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Travel plans: a way forward?

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The travel plan can be defined as a long-term management strategy for an organisation and its various sites or business park; the plan seeks to deliver transport objectives through positive action and is articulated by a document that is regularly reviewed. Importantly, unlike more 'traditional' measures, they can be effective at reducing car use while being politically acceptable and relatively cheap and quick to introduce. Given that politicians and their officials have often seen transport problems as being extremely difficult to solve, it is therefore strange that they have seemingly ignored the apparent significant potential of the travel plan. Interviews were undertaken with ten travel plan experts in the UK, the aim being to ascertain their views on the current state of play with respect to travel plans and their predictions for the future. From these a series of recommendations is presented as to how travel plan policy may be conducted in the future.

1.   Introduction

Docherty and Shaw (2008) illustrate a number of reasons why governments seem unwilling to take action to address transport problems. These include political factors such as the lack of political will, the short-termist, incremental political culture, complex and fragmented governance structures, civil service risk aversion, the power of transport and other vested interest groups and the attitudes and electoral importance of the middle classes, in addition to a range of other economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors. Such views are perhaps understandable, given that 'traditional' transport solutions could be perceived as being either disruptive, long term and expensive (building new roads and railways), politically unpopular (road pricing and parking restrictions) or else expensive and relatively ineffective at reducing car use (enhancing public transport services).

Perhaps almost uniquely, one instrument that can be effective at reducing car use while being politically acceptable and relatively cheap and quick to introduce is the travel plan. From the UK literature the 'traditional' definition of a travel plan is 'a general term for a package of measures tailored to meet the needs of individual sites and aimed at promoting greener, cleaner travel choices and reducing reliance on the car. It involves the development of a set of mechanisms, initiatives and targets that

together can enable an organisation to reduce the impact of travel and transport on the environment, while also bringing a number of other benefits to the organisation as an employer and to staff' (EEBPP, 2001). Meanwhile, a more recent definition sees a travel plan as being 'a long-term management strategy for an organisation and its various sites or business park that seeks to deliver transport objectives through positive action and is articulated by a document that is regularly reviewed' (BSI, 2008). More typically known in the USA as 'employer-based trip reduction programmes' or 'employer commute option programmes' and in Europe as 'site-based mobility management plans', travel plans work because

- they are formed of packages of measures that allow for flexibility in terms of the use of incentives and disincentives, implementation timescales and investment levels required
- they can take account of the local context in which they operate
- they generally involve (and are usually implemented by) agencies other than national or local government.
  For further information on travel plans in practice, visit http://www.nbtn.org.uk.

In terms of performance, at the site level studies indicate that travel plans can deliver significant transport (and wider)

benefits. In the UK, the Department for Transport (DfT, 2005) reports the results of 24 case studies of workplace travel plans carried out in 2004 that indicated reduced car use of between 10% and 25%, while the range for school travel plans is 8–15% and 7–15% in urban areas for personalised travel planning. Next, Hillsman *et al.* (2001) evaluated the commute trip reduction (CTR) programme in Washington state and found that the programme reduced single occupancy vehicle trips at participating sites from 74·5% in 1993 to 68·4% in 1999 – that is a drop of 6·1%. Meanwhile, the average reduction in trips from the Smarter Travel Workplaces Programme in Ireland is 18% (NTA, 2010). In cost terms, in the UK the Department for Transport and the National Business Travel Network (DfT and NBTN, 2008) (essential guide) cites a figure of £50 (€57·5) per employee, and Cairns *et al.* (2008) report a median average of £47 (€54·05) per employee for implementing a travel plan. Rather lower, Irish experience suggests costs of €7 per employee engaged and a further €2 for ongoing maintenance (NTA, 2010). Using a different measure, Rye (2002a) calculates a cost per trip removed from the road network of €1·50.

Yet, while clearly attractive, in practice the travel plan has remained a marginal transport planning tool (Boot *et al.*, 2007; Enoch and Zhang, 2008). The question is, why?

Eight key barriers to travel plans among companies are identified in Rye (2002b), Bradshaw (1997) and Coleman (2000), namely

- companies' self interest and internal organisational barriers
- personal taxation and commuting
- lack of examples due to novelty of the concept
- lack of staff resources
- lack of financial resources
- lack of small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) involvement
- lack of public transport operator involvement
- lack of regulatory requirements for travel plans.

