

Figure 5.5
ACCESS TIMES TO MAIN CENTRES

BUS IMPROVEMENTS

Developing the hourly services network

5.77 The network provides access within 800 metres to a service of at least hourly daytime frequency for 95% of Leicestershire people and includes:

- Strategic routes 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 county towns and the main services network.

5.78 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 over £3m a year. To ensure the network is affordable in the long term, we will now focus on achieving 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. Both these activities must be built upon to ensure continuing increases in patronage.

5.79 We do not believe it sensible to increase the 95% figure, for doing so would result in provision of hourly services to small rural communities with little demand for transport, resulting in poor value for money. What we will do, however, is to sustain this network and work to improve access both at other times and for the remaining 5% of Leicestershire people.

5.80 The County Council supports many evening and Sunday 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. In carrying out the review we will build on the experience of innovatory services we have been running in the Vale of Belvoir and Market Harborough areas in recent years, which are designed specifically around the evening access needs of young people. We will work further with young people's groups to ensure all the new services respond as closely as possible to their access needs.

5.81 We will therefore:

- Work to secure network stability for the hourly services network so that Leicestershire people have dependable bus services to plan around
- Help to achieve this by continuing and improving our work with our contractors to drive up service standards, by developing further our continuous programme of service promotion, and by working with the bus companies to help secure the same ends for commercially operated services contributing to the hourly network

- Review all evening and Sunday bus services with the intention of maximising the targeted access they offer within the limits of what is affordable.

Kick-start funding

5.82 Although most rural bus services are now operated under contract to the County Council, most urban and some inter-urban services are operated on a commercial basis. We need to work with the bus companies not only to make these services an attractive alternative to private cars, as described in Chapter 4, but also to ensure that they are as effective as possible in improving general accessibility.

5.83 We can help in this through many strands of our work, including the bus information strategy, the provision of improved bus stops and shelters, and work to improve bus terminals. Another approach is to work with bus companies to provide initial funding for services that are intended to become fully commercial after a growth period. Over the years we have had a number of successes with this approach, usually where a County Council contract service is taken over by the contractor for commercial operation once the demand has become established. Now the government's 'kick-start' initiative, which provides initial funding for services intended to become commercial, gives the opportunity to extend this approach further.

5.84 In 2005 we have submitted bids with partners for six improvements, including one with neighbouring authorities, the bus operator and Nottingham East Midlands Airport for comprehensive improvements to bus service links from Leicester, Loughborough and Derby. This bid was successful with funding of £700,000 awarded.

5.85 Our other bids, in all cases joint with neighbouring authorities, were not successful. Despite this, we feel that all were for valuable improvements to the network and we will take any future opportunities to secure funds for these initiatives. We are encouraged by the success of our bid for airport feeder services and believe Kick Start will remain a valuable mechanism for strengthening the commercial bus services network.

Night bus services

5.86 There is a commercially operated network of night time buses operated on six routes. NiteRider serves both city and county destinations, including Anstey, Syston, Wigston and Blaby in the County. Services operate up to 02.30 am on Friday and Saturday nights and are promoted in partnership with the nightclubs. This helps to encourage people to travel safely on the buses.

Complementary public transport services

5.87 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, we consult closely 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 demand-responsive service types particularly suited to places where there is limited demand. Examples are shared taxi services, community minibuses and rural dial-a-ride.

5.88 Our work in this area has been helped 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 to be taken 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 have now been transferred to East Midlands Development Agency.

5.89 We wish to maintain the work of the rural transport partnerships as a means to facilitate better access in rural areas. To help ensure we do this, and obtain maximum benefit from new sources of funding and partnership working, we are reviewing how they should best operate in future. We have obtained funding from the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership for this and an independent review is underway, the first of its kind in the East Midlands region. The review, due for completion in spring 2006, will recommend future priorities and focus, following which we will make appropriate applications for future funding.

5.90 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 all these services during LTP2, 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. Processes for monitoring and review will be developed further and introduced at the same time.

5.91 These are general-purpose services. In parallel, the County Council is 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, using volunteer car drivers. This is proving successful in making it easier for those without their own transport available to access health appointments in the five areas covered by the pilot. We intend to develop this in the medium term into a more comprehensive joint initiative and have assigned £250,000 capital funding during LTP2 to this project. Revenue funding will be sought from emda through the Rural Transport Partnership.

5.92 We intend therefore to:

- Review and improve services to small rural communities in a five-year programme, looking for solutions using small vehicles which will maximise access opportunities within affordable limits
- Continue to develop the work of the East and West Leicestershire Rural Transport Partnerships
- Sustain our access to health initiative and develop it towards a countywide model that provides community transport to local centres, including health appointments.

Dial a Ride

5.93 In partnership with Leicester City Council we provide a demand responsive Dial a Ride service for mobility impaired people who live in the Central Leicestershire area. It offers a door to door service for people who are unable to use conventional public transport services. Currently Dial A Ride offers shopping services from different geographical areas together with a flexible service to meet the needs of passengers, for example transport to lunch clubs, places of worship and leisure activities. There were

20,545 passenger journeys made in the year to March 2005 at a service cost of £90,000 per year, funded by us with Leicester City Council. The service is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis with consequential changes to its operation as necessary.

Taxis and private hire vehicles

5.94 Taxis and private hire vehicles have an important role to play in providing access, particularly at times and in places where bus services are not available. In that role we have already used them extensively for providing innovative transport services in the more rural areas, as described above. In Leicestershire the district councils are responsible for taxi and private hire vehicle licensing, and all are working with us to help maximise the usefulness of these vehicles in the LTP context. Across the seven districts:

- Blaby District introduced taxi licensing in 2001/02 and has a dual licensing system allowing taxis to operate over a wider area; this is particularly useful for the more remote rural areas
- Charnwood Borough has high standards of compliance testing and has given particular attention to taxi stands in Loughborough town centre so as to make them fully complimentary to buses
- Harborough District has similar standards and has recently improved the provision of taxi stands in the centre of Market Harborough
- Hinckley and Bosworth Borough has maintained effective dialogue with taxi companies to ensure that taxi provision is properly accommodated in the centre of Hinckley
- Melton Borough has reviewed licensing policy to take account of integrated transport and make it easier to introduce shared-taxi schemes
- North West Leicestershire District has given particular attention to evening taxi provision in Coalville and Ashby-de-la-Zouch, to be complimentary to bus services and reduce crime and disorder problems
- Oadby and Wigston Borough have similarly maintained high licensing standards and given particular attention to the appropriate placing of taxi ranks.

5.95 Our partnership work with the districts during LTP2 will be aimed at:

- Further developing the role of taxis and private hire vehicles in innovatory and shared-use applications in rural areas
- Increasing the scope of taxi and private hire vehicle services to compliment bus services, particularly in the late evenings
- Further developing taxis and private hire vehicles for use in widening the scope of transport provision for disabled people. This will require particular attention to issues such as driver training.

Coach services

5.96 Coach services, in Leicestershire mainly those operated by National Express, provide invaluable long distance access. They are particularly used by students and by elderly people. Although all these services are operated on a commercial basis, we can

help ensure that their important role is maintained and strengthened. There are two main ways of doing this, through providing information and through providing appropriate terminals.

5.97 Information on coach services is already provided via the Traveline telephone enquiry service, which we support, and is comprehensively available on the internet. We can add to this by ensuring that provision is made for local provision of coach information at the stops they use.

5.98 As we review bus terminal facilities in the county towns we are also ensuring that express coach services have convenient stops available, so that pick-up points are close to where passengers want them and offer convenient interchange with local bus services and taxis. One example is in Loughborough, where coach stops have already been moved closer to the main bus stopping areas following the closure of the previous bus station and will, with our proposed town centre transport scheme, be fully integrated with these.

5.99 Our work with Nottingham East Midlands Airport to improve public transport access is described elsewhere in this LTP. There are already some long distance coach services to the airport and, through the Airport Transport Forum, we will work with the airport to encourage an expansion of these and further improvements to interchange arrangements.

Bus stop upgrades

5.100 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. We will also continue to invest in new bus shelters, and have now entered into a countywide maintenance contract for these, to ensure continued 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. To secure value for money, 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.

