

ShowCase

Choose How You Move

Topic:

Sustainability

Organisation:

Worcestershire County Council

Location:

Worcester (West Midlands)

Dates:

April 2004 to March 2009

Budget:

£4.4 million (over 5 years)

Website:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/transport-and-streets.aspx

Email:

travelplan@worcestershire.gov.uk

Telephone:

01905 765 765



Overview

Choose How You Move was a council-run initiative to encourage the widespread take-up of sustainable transport options, with the aim of reducing congestion and car dependency, alongside the added benefits of improved health and fitness.

Worcester was selected as part of the Government's Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town Programme, alongside Darlington and Peterborough, to pilot the use of 'smarter choices' measures in reducing car use. The programme offered improved public transport infrastructure, cycle routes and pedestrian access, plus a variety of incentives and personalised travel advice.

Results

There were notable changes in travel mode choice across Worcester between 2004 and 2008. Based on surveys with representative samples of more than 4,000 people before and after Choose How You Move, there was a relative:

- Reduction of 7 per cent in car-as-driver trips per person per year
- Reduction of 4 per cent in car-as-passenger trips
- Increase of 11 per cent in walking trips
- Increase of 19 per cent in bicycle trips
- Increase of 20 per cent in bus trips
- Estimated saving of around 3,900 tonnes of CO₂ per year from personal car use



Published in July 2004, the Department for Transport's (DfT) White paper laid out the Government's plan for transport in the UK over the next 30 years. The strategy recognised that factors such as growing population and life expectancy, a greater willingness to travel further in exchange for a better lifestyle, and increased demand for goods would contribute to a growing demand for travel.



Also published in 2004 was research from DfT identifying a variety of 'soft measures' that might ease traffic congestion in towns across the UK. The report, *Smarter Choices: Changing the Way We Travel*, used multimodal research from around the UK and the world to show that every £1 spent on well designed interventions such as workplace, school and personalised travel plans, awareness campaigns, car clubs and car sharing schemes could bring about £10 of benefit in reduced congestion alone, with further potential gains from environmental improvements.

In parallel to this, DfT announced its Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town Programme. The aim of the programme was to demonstrate what effect a package of 'smarter choices' interventions and infrastructure improvements could have in a relatively small

area over a sustained five-year period. A total of 51 local authorities submitted expressions of interest, and following thorough evaluation 7 towns were shortlisted and invited to present their plans in detail. The shortlisted towns made presentations to DfT officials and representatives from the National Cycling Strategy Board and Transport 2000 in early April 2004.

To aid the development of a strong bid, Worcestershire County Council conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify the sectors and partners that needed to be represented on the project. These included those from health, public transport, business, education, local government and leisure. These sectors were seen as vital to the project delivery because different aspects of the project touched on these areas. The mapping led to the establishment of a stakeholder steering group to provide input into the project bid, ensuring all partners and key stakeholders were fully engaged from the start. The steering group included representatives from:

- University of Worcester
- Worcester City Council
- Worcestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT)
- Local public transport operator, First
- Local councillors

At the end of April, the then Transport Minister, Kim Howells, announced that Worcester, Peterborough and Darlington had been successful in their bids.

Each town's bid contained proposals to introduce comprehensive packages of hard and soft measures to promote safe and pleasant walking, cycling and bus use for all trips. Improved public transport information and comprehensive programmes of Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM) were also key components of the five-year programme, which had a core budget of £10 million to be divided between the three towns.

Targets

The Worcester bid set a target of a 20 per cent reduction in car-as-driver journeys over the five years. This target was set against a predicted 10 per cent increase in traffic growth over the five years based on year-on-year growth in vehicle miles (which did not occur). The Council thus wanted to achieve a 10 per cent reduction compared with the 2004 baseline. Based on average results from previous small scale pilots, Worcestershire County Council also set the following targets:

- 10 per cent increase in walking
- 100 per cent increase in cycling
- 20 per cent increase in public transport use
- 8 per cent decrease in car passenger trips

Target audiences

Because work had already begun nationally and within Worcestershire to help schools and employers develop travel plans and encourage sustainable travel choices, and because DfT wanted to investigate how 'smarter choices' interventions could affect the travel choices of residents, it was clear from the onset that the target audiences would be residents, schools and employers. Later, additional research was conducted to further segment by demographics and motivations.