In addition, local authority support for travel plans can best be described as 'patchy'. Therefore, the Department for Transport and the Government Operational Research Service (DfT and GORS, 2007) report that a review based on local transport plans submitted to the UK government by local councils found that although workplace travel plans are mentioned in every example, only a minimal reference was found in a third of these. Meanwhile, Roby (2010) emphasises the need for travel plans 'to develop from the original concept of influencing travel demand and encouraging more staff to travel in more sustainable ways (i.e. a transport planning tool)… to become much more… of a business management tool' (p. 8).

From the above, it is possible to draw the conclusion made by Enoch and Zhang (2008) that travel plans could potentially develop from a niche tool they are currently to being the primary mechanism of transport demand management, but only if 'the UK Government dramatically changes its approach' (p. 251).

The findings presented in this paper are the outcome of research (this research was sponsored by the Department for Transport and the National Business Travel Network), the aim of which was to determine the current state of play of travel plans in the UK and identify possible future scenarios based on the opinions of ten travel plan experts.

The following section outlines the method used, Section 3 the findings and Section 4 the conclusions for policy.

2. Methods

Face-to-face in-depth interviews were undertaken with ten travel plan experts. Those chosen were selected based on careful study of the literature in the area, the researchers' detailed knowledge of transport policy and travel plans and input from the UK Department for Transport and the National Business Travel Network. Table 1 details those interviewed.

The interviews comprised carefully designed questions, as listed in Table 2. All ten interviewees have known of travel plans for at least 8 years and a number for substantially longer, having been introduced to them in a variety of ways, such as the introduction of similar measures in California and the early experiences of travel plan measures in Nottingham, UK. In terms of being introduced to travel plans, respondents had been asked to take up employment as travel planners, taking travel plans forward within a local authority context, as an environmental campaigner, as consultants or as an academic. In a number of cases, a new job or role had led to involvement with travel plans.

A number of respondents had experience of being a travel planner, had worked in local authorities and all had been (and are currently) travel plan consultants. A number currently undertake travel plan research.

One consultant has written 50 travel plans for the workplace, hospitals, schools or residential areas, while another commented that he had been involved in well over 100 travel plans ranging from major businesses to SMEs, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, local authorities and leisure sites.

3. Travel plans in the UK so far

3.1 The current state of travel plans
In terms of travel plans and the current state of play the response was mixed, ranging from positive to negative.

Interviewee	Involvement in travel plans	Experience
Consultant	1990–	Visited USA in early 1990s over a 2–3-year period to learn more about TDM processes; Former employee of a large UK organisation, with responsibility for developing their travel plan.
Academic	1995–	Supervised doctoral students in area of travel plans; Fiscal barriers to travel plans – tax reforms and travel plans; Evaluation of travel plans; Site-specific advice; Business case; Training materials.
Independent consultant	Late 1990s–	Consultant solely involved with travel plans; Part-time employee of a local authority; Written, or advised on 50 travel plans for workplaces, hospitals, schools and residential.
Consultant	Mid 1990s–	Sustainable transport; Local authority and school travel plans; Involved in 100 travel plans with major businesses, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, local authorities and leisure sites; DfT panel offering business advice; Best practice guides.
Consultant	Mid 1990s–	Writing travel plans for a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sector; European benchmarking.
Independent consultant	Early 1990s–	Former director of planning/transport local authority; Sustainable transport; National guidance on travel plans.
Consultant	1996–	Local authority travel planning; School travel planning; Consultancy; Strategic advice and specific site advice.
Independent consultant	Mid 1990s–	Previously travel plan coordinator for a large organisation; Advice to local authorities and London boroughs; Aided in writing travel plans for local authorities and universities.
Independent consultant	Early noughties–	Campaigner perspective; Now independent consultant; Formerly worked for environmental campaign group; Written travel plans for various companies; Recently completed major survey of UK travel plans.
Consultant	Late 1990s–	Formerly worked for a large public sector organisation as a travel planner; Previously worked for a local authority, well regarded in travel planning; Currently heads travel plan unit for a major consultant.