5.101 This investment will be carried out mainly at the same time as we implement bus corridor projects, but we will also 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 continue our programme of grants for joint-funded bus shelters in rural communities and, in addition, will continue to ensure that new development provides appropriate upgrades to bus stops in the vicinity.

Priority bus access

5.102 Giving buses priority access to facilities can greatly improve access for passengers. We have two community hospitals, in Loughborough and in Coalville, where difficult road conditions mean it has not been possible to site bus stops within a short walking distance: lay-bys in Loughborough and a revised junction arrangement in Coalville will allow the stops to be provided and so improve access. Later in the LTP2 period we will improve access for other community hospitals, and potentially at other locations also.

Interchanges

5.103 Easy interchange makes the bus more available for journeys further afield. Interchange can be improved by better location of stops, improved waiting accommodation and critically by clear information and signing. Main interchange points are between buses, at rail stations with rail services, and at Nottingham 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.

5.104 We will continue this programme through the LTP2 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, described in Chapter 11, 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.

5.105 We believe there is sufficient national experience and evidence to demonstrate that bus stop upgrades, priority bus access and interchange improvements have a direct impact on the quality of the bus journey experience, so helping to improve access and attract passengers from cars. Cost-effectiveness cannot be proven at the local level, however, and our decision on the extent of investment in these measures must be driven by judgement. As with all other highway investment, we will continue to use a best value approach to carrying out the improvements in the most cost-effective way possible.

Concessionary travel

5.106 Leicestershire already has a comprehensive countywide 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 have paid 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.

5.107 We have been planning with our district partners for the introduction of free travel for all pensioners from April 2006, following the recent government announcement. The new scheme will keep all aspects of the existing one but add to that free off-peak travel within each district area. Government has provided substantial extra funding to the district councils so they are now able to fund the full costs of the new scheme, though it remains co-ordinated countywide.

Transport for disabled people

5.108 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 volunteer 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.

5.109 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. We have already installed raised kerbs at over 225 stops across the county and we will continue with these programmes in LTP2, as well as increasing the use of low-floor buses on contract services.

5.110 People with learning disabilities can often find it hard to use public transport. In partnership with smaller bus operators we have already carried out customer care training for drivers, which has included disability awareness: the larger bus operators carry out their own customer care training. In our bus information strategy, outlined below, we are giving particular attention to simplicity and clarity in presenting timetable information. In providing transport for people with learning disabilities we already support individuals in the use of normal bus services, rather than specialist transport, wherever possible. We will develop this area of work further during LTP2 in consultation with our disabled customers and the bus companies.

5.111 Many of these initiatives will particularly help wheelchair users using public transport. To help their more general mobility we have been improving footways and road crossing points over many years, largely through work with local disability organisations throughout Leicestershire. As noted below in the section on improving crossings and footways, we intend to continue this work through LTP2, remaining responsive to changing local circumstances for wheelchair users.

Our bus information strategy

5.112 We adopted a bus information strategy, agreed with bus company partners and Leicester City Council, in 2003. This is now incorporated in the bus strategy. It recognises the need for high quality information, properly updated and delivered through a variety of media. Implementation of the strategy by all partners is now producing marked improvements.

5.113 Our key commitments in the bus information strategy 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 serviced 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.

5.114 We have joined an agreement with bus companies and local authorities across the East Midlands to change bus timetables on only six standard days each year. This helps to ensure effective publicity for changes and to reassure customers.

5.115 We were founder members of 'EMTIS', the East Midlands Travel Information Service, and have played a leading role in moving the regional Traveline telephone enquiry service forward to its present high level of performance. We have entered into a data sharing agreement to ensure effective input to Transport Direct.

Fares and ticketing

5.116 Bus fares have risen nationally by 36% in real terms since 1984. This contrasts with a 5% fall in motoring costs. A contribution of rising staff salaries, insurance and other costs is expected to keep bus fares rising, while production efficiencies and improving fuel consumption holds motoring costs in check. In combination, these trends produce two threats:

- it will be harder to ensure that the trend of falling bus patronage is reversed and the bus plays a greater role in helping to tackle congestion
- it will be harder to ensure that those who depend on the bus for access will still be able to travel at affordable prices.

5.117 Chapter 4, and earlier paragraphs in this chapter, describe the steps we are taking to ensure that buses play a major role in tackling congestion. Concessionary travel, again described earlier in this section, is the single most effective way to ensure that travel is affordable, but we are taking other steps as well as described below.

5.118 The lack of **flexible fares** systems remains a disincentive to bus travel. Development has been 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 Summer 2006 as a pilot
- We are working with Nottingham 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.

5.119 In order to support post 16 students, especially those from low-income families, we are introducing a pilot free travel pass scheme in 2006. Full details are contained within the Action Plan.

5.120 Our concessionary travel scheme has been specially tailored to meet the needs of those in rural areas, who can choose special taxi vouchers instead of a bus pass if they rely on taxis for transport. Taxi services forming part of our rural transport network accept our bus passes, and disabled people can opt for taxi vouchers if they rely on this form of transport, as well as being able to travel at half fare on all our community transport schemes.

Communicating with our customers

5.121 All these activities depend upon effective communications with public transport users, so that we can ensure our actions are driven by their requirements. As an example of this, we have a continuous programme of on-bus inspection in which our inspectors not only assess the service standards of contractor operators but also talk with passengers to elicit their views of the service. In addition, we survey customer attitudes to our contract services on a structured basis each year, and repeat the attitudinal surveys for all public transport services annually rather than at three-yearly intervals as required by government.

5.122 We also need to be driven by the views of people who do not currently use public transport if we are to increase patronage and particularly to be effective in tackling congestion. As well as keeping in close touch with national research on this, we have also carried out specific local research. For example, before introducing the Leicester to Loughborough quality bus corridor, which has produced a large increase in patronage, we undertook focus group research with potential customers to explore further the specific attributes which would attract them to travel by bus.

WALKING IMPROVEMENTS

Introduction

5.123 We have been working to improve cycling and walking routes, to improve accessibility and encourage people to make more journeys on foot or by cycling. To help achieve this, our planned work includes improvements to crossings and footways, maintenance and lighting. We will be working with our LAA to ensure that our work complements its locality programmes. Also complimentary is the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, which looks in more detail at how to meet the needs of local communities for walking and riding. In making our plans we are assisted by 'Walking and Cycling: An Action Plan' produced by the Department for Transport which already sets out 42 practical actions aimed at increasing levels of use, but success in increasing physical activity can only be achieved through close working partnerships between Primary Care Trusts, Local Authorities, other public sector agencies and the private sector. These organisations are working in partnership in our LAA.

Improving crossings and footways

5.124 Our work on improving footways and crossings comes under a number of headings:

- Improvements associated with providing safe walking routes to school – described in Chapter 4
- Improvements in crossings to reduce road accident casualties – described in Chapter 6

- Improvements to remove the difficulties in walking short distances to access facilities – described here.

5.125 Most work will be in improving crossings, whether signal-controlled or otherwise. Over many years we have worked to make it easier for pedestrians to cross busy roads and the remaining list of problem locations is relatively small. Nevertheless, there are still some places where the road is a real barrier to walking and we will invest to improve crossings, starting with three crossings in Coalville and Melton Mowbray in 2006/07. We also expect our future year accessibility action plans to reveal more locations where we need to improve crossing points to allow better access to facilities.

5.126 Footway provision is generally comprehensive in towns and villages, but there are still some places where the lack of a footway makes it difficult to access local facilities on foot. Often it is only a short missing stretch which causes the problem. We will continue to allocate modest budgets for use on a discretionary local basis in overcoming these problems. Within this allocation we will continue to provide dropped kerbs and other facilities to help people with disabilities. Our work to adapt all our signalled crossings to meet full disabled use requirements will be virtually complete before LTP2 comes into effect. All of this investment is relatively inexpensive and offers good value for money using well tested equipment and techniques.

5.127 Our footway maintenance programme detailed in Chapter 9 is designed to improve and maintain the condition of the footways. This will help us to achieve our aim of encouraging more people to use walking routes as a means of access and to use them for leisure, thus promoting healthier living by participating in exercise.

Improving public rights of way

5.128 We are producing a Rights Of Way Improvement Plan. A consultation draft was published earlier this year, as required by Section 53 of the Countryside and Rights Of Way Act. We have also noted the government's intention to begin to integrate this plan with the LTP, with full integration by 2011, and this section is a step towards that. A final Rights Of Way Plan will be published in 2006, building on the comments from the Draft and the contents of this plan.