In autumn 2004 a comprehensive baseline study was carried out in Worcester to determine residents' existing travel behaviour and potential for change. The research, carried out by Socialdata and Sustrans, was divided into three main components:

1. A postal survey across the 15 urban wards of Worcester, with results drawn from a net sample

of 4,125 people. The survey took the form of a mail-back diary, which allowed residents to record their travel behaviour for one week, in their own words, and was followed up in some cases by telephone calls to check the completeness and accuracy of data.

2. In-depth interview study with a sub-sample of just over 400 travel diary respondents, where they were questioned in detail about trips recorded in their travel diaries and why they had used particular modes for those trips.

This research found that in 2004:

- 45 per cent of all trips were made by car-as-driver
- 21 per cent by car-as-passenger
- 25 per cent by walking
- 3 per cent by bicycle
- 6 per cent by public transport

The potential for modal shift was also measured. It was found that 46 per cent of all car trips were made by that mode for subjective reasons – because people had negative attitudes towards alternative modes and/or because they were unaware of the alternatives available to them. These trips were potentially transferable to sustainable modes by using marketing measures, without any changes to the transport system. The research found that if all of these potentially transferable trips were switched to walking, cycling or public transport, around two-thirds of all trips in Worcester could be made by sustainable modes.

Interviewees were also asked about their attitudes towards traffic and transport issues. Nearly all residents recognised an increase in car traffic over the last few years, and the majority perceived this negatively. In the case of traffic planning, a large majority of residents said they would support measures for public transport use, 4 out of 5 would support measures for cycling, and 9 out of 10 would support measures for pedestrians.

3. Focus groups with schools, residents and employers, asking them about current travel behaviour, knowledge of alternatives, why they did or did not use alternatives, and what would motivate them to change their behaviour.

The focus groups included a wide range of respondents, including:

- Schoolchildren
- Parents
- Young people (aged 18 to 21)
- Commuters
- Converted commuters (non-car users)

Primary school children have strong pester power, are well-informed on environmental and health issues, and have a desire to save the world. They are also open to the idea of change and motivated by the idea of freedom and adventure. This group had very clear motivations against car use, including boredom, lack of movement and restriction.

Secondary school children have a very different mindset, with inertia already having set in. Girls are more sophisticated and more mature, and prefer travelling by car because it is easier, or by bus because of the social aspect. However boys would like to be able to cycle to school.

Adult residents had a number of possible motivations to change their mode of transport. These included:

- Cycling – Seen as cheap, good for exercise and fitness, avoiding parking problems
- Train – Predictable journey time, relaxing journey, no wasted travel time as one can work on the train, more reliable
- Walking – Improves fitness, social activity that can be enjoyed by people of different ages and abilities, no cost, fun
- Bus – Negative perception of buses, which were viewed as expensive, unreliable and lacking integrated routes. The city's park-

and-ride service was viewed positively as a service that offered convenience

Key insights

- A significant proportion of car journeys could be replaced by walking or cycling – thus the perceived convenience of a car journey was identified as the programme's main source of competition
- Barriers to using sustainable transport alternatives included lack of information and poor perceptions of service quality
- People routinely overestimated the amount of time required for journeys by public transport and underestimated journey times when taking the car
- There was a willingness to consider alternative transport routes and methods, but a lack of knowledge and/or will to make use of them

Early focus groups (and subsequent surveys) indicated that making the programme 'anti-car' would not be appropriate or effective. People were already aware that using their car has negative consequences for the environment. Therefore a positive focus was needed, based on the benefits of using alternative transport modes.

Desk and qualitative research was carried out in March 2005 to establish the most effective methods of encouraging travel behaviour change. This uncovered best practice from pilots in Belgium, America and Australia, but also indicated that even dramatically raised awareness did not necessarily lead to high levels of behavioural change. A multi-layered approach would therefore be needed, with those people potentially most open to change identified as the initial targets.

Segmentation

Additional research was conducted to separate different 'types' within the three broad population segments identified – residents, employers and schools. Dr Foster Intelligence carried out

research that was used to produce a pen portrait for each group, covering their mindset and motivators. These portraits were used to inform the design of subsequent interventions.