Table 1. Interviewee experience

3.1.1 Positive

One interviewee was 'excited', feeling they were 'at the birth of something' and 'optimistic' as stakeholders were finally 'getting our act together'. It was also felt that 'the conditions are right to nurture everything that travel planning is trying to achieve', and

that there are 'more and more companies who want to take up a travel plan [in order to deliver] real tangible benefits'.

It is suggested that for travel plans to reach their full potential, then expectations among the very best need to be raised far

Travel plan report interview schedule
We are interested in the perceptions of travel plan experts as to how travel plans have developed, how they perform currently and how they should develop in the future.

Travel plans currently
1. What do you think is the current 'state of play' with respect to travel plans?
2. What do you feel are the core motivations for organisations adopting travel plans now?
3. What are the key barriers preventing travel plan take-up currently?
4. What is the current role of central and local government in overcoming the barriers to the take-up of travel plans?
5. How do you perceive travel plans (and travel plan 'policy') to be working at the moment?
   - ■ in improving access to work
   - ■ in improving the local environment
   - ■ in achieving social goals
   - ■ in reducing congestion
   - ■ in meeting their objective/s generally.
6. Have travel plans achieved their full potential? If not, why not?

Travel plans in the future
7. How do you see travel plans developing over the next 5 years/10 years?
8. What do you see as being the future barriers to the take-up of travel plans?
9. What do you think local government should do to help support/encourage organisations developing travel plans – that is what role should local authorities play?
10. What do you think national government should do to help support/encourage organisations developing travel plans – that is what role should national government play?
11. Are there any other organisations you feel could support/encourage the development of travel plans, and if so which and how?
12. What are organisations not currently doing that might make travel plans more attractive/beneficial to them?
13. Do you think that the concept of travel plans is a useful one, or are we wasting our energy trying to make them work when we should be doing other things?

Table 2. Expert interview schedule

higher, so that the 15% reduction in car use figure does not become a maximum that suggests a reasonable travel plan can 'dribble along at 5%'. For this to occur, the respondent re-emphasises the importance of lock-in mechanisms, and adds that perhaps 'a travel plan super-league' be established in which members have achieved cuts in car use of, say, double the median 15% to give 'companies something to go for'.

3.1.2 Mixed
One respondent was neither positive about travel plans currently, nor negative:

'I suppose I classify [travel planning] in my mind as reaching adolescence. I'm not being either pessimistic or optimistic, but I'm acknowledging that something new like this has a path of evolution to go through. It is progressing through some stages, but not as quickly as some of us in the industry would like.'

3.1.3 Negative
One interviewee was first concerned that 'too many [travel plans] are formulaic, because they're ticking off lists now rather than seeing what each one can contribute'. Second, 'local authorities still have not developed effective travel plans in most cases, [yet have] still got a load of perverse subsidies; free parking, or their equivalent benefit, and that is the same with a lot of company travel plans'.

One reason expressed for such a wide range of perceptions was the lack of monitoring data being collected on travel plans. Although there was a view that this is now starting to change as consultants begin to recognise that organisations need convincing evidence to adopt a travel plan, this is not yet widespread. Another response was that travel plans have lost their way with 'travel plans remaining in a facilities/estates ghetto and while they are there, they don't link to how a travel plan can help marketing and how it can help human resources, in terms of reduced absenteeism and in terms of staff recruitment. It remains in the ghetto because travel plans don't make an organisational link. That is the key barrier, that they aren't embedded within organisations'.

3.2 The current motivations for travel plans
Regarding core motivations for undertaking travel plans currently, the feeling from the interviewees is that 'It's still

the planning thing, but now corporate and social motivations are coming into it as well'.

'I think over the last couple of years; there was a very clear shift towards potential efficiency savings and the financial benefits of travel plans but in the last six months it is now back to the environmental motivations. The whole carbon planning agenda now has a national profile linked to a whole range of things…. Certainly the projects I've been involved in are more responsive to travel planning because that carbon footprint reduction to an organisation is now important.'

There was a view that new drivers for travel plans have arisen in specific locations. For example, in Sheffield travel plans can be seen as a means of addressing social exclusion, while Islington, a London borough, is using them to mitigate overloading on the public transport network.