5.129 Leicestershire has more than 3000 kilometres of footpaths, bridleways and byways. This network provides local routes linking communities and giving access to shops, schools and other facilities. It is also the best way to explore and enjoy the countryside.

5.130 We intend to:

- Manage and develop the rights of way network so that it meets the present and likely future needs of the public
- Assess and improve the opportunities which local rights of way provide for open-air recreation and exercise
- Assess and improve the accessibility of local rights of way to all in the community, including those with mobility problems.

5.131 In preparing the Rights of Way Improvement Plan we have assessed the current and future needs of users and how best to manage the network. Most walking and cycling journeys to access facilities begin from home and half of all recreational walks or

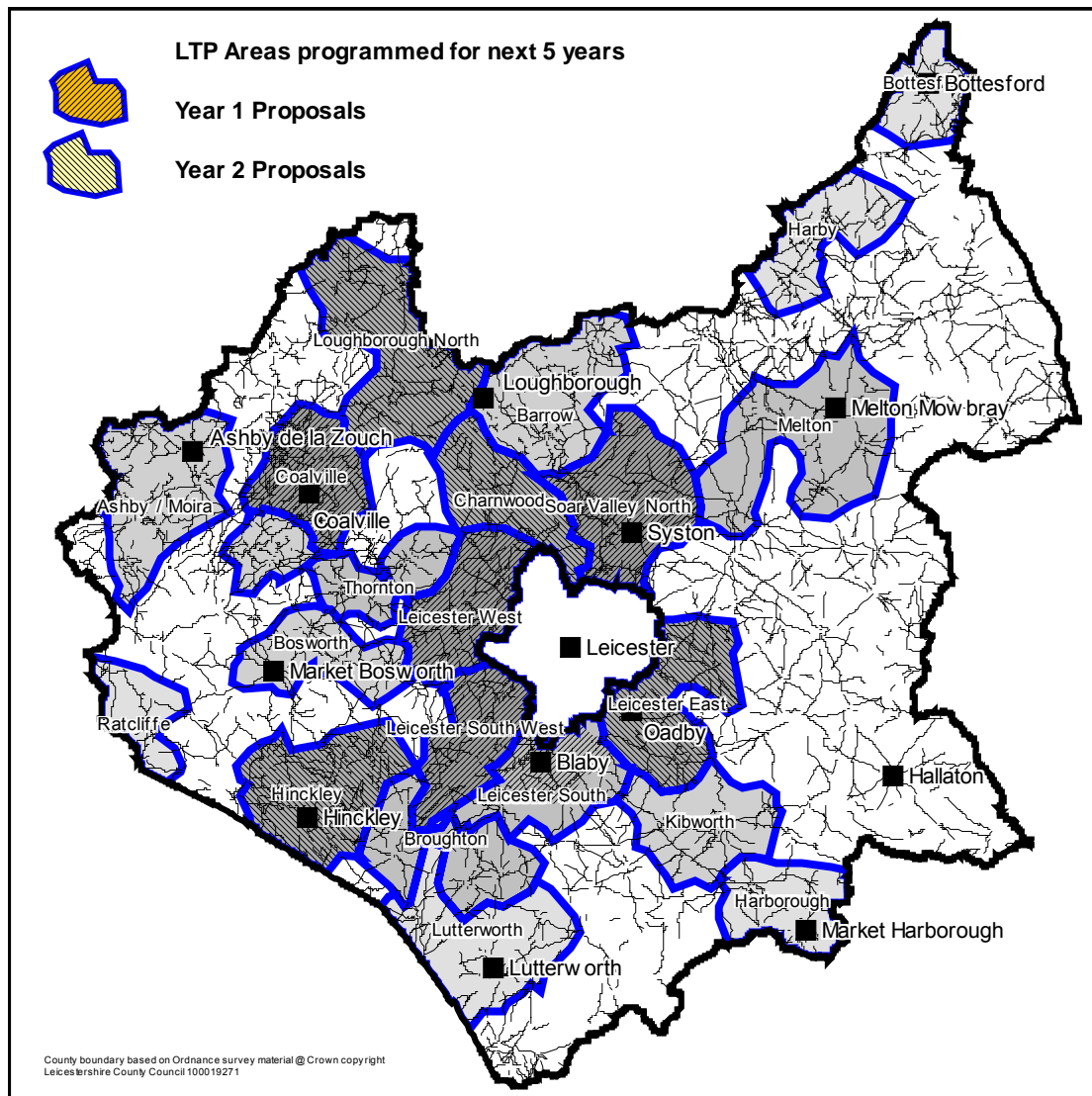
cycles start from the home. The pattern of walks varies considerably, depending on the availability and standard of routes. A recent Citizens Panel survey found that 90% of people identified access to the countryside for leisure as important. Three-quarters go walking or riding in the countryside every month, primarily for enjoyment and health reasons.

5.132 To give people the opportunity of walking or riding, routes need to be easy to use, visible, and near to where they live. 94% of the population live in urban areas or within 1 kilometre of these, and 46% of the network falls into these areas. This amounts to more than 1400 kilometres of paths.

5.133 This is where we intend to focus improvements, promotion and maintenance. If the network is to be used as much for access as for recreation, investment in the infrastructure is required. Improvements and maintenance will be focused on benefits that lead to routes being used more. We want to create a culture where cycling and walking are seen as real alternatives to car use and contribute to the enjoyment of the local environment.

5.134 The work on the Draft Improvement Plan, carried out in conjunction with preparation of LTP2, has already identified an initial set of schemes that meet the criteria set out above. They also reflect work on the shared priorities and wider quality of life issues. We are taking this work forward through a rolling programme of inspections and works, focussing on these urban and close-to-urban areas. Each inspection reveals firstly the requirements for maintenance – particularly repairs to surfacing, stiles and signing, the removal of barriers and clearance of vegetation – described in Chapter 9. We also use the inspections to help identify where improvements should be made, particularly cases where hard surfacing is justified to make rights of way suitable for all-year-round access use. Further details on the schemes are set out in the Statement of Action, within the Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Figure 5.6 shows the proposed Rights of Way LTP work areas.

Figure 5.6 - Rights of Way proposed LTP work areas



5.135 As well as contributing to the LTP objective for improving accessibility, the rights of way network can contribute to many wider benefits:

- Raising environmental awareness
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles
- Improving social inclusion
- Encouraging tourism and economic development.

5.136 The Chief Medical Officer has reported on a series of studies on links between physical activity and health, and that message could not be stronger. Indeed, it is picked up again in the 2004 government White Paper 'Choosing Health'. Walking contributes to well being and is essential for good health, and physically active people reduce their chance of heart disease by 50%. Only limited activity is necessary to produce significant health benefits, and the Rights of Way network is ideally placed to contribute to this: 75% of people in the county live within 250 metres of a footpath or bridleway, and 94% within 500 metres.

5.137 There are a number of places where we can provide new links, particularly between communities on the edge of Leicester, making walking a realistic alternative for more people to access a wider range of facilities. Often these are suggested by the local community, and close working with them and with landowners is necessary for the development of the links. These, together with the improvements to surfacing noted above and further work on improving access to rights of way for disabled people, make up the overall programme. The Draft Rights of Way Improvement Plan not only contains the government target for making paths easier to use (BVPI 178) but also contains new targets for the scheme areas during the LTP period.

5.138 In addition, we propose a general promotional campaign to encourage walking, riding and cycling from the home and popular sites. Promotion will also be linked with service providers who are encouraging walking and riding, including health agencies. Proposals around the Leicester area will be developed in conjunction with the City Council.

5.139 We will continue to manage the service in an integrated way, ensuring that works programmes for maintenance and development are carried out wherever possible at the same time. This will help further to secure value for money in a programme of relatively modest spend which has the potential to provide many more access links in the locations where they are most likely to be used.

5.140 The Improvement Plan also addresses other aspects of Rights of Way work that currently fall outside the scope of LTP2, including broader tourism, access to rural areas of the countryside and Surveying Authority functions.