Car-driving men aged 25 to 45; C1, C2; single/married

- Motivators: Health, time, self-image, autonomy, less stress
- Key attitude/decision: I could make time for my health by cycling to work

Car-driving women aged 20 to 35; (C1) C2; probably single

- Motivators: 'Me' time, cost, health, flirt factor, (environment)
- Key attitude/decision: I could have more time for me by taking the bus to work

Fitness-oriented adults aged 28 to 35; (C1) C2; single or married

- Motivators: Health/relaxation, sociability or flirt factor, self-image, cost, (environment)
- Key attitude/decision: I could have fun – and enhance my social life or sex appeal – by cycling for leisure

Trend-setting young people aged 16 to 18; B, C1, C2

- Motivators: Health, cost, self-image, (environment)
- Key attitude/decision: I could stay fit and focused – and save money – by taking up cycling

Car-driving mums aged 29 to 37; B, C1

- Motivators: 'Me' time, less stress, self-image, sociability
- Key attitude/decision: I can free up my time by using my organisational skills to lift share, or there are more ways than I think to get the kids to school



Building on the plans outlined in the bid to the DfT, Choose How You Move focused on four main work streams: Marketing, Schools, Workplace and Residential. The initial bid had outlined plans to include a Travel Advice Centre in the city centre as funding available was initially £5 million for each of two towns. However, DfT decided to select three pilot towns and so the available funding was reduced and the Travel Advice Centre was removed from the initial plans.

Key interventions developed

Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM)

Personalised travel information and incentives to try out new ways of getting about would be offered to households. Those who expressed an interest would be sent information relevant to their personal needs, including details of walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing. Residents could also sign up for a personalised journey plan, a home advice session on walking, cycling or public transport, and incentives. This element of Choose How You Move would be delivered by sustainable transport charity Sustrans and its partner Socialdata.



Employer Travel Plans

To encourage alternatives to single occupancy cars, measures such as car-sharing schemes, improved cycling and walking facilities and public transport promotions were developed. Flexible-working practices would also be encouraged, such as working from home, and tele- and video-conferencing. These measures would be monitored annually using a survey sent to all employers.



Sustainable School Travel Strategy

Worcestershire County Council developed this to show how measures could be taken to reduce car dependency for school-related journeys and the resulting congestion and road safety issues. Key to this were schemes like the Walking Bus, where trained parent volunteers walk with children along a route checked by the Council. Targeted communications were developed to encourage the take up of schemes, using results from initial focus groups to shape the promotional materials for children.

Active School Travel Plans

Schools that create a plan would become eligible for a DfT grant for on-site measures to encourage sustainable travel, such as cycle storage, lockers and sheltered waiting areas.

Supporting and facilitating

Clear and concise information leaflets, travel information systems, website information and improved infrastructure, including new bus

routes, bus shelters, cycle parking and Sustrans' Connect2 project to provide a pedestrian and cycling bridge over the River Severn with new connecting routes.

Celebrating

Successes would be promote and rewards offered for behaviour change, including free bus tickets, free bicycle hire and training, personalised travel information and route maps.

Overcoming barriers

Measures were specifically designed to encourage uptake of the three sustainable travel modes identified:

Cycling

The baseline research showed that for 34 per cent of all car trips within Worcester in 2004, there were no constraints against cycling as an alternative. The main reason given for not cycling was the perceived amount of time it would take, with other reasons including perceived lack of adequate bicycle infrastructure, lack of comfort (car emissions, safety risk, clothing) and a generally negative view of cycling as a mode for everyday trips. To overcome these barriers, the Council developed a free bike loan scheme from which people could hire a bike for up to six months for a small deposit, plus free cycle lessons, personalised travel plans and route maps.



Walking

The baseline research revealed that in principle every eighth car trip within Worcester (12 per cent) was replaceable by walking. Further enquiries revealed the barriers to walking were similar to those given for cycling, including time constraints and safety. As part of the ITM project and wider marketing, safety tips, safe

routes and a list of routes and journey times for popular local trips would be issued to residents, along with widespread promotion of other benefits, including health.

Public transport

Research revealed a potential for public transport use more than three times higher than actual use at the time (potentially 20 per cent of all journeys). Barriers included a lack of information around services and perceptions of potential journey time (people overestimated the time taken by public transport by nearly two-thirds). Cost was also often considered too high. To overcome these barriers, the Council would offer information and incentives specific to residents' circumstances. For example: timetables about buses visiting their nearest bus stop; free 'taster' tickets enabling them to try out services; maps of local shopping opportunities; individual advice on how they could optimise their travel – reinforced by clear promotion of other benefits, including cost, environment, congestion, pride in the city, and car wear and tear.