On the role of government in motivating organisations, this is felt to have 'increased marginally, and while it's still not strong enough to make [travel plans] work, it is still stronger than when we first started'. One change that was considered helpful would be to raise the profile of travel plans within the local transport plan system 'like it has done with School Travel Plans, whereby every school by 'x' year has to have a travel plan'. Perceived more positively has been the role of the Highways Agency in refusing to increase capacity on the highway network, instead 'pushing travel plans in a way they have never done before'.

3.3 Current barriers to implementation
The interviewees highlighted a number of barriers to the take-up of travel plans currently.

3.3.1 Lack of strategic thinking
It was stated that 'there is a lack of strategic thinking as to where travel planning fits in to a local authority's planning tools that they are using. To be honest I think it is just giving lip service in the main.' Instead, 'activity is ad hoc, and insufficient basically for what's required'.

3.3.2 Lack of leadership
Interviewees' comments suggest that there is perceived to be a lack of leadership in terms of travel plans. 'The advocacy role that you would expect from DfT has not really been as strong as it could be. Despite all the best practice guidance and documentation that has been produced there is no real engagement between national and local government to help make this more of a mainstream activity. It feels like there is more scope to provide national credibility.'

In terms of the experience of travel plan coordinators, the following statement was made.

'Travel plan co-ordinators are quite junior positions; they're fresh out of university without any grounding in transport planning or environmental management, doing it because they saw an advert that appealed. They do it for one or two years and then move on. So the more that we can do in terms of career programmes the better.'

3.3.3 Lack of resources
Lack of resources was commented on as being a barrier that 'comes up time and time again'. The view was also expressed that 'unless it is as part of some assessment process; [travel planning] will go on the back burner because local authorities deal with what is on their radar' and allocate resources accordingly. Meanwhile it was also reported that 'Capital and revenue funding is a barrier. Whether that comes through local authority support or internal pots within businesses is I think uncertain but either way, you can't do travel plans unless you invest in them properly. Trying to do them on the cheap, through a tick-box approach, means it is almost worse than not doing them at all in some respects. You sap a lot of energy and resource without really achieving anything. You're paying lip service to it.'

3.3.4 Lack of evidence
A recurring theme among the interviewees is the lack of evidence.

'It all comes back to the evidence because if you have the evidence that these things work, you can start to argue the case. At the moment it's difficult because you're arguing on the basis of 'this seems to be a good idea… even though we've got 1000s of travel plans that have gone through the process'.'

3.3.5 Inadequate monitoring and enforcement
The view was expressed that little monitoring or enforcement occurs. 'No-one takes you seriously through the planning process to develop travel plans, because at the end of the day, they know there is no-one there to actually enforce this.'

3.3.6 The travel plan product
The travel plan 'product' itself was perceived to be a problem. It was considered that, to be attractive, travel plans need to offer a practical alternative to the car and yet this is often difficult for local authorities to guarantee because they must rely on public transport operators that may not be 'on board'. One interviewee expressed this problem as follows.

'We are dealing with a really shoddy tool. We are trying to sell a package of measures based on second rate ingredients. We are not producing the quality products to work with, our public transport system is not viewed as great (although to be honest I think we have come on in leaps and bounds in terms of quality). Yet people's perceptions are changeable. That misconception about public transport is such a barrier.'

3.4 The current role of government in overcoming the barriers to travel plan take-up

Interviewees' opinions are mixed with respect to the current role of government in removing the barriers to travel plan take-up.

3.4.1 Optimistic view

From the optimist was the view that national and local government is 'being more proactive, the benefits over the last eight years, have been realised, and it is now seeing [travel plans] as a cure-all to the problems it is facing – congestion, social exclusion overdevelopment, underprovision of parking spaces, climate change and hitting air quality targets'. In addition:

'Travel plans transcend so many different agendas. As a travel planner I could sit on about twelve different boards, and still represent my agenda because it covers so many huge politically significant areas: 'oh, I get stuck in traffic, the bus is late, I've been knocked off my bike, I can never find a parking space, I can't develop anywhere!'.'

