

6.5 Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Cross-boundary strategy

Local Transport Plan 2006-2011

Joint Transport Policy Statement

**Buckinghamshire County Council
and
Oxfordshire County Council**



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**
ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY
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CONTENTS

Introduction	5
1 Strategic Highway Network	6
2 Network Management	6
3 Promotion and Development	8
4 Cross-Boundary Public Transport Issues	9
5 Local Liaison Procedures	10

INTRODUCTION

Transport and access are issues that affect everybody. Some of the issues surrounding this diverse policy area are common to both Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. If we are to deliver services to our customers both efficiently and effectively then there has to be close co-operation between the different Councils involved. Both Councils welcome the joint working that is being developed at a multiplicity of levels between Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire County Councils.

Local Transport Authority boundaries can represent an unnecessarily artificial boundary. Through joint working such boundaries and the issues that arise can be diminished or completely dispelled. This statement sets out a jointly agreed position on a wide range of transport policy, infrastructure and operational issues. It provides a framework for joint working that helps meet the nationally agreed 'shared priorities'.

Sections 1 to 4 provide detail on specific issues. Both local authorities regard this joint statement as demonstrating a commitment to ongoing liaison and development. Details of the practical arrangements for carrying out joint work are outlined in section 5.

I Strategic Highway Network

The M40 provides a strategic route between the Midlands and London, passing through both counties. The Highways Agency has developed a Route Management Strategy (RMS) in conjunction with other partners including police and local authorities. Both Oxfordshire County Council and Buckinghamshire County Council welcome this strategy. Within the M40 RMS the route has been divided into sub-sections with possible options identified to address identified problems. Each County Council will liaise separately with the HA for those sections within their boundaries and with each other should the proposed actions of the HA be thought to have a negative knock-on effect elsewhere on the trunk road network or on local roads within the neighbouring county.

The section between junctions 8 and 9 runs through both counties and has been identified as having an accident cluster at Shabbington bend. Both authorities welcome the suggested improvements to carriageway markings and road surfaces.

Other significant routes across Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire include the A418, the A34/A41 and the A421. Both authorities will continue to work together to ensure the safety and maintenance of these routes is at an appropriate standard. In developing the Strategic Network Hierarchy Buckinghamshire County Council will take account of the HGV routing within Oxfordshire and the findings of the 'Oxfordshire Transport Networks Review'.

ACTION

- *Each County Council will liaise separately with the HA for those sections of the M40 within their boundaries and with each other should the proposed actions of the HA be thought to have a negative knock-on effect*
- *Both authorities will continue to work together to ensure the safety and maintenance of other significant routes is at an appropriate standard*
- *In developing the Strategic Network Hierarchy Buckinghamshire County Council will take account of the HGV routing within Oxfordshire and the findings of the 'Oxfordshire Transport Networks Review'*

2 Network Management

Congestion

Oxfordshire County Council have set up a dedicated team to meet the challenges presented within the Traffic Management Act. This team will continue to work closely with Buckinghamshire County Council to ensure that wherever possible Network Management policies are consistent across boundaries and that highway works are carried out effectively taking account of each other's constraints with a view to minimizing impact on road users. The detail of joint working arrangements covering the requirements of the Traffic Management Act is included in the authorities' respective Local Transport Plan documents.

Where ongoing congestion is identified on cross-boundary routes the authorities will work closely to deal with such issues.

ACTION

- *Both Councils will continue to work closely to ensure that wherever possible Network Management policies are consistent across boundaries and that highway works are carried out effectively*
- *Where ongoing congestion is identified on cross-boundary routes the authorities will work closely to deal with such issues*

Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC)

An Urban Traffic Control system (UTC) links a series of junctions/traffic lights to manage traffic flow intelligently. UTMC coordinates several UTCs, variable display signs and other traffic information to manage traffic over a wider area.

Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire County Councils are currently at a similar point in the development of their use of UTMC. Oxfordshire currently has a SCOOT system whilst there are no such systems in Buckinghamshire. A UTC system is proposed for London Road in High Wycombe with the longer-term aspiration of upgrading this to UTMC over the life of LTP2. It is also intended that UTMC be introduced in Aylesbury, particularly in light of the level of growth planned for the town. Discussions have already been held between Buckinghamshire County Council, Slough and Windsor and

Maidenhead in this respect. There are considerable benefits to be had through joint development of projects such as economies of scale in procurement, which will be considered further.