A number of strands ran simultaneously throughout the five-year programme. Work with schools and businesses was ongoing throughout the five years, while the ITM was phased over three years (2005 to 2007), with planning of each phase over autumn and winter and delivery during spring and summer (when people are more likely to try walking or cycling due to nicer weather). Alongside these initiatives, there was a rolling programme of marketing communications and promotions, focusing on responsible car use and public transport in the autumn/winter and walking and cycling in the spring/summer.

The programme team worked closely to plan timing of activities and delivery to ensure synergy. For instance, the national Bike Week (held in June every year) was covered in all three streams (residents, business, schools) in a coordinated manner to make sure there was maximum impact. The team met formally on a regular basis but were in close working contact daily, and the steering group met quarterly. Monitoring of performance data on a monthly basis helped inform how the programme was going, with large-scale interim behaviour research completed annually in the areas receiving ITM.



Worcestershire County Council wanted to combine the marketing and promotions with improved services and facilities where possible. To ensure infrastructure supported behaviour change, the County Council and its partners developed Worcester Express, a network of three high-frequency bus services linking Perdisswell Park and Ride site, Warndon Villages, Worcestershire Royal Hospital and the city centre. These services were launched in summer 2005.

The programme also trialled a Car Club scheme to provide short-term hire of a vehicle to households within the city that decided against owning a car. However, this project did not achieve sufficient membership numbers to make it a viable option and unfortunately had to be pulled.

Other aspects of the programme were found to be a great success, including the use of ITM through home advice sessions in conjunction

with incentives, rewards and items of travel information. These were offered to more than 23,000 households (about 60 per cent of households in the city), with successful contact made with over 19,000 households. Furthermore, events were also found to be successful in raising awareness and introducing people to sustainable travel options.

“Other initiatives, such as family cycling days and hosting of Tour of Britain cycle race, were undertaken to raise awareness, highlight a different aspect of cycling other than to get to work or school, and to introduce a fun element that would hopefully inspire people. These were more innovative and we had no idea if they would be successful – fortunately they were very, very, popular and we still get asked if we can do more events!” (Cat Ainsworth, Principal Sustainability Manager)



Worcestershire County Council was aware of the importance of messaging and the impact a strong brand could have on changing behaviour. To inform future marketing and communications campaigns, qualitative and quantitative research was conducted in 2008 to assess how effective the Choose How You Move brand had been and to establish its strengths and weaknesses.

“Perhaps of most importance was developing and establishing a good brand that the public view as positive and can associate with. Securing brand reputation was seen to be key to sustaining the project beyond the term of the

grant funding.” (Cat Ainsworth, Principal Sustainability Manager)



Overall results

There were notable changes in travel mode choice across Worcester between 2004 and 2008, although only the targets set for walking and bus use were met. Based on surveys with representative samples of more than 4,000 people before and after Choose How You Move, there was a relative:

- Reduction of 7 per cent in car-as-driver trips per person per year
- Reduction of 4 per cent in car-as-passenger trips
- Increase of 11 per cent in walking trips
- Increase of 19 per cent in bicycle trips
- Increase of 20 per cent in bus trips

Individualised Travel Marketing

The ITM project targeted 23,500 households across Worcester (excluding the city centre, where there was already relatively high use of sustainable travel modes). Sustrans travel advisors successfully contacted 19,294 households between 2005 and 2007. Changes in mode choice among the ITM target population (including those who could not be contacted and those who were contacted but chose not to participate) were as follows:

- Relative reduction of 10 per cent in car-as-driver trips per person per year
- Relative reduction of 5 per cent in car-as-passenger trips
- Relative increase of 15 per cent in walking trips
- Relative increase of 19 per cent in bicycle trips

- Relative increase of 30 per cent in bus trips

School Travel Plans

Almost all schools in Worcestershire now have a School Travel Plan. Results from Oldbury Park Primary School, for example, showed an 11 per cent increase in walking levels since starting the scheme in January 2008.