3.4.2 Pessimistic view

On a more pessimistic note there was a view that some resources have been applied to travel plans, such that in 'most [local authority] offices now you can find somebody who is at least covering that brief'. The degree of travel plan activity, however, is only seen to be moderate. 'There is still this mandatory role in development control of travel plans associated with planning applications for local authorities now, but there is a difference of opinion as to the extent that local authorities believe it's their role to promote and support voluntary travel plans as a tool. Hampshire County Council is the only one that I have seen preparing a strategic document on Smarter Choices; a statement of intent about what they would like to happen, regarding whether it is actually happening, is another matter, as part of their local transport plan.'

For the next step, leadership by the Department for Transport is seen as being key. 'I think the role that both central and local government can take is by mainstreaming [travel plans] now, and taking them seriously. I want to be able to say to organisations 'well, oh sorry, but the DfT is pushing this forward, and they have committed themselves to travel plans and it's not a flash in the pan, they firmly believe in this'. [At the moment] I sometimes feel I am standing behind some very shaky people who at the first thing will bolt. In concurrence, leadership is key, and leadership from the top, and not just lip service. It has got to come from politicians, from central government, down through local government.'

3.5 The current perception of the working of travel plans

Overall, there would appear to be a level of uncertainty among interviewees as to how travel plans are currently working

– 'there probably is a shift in effectiveness, but it's difficult to really get a handle on it'.

As to the 'direction of travel', the theme seemed to be that things are slowly improving but there is a risk of 'slippage'. One interviewee noted that things are 'getting better', but 'it is still a long way from where it needs to be, at all levels, in terms of its effectiveness'. Although 'a lot of the words are there, and the aspirations of most organisations that are doing these things are certainly worthy, it's not being achieved on the ground. The activities aren't matching the aspirations, consequently the objectives aren't being achieved as they should be.'

One view was that the current working of travel plans is mixed, being good at the school level but 'iffy' elsewhere.

'It's working reasonably well in schools, probably there's still more depth to go into but it's on a school's agenda whereas it's not on an employers agenda. Certainly only right on the edge of leisure and leisure travel plans. I think we're getting travel plans rolling out to different areas: workplace, school, leisure – personalised travel planning is now very much coming on the agenda. So there seems to be this thing of increasing the number of travel plans but perhaps without increasing the quality; schools have got quite good quality but all the others are hesitating and that links it to these goals.'

However, there are also some positives identified. There are thus a growing number of organisations such as charities and trade unions now thinking about how travel plans could improve conditions for their beneficiaries/ members, while new approaches to changing people's attitudes to the travel plan message are being tested. Travel plans are 'a project management strategy', which aim to persuade the target people of the personal benefits to them of reducing car use.

In saying this, a view held was that there needs to be a systematic approach to categorising best practice in terms of travel plans.

'It might be that you can categorise them in to broad types of industry and we just haven't done that today, we tend to lump them all in to a best practice guide. If you have a call centre, for example, their travel plan will be very different to another business in the same way that financial services tend to have stricter working hours, they'll be regulated 9.00–5.30 whereas the manufacturing world might be very different. I have a sense that having an understanding of the discrete, different business sectors and the tools that are effective in each of those would be quite helpful, but I don't underestimate the task of achieving it because it's very difficult to get hold of even a small amount of evidence in any one of those sectors. So by

disaggregating them, you're losing the ability to pool the level of achievement.'

3.6   Have travel plans reached their full potential?

On the question of travel plans having met their full potential, the representative answer is 'no, not at all; anything but, but there is a lot more potential out there'.

As to the reasons why travel plans have not yet met their potential, the lack of monitoring (much less systematic), the lack of enforcement, the increased number (and variable quality) of consultants adopting a standardised 'sausage machine' approach to travel planning were seen by the interviewees as being especially problematical.

One respondent stated that the reason related to bringing all the actors together in that 'because you haven't actually got a process of implementing travel plans that brings all the actors on board. You're trying to implement travel plans with a rather traditional transport planning process, which links to this being a dispersed measure that requires the voluntary buy-in to work and what you're getting is a lot of stick for the involuntary buy-in and probably putting back some more in that.'