5.141 The Draft Improvement Plan, including details of schemes, has been subject to consultation with the Leicestershire Local Access Forum, local councils, user groups and the public. It is available on the County Council website, www.leics.gov.uk/paths

REDUCING THE FEAR OF CRIME

5.142 Fear of crime can be a major disincentive to walking in the dark. This is particularly true for elderly people, for children walking home from school in winter, and for anyone waiting for a bus in the evening. We have for many years worked with district community safety partnerships to identify where street lighting improvements can contribute to the mix of measures which will help alleviate such fears and so make people more willing to walk rather than travel by car or stay at home. Amongst the other measures we have taken action on are the initial design of new estates so as to minimise risk from this source, designing and locating bus stops and shelters to maximise visibility, and collaborating in specific campaigns carried out by the police and local communities in problem areas. We have also worked with the police and bus companies in specific instances where bad behaviour and vandalism on public buses has intimidated other passengers.

5.143 The street lighting improvement programme is decided annually on the basis of up to date relevant crime statistics and local views expressed through the community safety partnerships as to the seriousness of the problems in each location. Our experience during LTP1 has shown that schemes identified in this way can achieve a significant reduction in recorded crime and we therefore believe that our relatively modest investment in this work produces good value for money.

5.144 During LTP2 we will continue this work, and pay particular attention to designing out crime in our programme of improvements for town centre bus terminals. We will also work with the bus operators to remove the fear of crime for passengers, looking where necessary at bus routes and timings to design out problem spots, as well as bringing in the police where necessary to correct specific problems.

5.145 As we work to improve the rights of way network more for access to facilities, rather than just for leisure, so we will need to give increasing attention to making rights of way acceptable for use at all times. In some cases we may need to provide street lighting under the community safety programme, whereas elsewhere action may be needed to open up footpaths for increased visibility.

CYCLING IMPROVEMENTS

5.146 Our work in improving facilities for cycling is described fully in Chapter 4. We aim to improve opportunities for cycling, not only as a means of tackling congestion - by offering a more sustainable alternative to car use - but also for a wide variety of access needs, including leisure. As with walking, the work links to the Healthier Communities programme in the Local Area Agreement.

5.147 Although cycle use is relatively low, cycle ownership is relatively high, with 29% of respondents in the East Midlands household survey having access to one. Our efforts, then, must go not only into providing safe cycling infrastructure, but also into an integrated marketing programme to persuade people to cycle more. We have already started this work, and will develop it much further in the LTP2 period.

5.148 Cycling can play a major rôle in travel planning, and we have included proposals in our action plan to expand this work for post-16 colleges and employment sites, linked to the school and workplace travel planning work we are already carrying out, as described in Chapter 4. National data identifies a willingness of younger people to participate in cycling, and we believe these actions will help turn that willingness into reality. Our investment in the safe cycling network, coupled with completion of our work on signage in partnership with Leicester City Council, will complement this.

TOURISM

5.149 Countryside access is increasingly important both for Leicestershire people and for visitors from the region and further afield: East Leicestershire, Charnwood Forest and particularly the new National Forest are increasingly important visitor destinations. Our rights of way strategy pays specific attention to providing access in these areas, and we have developed many new routes for walkers, cyclists and equestrians as the National Forest has developed. Equally, our hourly bus services network takes visitors into the heart of our most attractive countryside and serves many key destinations, from Bradgate Park on the edge of Charnwood Forest in Central Leicestershire, out to the Heart of the Forest visitor centre at Moira.

5.150 We will build on this work during LTP2, with further development of the rights of way network and further work to publicise available access by rights of way and by public transport. We will ensure that this work is integrated with that of the providers of key tourism facilities so that we are both effective in reaching our target audience and achieve value for money in doing so.

ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

5.151 The accessibility planning work conducted over the spring and summer 2005 identified some key priorities that partners wished to be developed further. Based on the first stage of consultation we have identified key themes that will enable us to continue to deliver an integrated response to the Framework Accessibility Strategy submitted with the provisional LTP2. Our aim is to produce tangible outcomes in the geographical areas that partners have identified. Throughout this process we have worked closely with Leicester City Council to ensure that accessibility planning is delivered jointly, where appropriate. This approach, we believe, will result in the optimum use of resources and deliver the most effective services. Our approach to accessibility includes consideration of public and community transport solutions, walking and cycling.

5.152 The five key barriers to accessibility can be categorised as:

- Availability/accessibility
- Cost
- Inaccessible places
- Safety and security
- Lack of information and limited travel horizon.

5.153 The focus of the Accessibility Action Plan is on delivering solutions to address these barriers and complement the planned work of our partners, for example the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

RESPONDING TO CONSULTATION

5.154 The consultation conducted during the composition of the Framework Accessibility Strategy highlighted common main themes. Based upon the comments and suggestions put forward by consultees, a draft Accessibility Action Plan was developed. This contained an outline of planned projects that are expected to be delivered by us, Leicester City Council and other partners, for example the Leicestershire Rural Partnership. Proposals for projects that were identified as appropriate for inclusion in an Accessibility Action Plan were included in the draft Action Plan. The major considerations were:

- To propose solutions for accessibility issues that partners had identified and were not being addressed through other initiatives, and
- To ensure that all projects would be sustainable in the long term.

5.155 The draft Action Plan was based on four key themes, namely access to work; education and training, health, and food shopping and local centres. It proposed a phased delivery programme to achieve countywide delivery of the aims. Priority areas were decided upon by previous consultation and by indices of multiple deprivation. A draft Action Plan was drawn up, which identified projects based on the requests of partners within the parameters of available funding streams. The draft Action plan was circulated to LAA Lead Officers and district and borough council representatives, prior to

a workshop held jointly with Leicester City Council, in January 2006. The purpose of the workshop was to confirm with partners that the approach being used was the correct one. It also provided the opportunity for partners to agree and prioritise actions and to evaluate suggested projects. This was achieved in various ways, including through the four discussion groups in each workshop, by written comments submitted before and after the event, and in the workbooks issued to each delegate at the event. Partners then agreed the best method for future working. The event was organised in partnership with Leicester City Council and attended by representatives of the Leicestershire LAA, district and borough councils and the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership. The purpose was to further explore further the accessibility links to the LAA, finalise priorities, identify the best methods of effectively delivering accessibility projects and agree the final Action Plan.

5.156 Following the workshop, comments and suggestions made on the day during the discussions, together with written comments contained in delegate workbooks and additional suggestions submitted following the event, were assimilated into a second draft Action Plan. This stage also involved meetings with the Leicestershire LAA Lead Officers and the Leicestershire Community Transport Group. At the meeting with the LAA the members approved and supported a revised strategy for delivering accessibility projects through the LAA framework. The Community Transport Group supported and approved the phased expansion of community transport, planned in the 'access to health' and 'access to food shopping and local centres' programmes.

5.157 The consultation showed that the proposals contained within the draft Accessibility Action Plan were broadly supported. Our partners suggested that the best method for delivery was by the formation of an Accessibility Forum, to be responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the first year of the Action Plan and to decide upon the specific projects for subsequent years. The forum will comprise representatives from the City and County Councils (Lead), LAA, Rural Transport Partnership, Community Transport, service users, community representatives and service providers (for example bus operators), Age Concern and Leicestershire Rural Partnership. The purpose of the group will be to ensure that appropriate projects are delivered to meet the needs of local people. To ensure that local solutions are developed, and to avoid thematic silo working, each accessibility project will work closely with the relevant LAA programme team, and this will optimise localised knowledge. Leicestershire County Council will, therefore, work with partners to develop and establish an appropriate Accessibility Forum. The Forum will meet twice yearly and be led jointly by Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council.

5.158 Partners supported the key aim of expanding the capacity of community transport provision throughout the city and county. However, it was suggested that a more joined up approach to delivery was required. For example, rather than having specific targets to increase capacity for transport to health appointments, the group felt that it would be more effective, and better value for money, if capacity overall could be increased. This would allow for an increase in journeys to the local centre, where health facilities are often located, and for increased access to food shopping and local facilities. This would enhance partner aspirations to sustain the viability of local centres. It would provide a direct link to the Leicestershire LAA Stronger Communities programme and to the Leicestershire Rural Partnership Market Towns initiative.