Public transport

Used in addition to traffic counters and cycle counters, bus patronage figures from 2005 to 2008 show a marked increase in the use of services across Worcester since the programme's launch in 2005. Since then the number of people using the bus service has stayed well above its lowest point in April 2005 of just over 240,000 users, with over 320,000 users in October 2008.

Car share database

Prevalence of car sharing was not measured using conventional targets. However the use of the car sharing website was monitored. The database has more than 1,500 members, a figure that increased during the Choose How You Move period.

Infrastructure

Due to space limitations and historical factors, opportunities for changing the infrastructure of the city were limited. However, the Council did work through planning procedures to introduce additional bus lanes.

Marketing materials

In April 2008, research was carried out to establish the effectiveness of the Choose How You Move brand. The suitability of existing marketing materials and messages was also explored, as well as perceptions in the areas of Worcester where they had already been rolled out. This research included 10 focus groups made up of 88 residents in total, and 151 face-to-face interviews with residents in Worcester City Centre over a 10-day period.

Key results and conclusions

- Around half of residents recalled seeing the Choose How You Move logo
- The message was not specific – it could be clearer that it was promoting sustainable travel
- It did not stand out against other logos being promoted
- It looked 'council' (although some saw this as a positive)
- It looked like 'recycling'
- Younger residents tended to be more positive about the logo, thinking it to be bright, colourful and promoting the message
- Residents saw the main benefits of sustainable travel as personal, rather than environmental. Personal reasons – mainly health or fitness and saving money – were stated around twice as often as environmental benefits



Worcestershire County Council was nominated Beacon Council for its work on climate change in 2008/09, on the basis of initiatives including the Choose How You Move programme. As part of this award, the council has participated in a number of best practice sharing seminars and visits from other authorities to share learning. In addition, a local stakeholder conference to formally present the final results and discuss successes and lessons learnt was held in May 2009.

Worcestershire County Council have continued some initiatives from the Choose How You Move programme from other funding sources, such as the cycle loan scheme, and are working to tweak these to become self-financing.

A review and re-launch of the County Council's Transport and Streets website has incorporated the clear and positive messages of the programme into all related online content, including personal action points for readers. In these times of budgetary restrictions, quality online information and support offers councils a cost-efficient method of continuing the programme, although audience reach and resulting behaviour change are expected to be much lower.

The Worcestershire County Council Local Transport Plan 3 that is currently being developed includes a policy and strategic plan for 'smarter choices' to be implemented over a 15-year period. This is being replicated in other councils following DfT endorsement of the benefits of social marketing techniques.

Lessons learned

An ITM project offering households targeted and localised information, backed up with general above-the-line marketing, can achieve significant levels of modal shift.

Stakeholder engagement from the outset can be vital for improving chances of success. For this programme this was done to aid the bid for funding and was essential throughout. Key stakeholders guided the scope of the programme and cleared any blockages for progressing.

"There are always more options for involving partners, particularly private sector, but I think we were pretty inclusive. If we were to start again now, we might try to bring on board a relevant major local business as a sponsor and delivery partner and try to incorporate more general economic benefits into the remit." (Cat Ainsworth, Principal Sustainability Manager)

Marketing messages on sustainable transport need to be clear, concise and direct, with a focus on personal benefits, and to use realistic

imagery that reflects 'real', practical scenarios and experiences rather than 'ideal' models. Since the end of the programme, Worcestershire County Council has been continuing to work in this area without the benefit of significant funding. It has found that having established a good brand with simple positive messages has allowed it to continue to promote sustainable travel and encourage behaviour change on a much more restricted budget.

It is important to recognise that social marketing is a specialised skill and thus Worcestershire County Council would recommend that organisations looking to set up similar projects ensure that the team know or are trained in the fundamentals of social marketing.

Looking at the whole programme across the three Sustainable Travel Plans, the DfT identified the following key learning points:

- Assemble an effective team
- Develop active partnerships
- Gain political support for smarter choices and complementary measures
- Invest in a strong brand
- Give the campaign a strong local identity
- Adopt a positive tone
- Ensure effective distribution of campaign information and messages
- Use innovative ways to celebrate sustainable travel to capture the imagination of the public and the press
- Develop a balanced package of initiatives
- Improve the quality of the sustainable travel offer
- Establish from the onset a strong system to monitor the impacts

More detail about the lessons learned from the Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns Programme can be found in *The Effects of Smarter Choice Programmes in the Sustainable Travel Towns* report (2010).