Accreditation was put forward as a means of achieving travel plan potential in that 'It needs much wider coverage, you need good quality ones, that raises the question of do you need some sort of accreditation scheme? You do in other areas of activity, you do in investment in people, and you have ISO 14001 for environmental management. What do you have for travel plans?… You want some sort of national award scheme if you like, to measure the quality of them, and you just need more of them, they do have potential'.

Looking to the future, one view was that the ideal was a situation in which the transport system became so good that travel plans will become 'obsolete' and so 'cease to exist'.

3.7   Summary of views

Table 3 presents a summary of the views raised above.

4.   Travel plans in the future

Looking to the future, the responses to corresponding questions already raised can be summarised as follows.

On the development of travel plans in the short term, that is, the next 10–15 years, the general view is as follows

- Without significant intervention by national government, while the number of travel plans will probably increase steadily, their effectiveness may well diminish due to increased standardisation.

- Local authorities are driven by what is happening nationally in terms of policy.
- A national political champion would seem to be significant in terms of the development of travel plans.
- Making travel plans compulsory for certain company size was a view expressed.
- There appears to be a need for an increase in local authority staffing in the area of travel plans.

Regarding future barriers to travel plan take-up, several of the points mentioned previously are also mentioned with the future in mind. In particular, the following points can be made.

- Travel plan policy is unclear, lacks direction and is not seen by local authorities as a government priority.
- There is a fear that government will abandon travel plans if they are not seen to work.
- The travel plan industry is seen as being 'messy'.
- Senior managers favour car-based benefit packages for staff over travel plan measures.

As to the future role of local government in supporting travel plans, the following aspects were identified, namely: leader/coordinator; regulator/enforcer; supporter/advisor; promoter and provider.

- Local authorities should lead and coordinate, regulate and enforce, provide support and advice, and promote travel plans within their areas.
- There needs to be a more strategic view as to how local authorities plan their travel planning activities.
- A mentoring role could contribute to the success of travel plans.

For the future role of national government in encouraging organisations in their development of travel plans, the feeling is that

- national government ought to lead, coordinate and promote travel planning; in addition, it should provide financial support and look towards reforming the fiscal system to support organisations developing travel plans
- travel plans need to be given a higher profile by national government.

When asked about what other bodies should be involved in delivering or supporting travel plans, the experts suggested

- public transport operators, other government departments, campaign groups, professional associations, business groups and trade unions
- more needs to be done to involve public transport operators, other government departments (e.g. the

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The current state of travel plans
- Overall, there are grounds for optimism but also serious reservations about how travel plans are progressing
- Travel plans appear to be at something of a watershed in need of new impetus and strategic direction
- The conditions would appear to be right for the nurturing of travel plans
- Travel plans would appear to be formulaic, often relying on ticking off lists
- There appears to be a lack of monitoring data collected on travel plans
- There is a perception that travel plans remain in an estates department 'ghetto'.

The current motivations for travel plans
- Securing planning permission is still the dominant reason for travel plans being drawn up. As to voluntary motivations, these have focused on improving economic competitiveness, enhancing corporate social responsibility (CSR) profiles and most recently on minimising carbon footprints
- Recruitment and retention of staff is another major business concern at present, although at the moment the link to travel plans is often not being made within organisations
- New drivers for travel plans are appearing such as for dealing with social exclusion and to mitigate overloading of the public transport network.

Current barriers to implementation
- A range of barriers still remains, all of them strongly interrelated
- There is perceived to be a lack of strategic direction and a lack of leadership in taking travel plans forward
- There is insufficient monitoring and enforcement, a reluctance by organisations to commit to travel plans, and finally a feeling that the travel plan product is often not fit for purpose
- Travel plan coordinators are often junior positions without grounding in transport planning issues
- There would appear to be a lack of evidence as to the success of travel plans. This makes it difficult to convince senior management.

The current role of government in overcoming the barriers to travel plan take-up
- Travel plans continue to move forward, with many local authorities now employing some form of travel plan officer. Progress though is slow
- There is now a need for travel plans to become more mainstream – for them to be integrated across not only transport and planning departments, but beyond
- The current perception of the working of travel plans
- There is a feeling of slow progress being made, but also that any gains made are vulnerable to being reversed.