5.159 The Accessibility Action Plan incorporates the suggestions made by the consultees. It seeks to deliver the key projects contained within the four themes to the agreed priority areas. These include the areas of social exclusion identified by indices of

multiple deprivation and other data sources, including Parish Plans and Village Appraisals, and the areas identified by the LAA. The Action Plan has also been developed based on the best practice examples identified by "Within Reach", an accessibility planning support programme provided by the Department for Transport for local government officers in England, who have been tasked with developing accessibility strategies for their areas.

DELIVERING THE ACTION PLAN

5.160 The strong links between the Accessibility Action Plan and the LAA Delivery Plan have become more and more evident as this work has developed, and as comments made by LAA leads and representatives have been incorporated into the Accessibility Action Plan. Whilst the main focus of the accessibility work will be to reduce social isolation in areas of deprivation, which is a government requirement, it is clear that additional work to include the areas identified by the LAA can also be included. We have therefore decided to adopt a joint approach to delivery in identified areas, to ensure that maximum benefits to residents are achieved.

5.161 Delivery of the Accessibility Action Plan will concentrate on four key themes:

- Marketing of existing services and facilities
- Expansion of community transport
- Improving infrastructure, for example bus shelters
- Working with employers to develop and implement travel plans

5.162 The primary links to the LAA include Supporting Communities and Better Access to Services. In particular, links are to:

- Joined up countywide information of transport services, walking and cycling
- Working with community groups to increase capacity, services and volunteers
- Equality of access to services through better information, including disability groups, black and minority ethnic groups and socially excluded groups. Our work will also include an expanded provision of information for people whose first language is not English, for example Eastern European immigrants
- Improving independence for older people by increasing transport services (for example to shopping, lunch clubs and health services.)
- Development of social capital by working with community transport groups to increase capacity
- Increasing the vitality /viability of local centres by providing additional services (through expanded community transport and through potential new services provided by the Rural Transport Partnership)
- Addressing transport barriers to work
- Reducing the fear of crime, for example better lighting at bus stops.

5.163 The Accessibility Action Plan will be delivered by project delivery teams reporting to the Accessibility Forum. The Forum will perform a strategic function, monitoring progress and developing individual action plans through consultation.

5.164 The project delivery teams will be charged with delivering individual projects in particular areas. For example, the further expansion of community transport projects working in the North West might include officers from the County Council, North West Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Services, Rural Transport Partnership and local community representatives in the delivery of the project in that geographic area.

ACTION PLAN ISSUES - INTRODUCTION

5.165 The following sections describe the issues addressed in the Action Plan from each of the key members and include reviews of relevant best practice.

ACTION PLAN ISSUES - EMPLOYMENT

Review of Best Practice

5.166 **North Nottinghamshire.** The Manton project successfully provided an improved bus service to a new retail development on the former colliery site. The employers worked with the local authority to fund sustainable transport that benefits local people and provides access to work for the one thousand employees working a three-shift system.

5.167 We have recently strengthened our policy in respect of accessibility planning on new sites. To ensure that public transport is included in any future developments, all planning applications are considered by public transport officers at the outset. The Action Plan contains details of working with local authorities through their Local Development Frameworks to identify, plan and deliver a holistic approach to accessibility planning. This includes the siting of new facilities on the most appropriate sites together with the provision of services and infrastructure, including walking, cycling and public transport. To ensure that we gain maximum added value from this work, over and above what the developers will be expected to contribute, we will allocate £25,000 a year from appropriate budgets to enable the development of facilities in approved schemes. The fund may be used, for example, to make a contribution towards cycle routes or the provision of bus shelters.

5.168 The results of the Planning Gains Supplement Consultation, published by central government in December 2005, may influence the future direction of this particular area of work when the Accessibility Forum considers it.

Results from partner consultation

5.169 **Travel Planning.** The key agreed priority for improving access to work is Travel Planning. Partners expressed the view that all companies should be encouraged to develop their own Travel Plan, including information about bus services, car sharing and cycling. It was considered crucial that companies should be encouraged to implement plans. They believed the possibility of incentives for companies who operate a successful scheme should be further considered together with punitive measures for those who do not participate. The Accessibility Forum will be asked to define performance indicators for successful schemes. Further support from government, for example the requirements placed on schools to implement a travel plan, would assist in

the effectiveness of plans. A holistic, countywide approach that is supported by all local authorities was agreed to be essential. Views also expressed by partners were that Leicestershire County Council and Leicester City Council should promote travel planning more effectively at their main employment sites.

5.170 Improving bus and cycling routes. The need for more orbital routes around the periphery of the city, both bus and cycling, was identified. Whilst people can reach most employment sites using the network, this sometimes requires travelling by bus into the city centre and catching another bus to the required destination. This was regarded as a barrier to some people, especially when the home and work areas adjoined or were in close proximity.

5.171 Partners requested continued initiatives to attract more passengers onto public transport for access to work. These included shorter bus journey times, financial incentives and improved customer care training for drivers.

The current situation

5.172 Travel Planning. Leicestershire County Council has for a number of years had an active Travel Plan team who have engaged with employers and district council colleagues to develop Travel Plans. Difficulties have been experienced in establishing ownership of Travel Plans, especially those that have been drafted well in advance of the occupation of the site by the company. A countywide approach to planning does already exist in that the majority of proposed Travel Plans are submitted to the County Council Travel Plan team for comment. This area of work will be included in the proposed development of partnership working with district councils through Local Development Frameworks, outlined above. Further work will be undertaken to investigate the possibilities of a formal, consistent countywide standard.

5.173 However, as described in Chapter 4, there is evidence of good practice within the workplace throughout the county. Employers have introduced and support practical measures such as cycle parking. There is also evidence of a willingness to consider other sustainable travel options, such as establishing car share schemes. Work is being undertaken to support these practical applications.

5.174 The Leicestershire County Council Travel Plan for County Hall includes a car sharing scheme that has proved to be popular with employees. Introduced in 2004, the scheme has in excess of three hundred members. The success of the project has increased following the appointment of a dedicated officer who has developed a marketing strategy. This includes personal contact with all new staff to inform them of the scheme and encourage them to join. The best practice model being developed at County Hall is included in the Accessibility Action Plan. Support for employers, including a resources pack and officer time will be offered to enable the development of their own individual schemes. We will provide additional officer time in support of this project and will seek external funding via our Rural Transport Partnerships to enhance it further. We do not expect difficulties in engaging with employers on this work because they have already expressed a willingness to work with us through our earlier consultation and through the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership. In addition, our planned partnership working with the LAA should reduce any difficulties that may arise, although if external funding is not forthcoming the scope of the project will have to be reduced accordingly.

5.175 **Improving bus and cycling routes.** We have already developed an hourly bus network for 95% of the population. A key component of the network is the interchange facilities that provide passengers with the opportunities to travel to a variety of destinations.

5.176 An independent review of the work of the Leicestershire Rural Transport Partnerships is currently being conducted. Commissioned by the Leicestershire Rural Partnership and funded by the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership, the review will consider the future strategic priorities for the county. If appropriate, applications for project funding will be made to the East Midlands Development Agency (emda). The recommendations are expected in summer 2006.

5.177 We have a programme of infrastructure improvements designed to produce quicker journey times, including the bus corridor improvements described in Chapter 4. A Bus Operators Forum was set up some years ago comprising representatives from local commercial bus companies and ourselves. As a result of discussions held at the Forum a programme of customer care training for drivers was designed and planned. We will continue to work with partners to deliver this programme. Additionally, the Integrated Passengers Transport Unit will, from April 2006, have increased capacity to develop training. We continue to support the Bus Driver of the Year competition that celebrates the excellence of good service in a range of categories. Initiated by the County Council in 2004 for drivers of commercial buses and some county council owned vehicles, the scheme is being extended to include taxi drivers. As part of the selection process for the title, drivers are tested on their customer care skills.

5.178 The Flexi Fare ticket has recently been introduced in the Leicester zone. Covering the city centre and the suburbs, the Flexi day ticket gives unlimited travel on all buses. The success of the scheme will be monitored and, if appropriate, discussions will take place with relevant bus companies and other partners to consider extending the scheme.