Oxfordshire County Council are also looking into the potential of Intelligent Transport Systems, in order to help meet congestion outcomes; in particular the initial focus is likely to be on the Travel to Oxford area.

ACTION

- *There are considerable benefits to be had through joint development of UTMC projects which will be considered further.*

Freight Routing and Signage

Oxfordshire's Freight Quality Partnership has developed a Lorry Route Map. Buckinghamshire County Council will be reviewing signage across the county as part of the implementation of their Freight Strategy and will liaise with Oxfordshire on this, taking into account the Transport Network Review's Route Hierarchy.

ACTION

- *Buckinghamshire County Council will be reviewing signage across the county as part of the implementation of their Freight Strategy and will liaise with Oxfordshire on this*

Design and Maintenance

Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire currently use the same term consultant for Engineering Design services (Jacobs Babtie) and are actively seeking ways to achieve mutual benefits from these contracts. Buckinghamshire County Council have taken steps to align the contract periods of their maintenance and street lighting with those of Oxfordshire. Discussions are underway to look at how joint procurement could bring about improved efficiency and operation for the next round of tendering.

ACTION

- *Discussions are underway to look at how joint procurement could bring about improved efficiency and operation for the next round of tendering*

Road Safety

Oxfordshire County Council and Buckinghamshire County Council are members of the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership and the Local Authorities Road Safety Officers Association. Both authorities are enthusiastic about the Government's recent announcement to provide a more holistic approach to road safety, which will incorporate the safety camera work. Through these groups good practice is shared and we work closely to address cross border issues. Both authorities are finding that site-specific remedial work is effective and that treating entire routes can gain significant benefits in reducing casualties. We are committed to investigating routes and working together where they span both authority areas (eg the A41 between Bicester and Aylesbury.) To complement these capital works, both Councils recognize the importance of revenue-funded initiatives, in particular Road Safety Education, Training and Publicity (ETP) work in meeting national casualty reduction targets and will continue to work on joint campaigns and initiatives such as the award winning 'For my Girlfriend' campaign aimed at younger drivers in the two authority areas and beyond.

ACTION

- *Through various groups good practice is shared and we work closely to address cross border issues.*
- *We are committed to investigating routes and working together where they span both authority areas*

3 Promotion and Development

Accessibility Planning

Accessibility planning to address social exclusion, in particular, is a new area of work for both authorities. Buckinghamshire County Council is setting up or linking with various strategic partnerships to develop action plans relating to Access to Healthcare, Access to Employment and Access to Education. Oxfordshire County Council is setting up similar partnerships to progress its priorities of Access to Health and Access to Employment & Skills Training. As these action plans develop, if there are benefits in joint working between the Councils these will be sought. With increasing specialisation by hospitals, for example, it may be that improvements in access to Stoke Mandeville and John Radcliffe hospitals from across both counties would be desirable.

More detailed work will be considered for key locations close to the County boundary, such as Thame and Bicester; in particular, ensuring that there are interchange facilities for cross-border bus services.

ACTION

- *As the accessibility action plans develop if there are benefits in joint working between the Councils, these will be sought*
- *More detailed work will be considered for key locations close to the County boundary, such as Thame and Bicester; in particular, ensuring that there are interchange facilities for cross-border bus services*

Cycling and Walking

Cycling and walking are important modes of transport for tackling congestion and increasing accessibility, along with providing health benefits to individuals. Buckinghamshire County Council has recently been awarded DfT funding to make Aylesbury a cycling demonstration town and will liaise with Oxfordshire County Council to learn from their considerable experience in this field. Oxfordshire County Council is also revising its cycling and walking strategies into a combined 'Active Travel' Strategy that also covers provision for wheelchair users. Opportunities for jointly funded schemes will be taken forward where they are identified as a priority for both authorities in

meeting overarching objectives.

ACTION

- *Buckinghamshire County Council in making Aylesbury a cycling demonstration town will liaise with Oxfordshire County Council to learn from their considerable experience*
- *Oxfordshire County Council is revising its cycling and walking strategies into a combined 'Active Travel' Strategy that also covers provision for wheelchair users*
- *Opportunities for jointly funded schemes will be taken forward where they are identified as a priority for both authorities in meeting overarching objectives.*

School Travel Plans

Working with local schools to promote safe routes for children to walk and cycle to school is an important part of each authority's LTP programme and will continue to be so in the second LTP. These schemes increasingly form part of work taking place by schools to develop a School Travel Plan.