Have travel plans reached their full potential?
- Travel plans are still far from reaching their full potential
- Much more could be done in terms of increasing the effectiveness of travel plans by raising awareness among organisations, enhancing their attractiveness to organisations, and by improving their outcomes through better design, monitoring and enforcement.

Table 3. Summary of views

Planning Inspectorate and the Audit Commission), campaign groups, professional associations, business groups and trade unions in supporting travel plans.

In answer to a question on how organisations might in future make better use of travel plans, the responses can be summarised as follows.

- Travel plans need to be more effectively 'sold' to organisations by placing more emphasis on the wider benefits enjoyed by integrating them more effectively within existing management systems.

Finally, when probed as to whether the travel plan concept is a useful one, the reply is that they are useful. This is because

- travel plans influence transport decisions through organisations other than local authorities
- travel plans typically target transport use at the most congested places and at peak times, potentially increasing their effectiveness with regard to other transport policy measures.

5. Conclusions for policy

The findings from the research undertaken highlight that, while travel plans are being implemented with varying degrees of success by many local authorities, National Health Service trusts and academic institutions and, to a lesser extent, by businesses, they are far from 'mainstream' in the UK. High-profile successes aside, this research indicates that travel plans

are often developed on an ad-hoc basis without strategic direction and suggests they exist in a policy vacuum, are marginalised, lacking in resources and monitoring and thus are not as effective as they could be.

To move towards the incorporation of travel plans into the mainstream, government, local authorities, organisations, transport suppliers and the travel planning profession all have important roles to play. Key areas for further consideration by relevant stakeholders are summarised below.

5.1 Government

There is a perceived lack of leadership, commitment, strategy, vision and financial resources to travel plans at a national level, which leads to the impression that the government is not committed to travel plans. To reverse this perception, government should afford a higher profile to travel plans and this should be supported by policy champions.

There is a perceived lack of integration with other policies such as obesity and carbon reduction, and it is considered that such integration would strengthen the value of travel plans.

Government's role is seen by experts as leading, coordinating and promoting the development of travel plans. Consideration should be given to how to do this more effectively – this might include financial support and reforming the fiscal system to provide better support for organisations developing travel plans as well as the introduction of legislation and regulation requiring their adoption.

5.2 Local authorities

As with government, a lack of leadership, commitment, strategy, vision and financial resources at local authority level is perceived to be repeated. Some local authorities do not have their own travel plans in place.

Local authorities' role is seen as leading, coordinating, regulating, enforcing, providing support and advice and promoting travel plans within their areas. Consideration should be given to how local authorities could do this more effectively.

5.3 Organisations

There is a perceived lack of integration of travel plans, with organisational management systems often rendering them as marginal activities. Many organisations resist travel plans as they are seen as non-core and they are perceived to incur additional costs. Lack of business case evidence does little to enhance the reputation of travel plans. Consideration should be given to overcoming these issues and resistances.

5.4 Transport suppliers and other agencies

There is a perceived reluctance or inability of transport suppliers and other relevant agencies to become involved in supporting travel plans. Consideration should be given to overcoming this.

5.5 Travel planning profession

Finally, there is a lack of skilled travel plan coordinators and travel planners – in particular in positions of responsibility. Consideration should be given to overcoming this.

6. Recent policy developments

Subsequent to this research being undertaken, the election of a Conservative coalition government in May 2010 in the context of the global economic recession led to the results of a Comprehensive Spending Review being announced on 20 October 2010 (HM Treasury, 2010). This cut overall government spending by £81 billion (€93.15 billion) by 2014 in order to reduce the level of debt incurred by the public sector. Interestingly, results in terms of travel plans have been mixed. On the one hand, the Department for Transport allocated £560 million (€644 million) towards a sustainable transport fund to be spent over the next 4 years – a significant amount in the current fiscal climate. On the other hand, revenue funding for transport services nationally was cut by 21% (infrastructure spending was only cut by 11%), while travel planning in London looks set to be scaled back due to a large reduction in funding for Transport for London. This would suggest that the current government is favourably disposed to travel planning in principle, but has yet to realise fully some of the implications of wider policy decisions on the effectiveness of travel plans in practice.

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