NEXT STEPS

Travel Planning

- The Accessibility Forum will be asked to support the work currently being undertaken by Leicestershire County Council and to contribute ideas for promoting company travel plans.
- A working group will be formed to consider the best methods of seeking support to incentivise workplace travel plans and to focus practical solutions to support companies to engender increased participation in sustainable transport schemes. The working group will also examine ways in which the sharing of best practice can be further developed. In particular, car share mapping will be developed as a support mechanism for companies. The risk of this project not proceeding is limited as the financial investment required is modest. The major requirement is for the sharing of best practice and officer time from our stakeholders to progress the work.
- The working group will draw up a programme of marketing and publicity for travel to specific employment sites. We will encourage employers to include travel information in the information packs sent out to job seekers, thus informing potential employees of their accessibility options at an early stage.
- Funding to help facilitate the marketing and publicity project, together with funding to implement additional support for employers outlined above, will be provided in part by ourselves and in part by bids to external funding sources. Match funding will also be sought from other stakeholders. The risk of the project not proceeding is limited as the financial investment required is small. We will be asking for contributions in kind, as well as financial contributions, from our partners. For example, a partner could provide design time. Should we be unsuccessful in securing any match funding contributions, the project will be scaled down to keep within the county council budget allocation.

Improving bus and cycling routes

- Following the recommendations of the review into the Leicestershire Rural Transport Partnerships an appropriate working group will be formed to develop an action plan and apply for project funding.

ACTION PLAN ISSUES – EDUCATION

Review of Best Practice

5.179 **Hull.** Travel training for 16 - 19 year old students with learning disabilities. The Hull project incorporated travel training into the everyday curriculum for students with educational special needs. Basic skills were practised in the classroom environment and, when students had gained confidence, on public transport services. The result was that, for some students, there was an increase in self confidence that led to greater independence. The financial cost to the local authority was reduced as the requirement for special educational needs transport was reduced. A similar project in Rochdale also produced positive results.

5.180 **Bristol "Respect the Difference"**. In addition to travel training for special educational needs students, a poster campaign on buses, together with driver training and especially designed bus route maps, yielded positive results for passengers with special educational and learning needs.

5.181 **Lancashire, Telford and Wrekin**. Marketing campaigns aimed at encouraging post 16 students to use public transport were carried out, increasing usage. In the Lancashire model students were offered a subsidised bus pass for term time travel. The Telford and Wrekin model offered free travel.

5.182 **Merseyside**. The Merseyside model provides LEA funding for public bus services rather than purchasing exclusive home to school buses for students. This is seen as beneficial to all residents and enables students to participate in extra curricula activities.

5.183 We note, however, that in Leicestershire the provision of home to school transport based on the urban Merseyside model would be unlikely to be a success due to the rurality of the county. In general, small numbers of students require transport from disparate communities. There is not the required population density within the county to develop a Merseyside model.

Results from partner consultation

5.184 Partners considered that the priority for the Accessibility Strategy should be raising the awareness of options for travel to colleges. The aim would be to improve accessibility to colleges and training centres for everyone, as people engage in education and training at different stages of life. For example mature students may wish to retrain to gain new work skill or academic qualifications. Partners considered that this programme should commence with the 16 to 19 year old students, as this was likely to be the largest group in numbers. Subsequent phases should engage with other groups, for example parents returning to the workplace.

5.185 The suggested method of raising awareness of travel options was to develop a high profile publicity and marketing strategy in conjunction with the colleges and training centres. Site specific travel information, including public transport, car sharing schemes, walking and cycling routes, would be included. It was felt that web based information should be the main focus of the project delivery. Paper and other formats, for example audio, should complement the scheme and be included in student induction packs to encourage sustainable travel planning prior to commencement of the course.

The current situation

5.186 In Leicestershire the current Post 16 programme offers a subsidised travel pass restricted to the journey from the home to college on College days only and using only services of the specified operator(s). However, from September 2006 it is planned to offer 16 to 19 year old students attending colleges of Further Education the choice of EITHER an unlimited travel pass for travel on Arriva or First services OR the existing type of restricted travel pass, which is valid on both First and Arriva services. We will purchase the passes. The expected outcomes of the pilot are that there will be no additional financial cost to the local authority but access opportunities for young people will be significantly increased. The pilot project will run for one year.

5.187 In Leicestershire a programme of work has begun to support passengers with special needs. Leicestershire Together held a Disability Citizens Jury in 2005. Barriers to

travel were raised by the jurors. These included bullying of disabled passengers on board buses, the need for improved driver and staff training, the provision of timetable and other information in a variety of formats, and the methods of communicating changes to services. We have begun to explore these issues working with our Social Services Department and the Valuing People Project. Further issues raised included the need for concessionary travel passes for carers.

5.188 The Accessibility Action Plan includes a commitment to work with partners to implement appropriate solutions to these issues. Work has already begun with our partners in the Valuing People Partnership launching a new Accessible Information programme, aimed at simplifying information produced by Leicestershire County Council to ensure that it is easily understood by all. Members of the Accessibility Forum project group attended a full day workshop in January, hosted by Leicestershire County Council, and a conference held in Birmingham in March, hosted by the Valuing People Support Team, in order to gain information and best practice recommendations that will assist us in the design and delivery of our future projects.

5.189 Travel planning for colleges of further education and universities has not been undertaken. This is because the current Department for Transport requirement is for local authorities to work with schools that cater for pupils up to 16 years old. The School Travel Plan Team based at County Hall has successfully implemented travel plans for seventy seven schools and the ongoing programme aims to reach a 90% target in 2010. With the focus on engaging with secondary schools, there is currently limited expertise capacity to work with colleges, universities and other training establishments. We therefore plan to recruit a further travel plans officer for this area of work and will seek to enhance this person's work by seeking additional match funding from stakeholders.

5.190 We have an established Bus Information Strategy. This work is likely to be strengthened following the reorganisation of public transport services into an integrated unit in 2006. The marketing team will be invited to join the working group for general promotion of public transport options to education, training and work, and to explore the possible emulation of the Bristol "Respect the Difference" project.

5.191 Leicestershire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Strategic Area Review: Phase Two, Post 19 Education, sets out the aims of the LSC to address access to education and training for post 19 students. We will be working with our partners in the LSC to design and develop appropriate projects in the second half of LTP2.

Next steps

5.192 Partners agreed that the initial focus should be on the 16 to 19 year old learners. The project will then be expanded to cover all learners.

- To ensure equality of access for 16 to 19 year old residents, funding will be sought to extend the student unlimited travel pass pilot countywide. A working group, led by the County Council, will discuss the practicalities of extending the scheme with bus companies.
- We will develop a Project in conjunction with Leicester City Council, bus companies and disability groups to design and deliver a countywide publicity campaign based on the "Respect the Difference" model. This work will link with the work of the Disability Citizens Jury. We will part-fund the project with match funding of £10,000 per year. Contributions will be sought from partners. The risk

of this project not proceeding is limited, as we have reserved funding. Should it not be possible to secure match funding from our partners, the project will be scaled down accordingly. However, a relatively small amount of financial support is required. We expect that partners could also provide contributions in kind.

- We will form a working group to identify the best methods of delivering travel plan support to colleges and training sites. This will include drawing on expertise from our Workplace Travel Plan team.
 - ◆ We will endeavour to secure financial and human resources to implement a programme. Should resources not be secured, this project would be unlikely to proceed as planned, as there is insufficient existing staff resources within the Travel Planning team at the county council. A reduced project would need to be designed and delivered.
 - ◆ The next step will be to design and implement a pilot marketing project with one Leicestershire College.
 - ◆ Student induction packs, containing travel information in both text and web links format will be developed. The Learning and Skills Council will advise on delivery.

ACTION PLAN ISSUES – HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Review of Best Practice

5.193 **Merseyside.** Improvements to bus routes from urban areas to Broadgreen hospital are planned to improve accessibility to the site for patients, staff and visitors. The intention is to monitor the improved services through the use of core and local access to health care indicators.

5.194 **Worcestershire.** The Worcestershire Transport and Health Partnership has been successful in improving public transport to the hospital sites through match funding from the NHS for service improvements undertaken by Worcestershire County Council.

5.195 **Lincolnshire.** The Lincolnshire model intends to develop an Action Plan to introduce a co-ordinated information and booking system for travel to health. Backing was gained from the outset from the County Council's corporate management team, and subsequently from the Health and Social Care Partnership (comprising Chairmen and Chief Executives of health trusts and Social Services Director.) This early commitment from high level officers should ensure that the project achieves its aims.

5.196 **Cornwall.** Using partner funding from the Countryside Agency through the Rural Transport Partnerships and the PCT, the pilot Cornwall Transport Access for Patients (TAP) developed a call centre to co-ordinate all voluntary car schemes in the County. The subsequent project co-ordinates voluntary transport journeys for patients to hospitals for both outpatient appointments and admissions/discharges from hospitals following treatment.

5.197 **Lancashire.** A similar partnership between community transport projects and outpatients clinics has been piloted in the rural Wyre area of Lancashire. Patients attend the anti coagulant blood clinic using community transport. Appointment times are organised by the hospital to ensure that patients spend no more than one hour at the clinic, enabling the patient to use the same community transport driver and vehicle for their return journey. This type of service delivery could be incorporated into the

Leicestershire plans subject to the relevant health sector partner support in co-ordinating appointment times. We will ask the Primary Care Trusts to consider the viability of this proposal.

5.198 **Honley Surgery.** A dedicated transport service for patients to attend one of three local surgeries. The service is free to patients. The Countryside Agency and Yorkshire Primary Care Network funded the project for a three year pilot. In Leicestershire the similar Transport to Doctors project has been running for four years and has proved to be very successful with passengers. Fares are charged at the equivalent of bus fares, with concessionary passes accepted as community transport is regarded as an integral part of public transport in Leicestershire. One area for development in the Leicestershire project will be to further engage staff at some surgeries to enable optimum co-ordination of appointment times. This has worked well in some surgeries, but not all.

The Current Situation

5.199 In Leicestershire, as in other parts of the country, the Primary Care Trusts are being reorganised from April 2006. Due to the health sector staff resources needed to implement this change, there has been a limited amount of contact between the PCT and ourselves. For this reason we have delayed our main projects to years two to five of the LTP2 period. We hope that this will allow the newly reorganised PCT for Leicestershire time to establish and be in a stronger position to work with us.

5.200 We are planning with the University Hospitals of Leicester Trust to introduce a new dedicated bus service that will serve the three main Leicester hospital sites, Leicester General Hospital to the east of the city, Leicester Royal Infirmary located close to the city centre and Glenfield Hospital to the west. The service will provide a shuttle between all three hospital sites to improve accessibility for staff, patients and visitors.

5.201 Our Action Plan includes a targeted marketing and publicity project that will promote the new service and further publicise existing public transport, walking and cycling options. This will assist job seekers who wish to work at the hospitals, existing staff, patients and visitors.

5.202 The strong link between Leicestershire County Council and community transport providers has been further developed in recent years through the Transport to Health Project. Funded by the Countryside Agency and the county council and supported by the health sector and East Midlands Ambulance Service, the three year pilot delivers community transport to hospital outpatient appointments and to doctor's surgeries for rurally isolated or mobility impaired people. Close partnership working with the University Hospitals Leicester has improved transport booking arrangements for patients together with on site parking for volunteer drivers at the acute hospital sites.

5.203 We have continued to fund the pilot projects following the ending of the Countryside Agency grant in March 2005. The current financial contribution is £40,000 per year. All partners were keen to see the initial pilot projects developed, recognising the benefits that have been achieved. A "do nothing" option was considered and rejected, as this would have left the most vulnerable people potentially without transport links to healthcare. A study has been commissioned to evaluate the project and to investigate the best methods of providing transport links to health appointments for residents who could not access public transport due to rural isolation or mobility impairment. The Community Transport Support Group for Leicestershire fully supports this project. Consultation with community transport providers and passengers during the

last three years, including independent reports, confirms the need for this service expansion. We will continue to work with our community transport partners to ensure that the services that we provide are meeting the needs of the local people and are being delivered in an appropriate manner.

5.204 The study recommended that the project be expanded to cover the whole county. Whilst it is noted that the proposed solutions will not achieve significant financial savings for the health providers, the time and benefit efficiencies are considerable. As noted above in the Lancashire and Cornwall experience, a well organised community transport service can, and does, achieve tangible, sustainable solutions for residents in rural areas and those with mobility impairments who might otherwise not attend their health appointment.

5.205 Discussions with relevant Leicestershire and Leicester partners are ongoing to establish the practicalities of implementing the recommendations. To avoid problems experienced by similar schemes nationwide, for example in Scotland and Ripon, cited in the Community Transport Association report in November 2005, the Leicestershire proposal must take into account the increasing cost of journeys to hospital. As patients are given the option of treatment at hospitals further afield, the full support of all partners will be essential to succeed in achieving the aims and objectives of this project.

Next steps

- Delivery of the Transport to Healthcare Project. This involves capacity building of community transport providers through the purchase of additional vehicles using LTP capital funding. Revenue funding to support the additional staff resources will be sought from the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) through an application by the Leicestershire Rural Transport Partnership to the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership. Should we be unsuccessful in securing revenue funding, the project will have to be significantly reduced. However, the proposal is to place the new vehicles with established and experienced community transport providers, all of whom are not-for-profit organisations. They will have access to charitable funding, for example the Big Lottery and Halifax and Bank of Scotland (HBOS). We have a proven record of supporting community transport organisations with successful charitable funding applications of this nature. We therefore expect that a lack of revenue funding would be unlikely to prevent the project from proceeding as planned, though it may be delayed.
- Design and publicity of site-specific public transport services. All partners will need to identify contributions. (For example, business sponsorship, printing, staff resources)
- Co-ordinated appointment times
- Investigating the use of our own passenger fleet, and the further use of Post Buses, to provide additional services.

ACTION PLAN ISSUES – FOOD SHOPPING AND LOCAL CENTRES

Review of Best Practice

5.206 **Wiltshire County Council** employed carers who were given training and responsibility for food shopping to help their housebound residents.

5.207 The Social Exclusion Unit Final Report **A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People** cites the access problems faced by older people, in particular access to health services, shopping, personal business and leisure as the most important to older people. Barriers to transport include the high cost and the availability of appropriate transport for mobility impaired passengers. Suggested models of best practice include village car schemes such as in Bedfordshire.

5.208 **Help the Aged** published "In the Right Place: Accessibility, local services and older people" in 2005. This report advocates that a high priority should be given by transport planners to the accessibility of local services for older people. It supports the concept of transport services designed with older people in mind, together with a reminder that the quality of life of an older person can be improved if there is access to the services that they need. Our planned expansion of community transport will provide additional services that will benefit older people. In addition, our work with the Leicestershire Rural Partnership and district and borough councils through their LDF work will influence the retention of some existing services together with the siting of new ones. Representatives from Age Concern will be included in our Accessibility Forum to ensure that the needs of older people are fully considered in the planning of our new projects.

The current situation

5.209 Access to many local centres and market towns is provided by the hourly bus service and by community transport services. The revision of concessionary travel for older people from April 2006 will address some of the cost barriers. In Leicestershire, community transport is regarded as an integral part of the public transport network. Passengers are currently entitled to use their concessionary passes on most community transport services. This further helps to reduce the cost barriers to transport. Concessionary travel information is available in a wide variety of languages and formats, including web based information and leaflets are being redesigned to reflect the recent changes adopted by the Leicestershire Councils Partnership.

5.210 We have developed many village transport schemes, funded jointly by the Countryside Agency and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership. Projects include the Misterton with Walcote and Hallaton Taxi Voucher Schemes, both of which were cited as examples of best practice by the Countryside Agency. We are working with the Rural Transport Partnership to further develop village schemes that reduce rural isolation.

Next steps

5.211 Following suggestions from our partners, the approach to improving access to food shopping and local centres will be linked closely to the Access to Health Programme. It will also be directly linked with the LAA Stronger Communities Programme and the Leicestershire Rural Partnership Market Towns Programme.

- The planned expansion of community transport will enable increased journey opportunities for passengers to access their local centres, where food shopping and healthcare are also available.
- The results of the Wiltshire pilot project will be sought and considered by the Accessibility Forum.
- Further development of shopmobility projects will be investigated.

- "Accessibility Guides" to inform residents of services and facilities within their local area will be developed and piloted. This will include, for example, information on wheelchair accessible transport services that serve local centres with a Shopmobility scheme.
- The increased capacity for the storage of shopping on public transport will be investigated.

ACTION PLAN – SUMMARY

5.212 In summary, our action plan contains the following main elements:

- Developing our bus information strategy further
- Producing site and area specific travel information
- Promotion of existing walking and cycling routes
- Improvements to existing, and provision of new, high quality walking routes
- Improvements to existing, and provision of new, high quality cycleways
- Ensuring accessibility is consistently considered in transport proposals
- Ensuring our Rights of Way Improvement Plan meets our accessibility objectives
- Reducing crime and the fear of crime to encourage walking and cycling
- Working with partners to consider changes to the location, ways and times that services are provided
- Consultation with local communities
- Consultation with major employers
- Continuation of bus corridor and shelter improvement programmes
- Provision of a county and city wide transport to health service for mobility impaired and rurally isolated residents
- School travel planning programme
- Workplace travel planning programme
- Walking and cycling training at schools.

5.213 The table below summarises the Year 1 Action Plan Projects and also Year 2 to 5 projects. The projects that will be delivered in later years will depend on the results of the Accessibility Forums and we expect that projects will be identified through our partnership working particularly with the LAA. We also expect that projects that we pilot or investigate in year 1 will be expanded. The table is presented in terms of the four themes. Because the action plan has been drawn up jointly with Leicester City Council we have also shown their proposed actions within it.

Employment

Project Aim	Project Description	Area	Partners	Links
<p>Improve access to employment sites by improvements to walking and cycling routes, for example improved lighting and dropped kerbs. Improvements to public transport routes (see Food and Local Centres).</p> <p>The development of orbital access route to enable access to employment sites on city periphery.</p> <p>Raise awareness of existing bus services, walking and cycling routes.</p> <p>Promote travel planning.</p> <p>Place accessibility planning in the mainstream.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further development of outline priorities by conducting consultation with local communities 2. Review of walking and cycling routes to local employment sites and development of implementation plan for appropriate improvements 3. Bus corridor improvements incl. bus infrastructure upgrades. 4. Rights of Way Improvements 5. Development of company travel plans, including role of car sharing 6. Developing the Bus Information Strategies 7. Promotion of area specific travel options, including bus, walking and cycling to key employment site 8. Providing transport input into internal and external programmes of work. 	<p>Year 1 City: 1. Access from New Parks County: 1. Bardon Magna Park 2. Earl Shilton 3. Thurmaston Year 2 City: 1. Access from Abbey Rise County: 1. NEMA 2. Oadby A6 Year 3 City: 1. Access from Beaumont Leys 2. Access from St Matthews County: 1. Melton, Leicester Road 3. Oadby, A6. Saffron Road, Wigston Year 4 City: 1. Access from Saffron County: 1. Harborough to Corby 2. Blaby, A426 Leicester Road/Lutterworth Road Year 5 City: 1. Access from North Braunstone 2. Completion of Green Ringway cycle route</p>	<p>Leicester City Council Leicestershire County Council Chamber of Commerce Leicester Regeneration Company LSEP</p>	<p>LAAs LTPs ROWIP</p>

Education and training

Project Aim	Project Description	Area	Partners	Links
<p>More schools and colleges to have travel plans in place.</p> <p>Raise awareness of existing bus services, walking and cycling routes.</p> <p>Encourage greater use of existing facilities</p> <p>Encouraging SEN students to be more independent</p> <p>Place accessibility planning in the mainstream</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of site specific travel plans 2. Promotion of site specific travel options 3. Review of walking and cycling routes to local school/college sites, developing specific initiatives 4. Bus infrastructure upgrades 5. Rights of Way Improvements 6. Developing the Bus Information Strategies 7. Providing travel training for SEN students 8. Bus corridor improvements incl. bus infrastructure upgrades 9. Rights of Way Improvement 10. Providing transport input into internal and external programme of work 	<p>Year 1 City: 1. Continue working with Post 16 forum to improve site specific travel information</p> <p>County 1.</p> <p>Year 2 City: 1. Review 3 mile rule</p> <p>County: 1.</p> <p>Year 3 City: 1. Access to Beaumont Leys, Judge Meadow and Soar Valley schools</p> <p>County:</p> <p>Year 4 City: 1. Access to City of Leicester, Crown Hills and Rushey Mead schools</p> <p>County:</p> <p>Year 5 City: 1. Access to English Martyrs</p>	<p>Leicester City Council</p> <p>Leicestershire County Council</p> <p>Schools and Colleges</p> <p>Post 16 Partnership</p> <p>Connexions</p>	<p>LAAs</p> <p>LTPs</p>

Health

Project Aim	Project Description	Area	Partners	Links
<p>Provision of accessible transport service provision for mobility impaired and rurally isolated residents</p> <p>Raise awareness of existing bus services, walking and cycling routes, travel cost reclamation schemes (incl. taxis and mileage).</p> <p>Increase usage of existing services and facilities.</p> <p>Promote travel planning through the hospital, including car sharing</p> <p>Place accessibility planning in the mainstream</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustain and develop existing Transport to Health services countywide, subject to securing sufficient financial support from partners 2. Developing the Bus Information Strategies 3. Promotion of all existing site specific public transport, accessible community transport and other access options to hospitals and health centres. 4. Bus infrastructure upgrades 5. Rights of Way Improvements Providing transport input into internal and external programmes of work 	<p>Year 1 County: Blaby, Harborough, Oadby & Wigston City: St Peters, Westcotes Health centres Year 2 County: NWL Hinckley & Bosworth City: Humberstone Health Centre Year 3 County: Charnwood Melton City: Charnwood Health centre Year 4 City: 1. County: Year 5 City: 1.</p>	<p>PCT Leicestershire County Council EMAS Community Transport providers Leicester Shire Economic Partnership Leicestershire Rural Partnership District/Borough Councils</p>	<p>LTPs LAAs LIFT Choose and Book</p>

Food and Local centres

Project Aim	Project Description	Area	Partners	Links
<p>Improving bus, walking and cycling access to local centres</p> <p>Raise awareness of Existing bus services, walking and cycling routes.</p> <p>Increase usage of existing services and facilities.</p> <p>Ensure efficient taxi operations, including better information</p> <p>Reducing the need to travel</p> <p>Place accessibility planning in the mainstream</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bus infrastructure upgrades (service routes) 2. Rights of Way Improvements 3. Developing the Bus Information Strategies 4. Promotion of all existing public transport, accessible community transport and other access options 5. Working with colleagues to sustain local shopping areas in housing estates 6. Providing transport input into internal and external programmes of work 	<p>Year 1 County: 1. Market Harborough, Market Hall 2. Glenfield/Thurmaston Loughborough town Hinckley to Market Harborough Market Harborough Town 3. Coalville Leicester South West Soar Valley Leicester West City: 1. Access from New Parks Year 2 County: 1. Castle Donington, Delvin Lane Oadby, The Parade 2. Market Harborough Town Dunton Bassett to Lutterworth Coalville to Hinckley 3. Charnwood Leicester East Loughborough North City: 1. Access from Abbey Rise Year 3 County: 1. Kibworth, The Square 2. Wigston, Earl Shilton, Braunstone 3. Melton, Leicester South, Broughton, Thornton City: 1. Access from Beaumont Leys Access from St Matthews_ Year 4 County: Birstall 2. East Goscote 3. Ashby, Barrow, Bosworth Kibworth, Loughborough City: 1. Access from Saffron Year 5 County: 1. Kegworth, Anstey Loughborough to Grantham 3. Harborough, Lutterworth Harby, Bottesford, Ratcliffe City: 1. Access from North Braunstone</p>	<p>Leicester City Council Leicestershire County Council District/Borough Councils LSEP LRP</p>	<p>LAAs LTPs Community Strategies</p>

INDICATORS AND TARGETS

5.214 Our main indicators and targets for the accessibility strategy are described in Chapter 12. The key outcome targets are:

- Countywide % of households without access to a car within 30 minutes of a main centre = 90% in 2010/11, increased from 95.8% in 2004/05
- Countywide % of households without access to a car within 60 minutes of a main centre = 96% in 2010/11, increased from YY% in 2004/05.

5.215 The key intermediate outcome and contributing output targets are:

- Journeys per week using complementary transport for disabled people = 1800 in 2010/11, increased from 1573 in 2003/04
- % of bus stops provided to designated LTP standards on the hourly network = 50% in 2010/11, increased from 23% in 2003/04
- % of bus fleet with low floors for level access based on County and City combined fleet = 70% in 2010/11, increased from 36% in 2003/04.