The authorities recognise a need to co-ordinate activity and work jointly where catchment areas create cross-boundary issues (eg schools in Long Crendon, Brill and Tingewick). There is also a need to work collectively in respect of other schools where commuting distances are longer.

ACTION

- *The authorities will co-ordinate school travel planning activity and work jointly where catchment areas create cross-boundary issues*
- *There is also a need to work collectively in respect of other schools where commuting distances are longer*

4 Cross-Boundary Public Transport Issues

Bus Routes and Rail Services

East West Rail project

Both local authorities are part of the East West Rail Consortium, a group of 35 local authorities and private sector stakeholders who are promoting the reopening of the railway between Oxford and Cambridge. Efforts are being focused on the western section (between Oxford and Bedford with a spur to Aylesbury). A study, funded by the ODPM, showed that the railway delivered improved east-west links along a corridor where the road network is poor. Supplementary work has proven that there is a good business case and that the railway could help support higher levels of housing growth across the area and was presented to ODPM in December 2005. Further work to look at funding and delivery mechanisms involving regional and national stakeholders is ongoing.

ACTION

- *Take forward further work to look at funding and delivery mechanisms involving regional and national stakeholders*

280 Bus Service

The 280 Bus Service links Oxford to Aylesbury via Wheatley, Thame and Haddenham. The route is operated commercially (by Arriva) on a half-hourly daytime frequency. Oxfordshire County Council has included this route within its 'Premium Bus Route Network' and is thus committed to ensuring a high quality travel environment and service; including extension of its newly-launched real-time passenger information system on this route. The real-time passenger information system selected for Aylesbury has yet to be finalised and Oxfordshire County Council's aspirations will be considered along with Arriva's operational requirements and those of other operators.

ACTION

- *Extend the real-time passenger information system on the 280 service*
- *Buckinghamshire County Council to consider Oxfordshire's real-time aspirations in the developments in Aylesbury*

Remote Park and Ride

Oxfordshire County Council is working with developers to create a new 'remote' park and ride site close to the growth town of Bicester, initially to serve Oxford. As this progresses so both parties will liaise to consider the potential for any viable cross-border services that would meet congestion objectives or improve access for socially excluded people.

ACTION

- *Both parties will liaise to consider the potential for any viable cross-border services*

Lewknor Taxibus "Oxford Tube" Connection

Following the end of original (Rural Bus Challenge funded) Taxibus project, which provided a demand-responsive minibus connection to and from the commercial Stagecoach-operated "Oxford Tube" coaches at Lewknor (giving onward links to London), surveys of Oxford Tube users indicated that the most significant passenger flows came from Watlington in Oxfordshire and Stokenchurch in Buckinghamshire. Accordingly, a revised Taxibus service, limited to connecting these two settlements with Lewknor Interchange, is being taken forward on a shared funding basis by the two authorities, on a trial basis for one year from 30 January 2006. The opportunity has also been taken to share marketing between the Authorities, the two Parish Councils and Stagecoach.

ACTION

- *To monitor and review the success of the new service pattern during the trial year*

Regional Public Transport / coach services

The Regional Transport Strategy (as part of the forthcoming South East Plan) has adopted a network of multi-modal but primarily public transport orientated 'hubs' and 'spokes' to identify key movements across the region. Both Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire have regional 'hubs' and are investigating ways of upgrading them. For Buckinghamshire a Community Infrastructure Fund bid was submitted in July 2005 for 'The Aylesbury Hub'. This proposal includes a link road between the bus station and railway station, bus priority around the inner ring road, removal of buses from the town centre, a significantly upgraded waiting environment at the bus station, and 'superstops' around the inner ring road. The proposal also includes real time passenger information to give passengers confidence in local services.

For Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford has been identified as a regional hub. A key project during LTP2 will be the development of a comprehensive 'Access to Oxford' strategy to deliver key LTP2 priorities and develop longer-term solutions in the context of future growth (for example in Oxford's West End). The Strategy area includes the city centre and key employment areas such as Headington, with a strong focus on air quality and delivering congestion, accessibility and safety benefits along the radial corridors (both within and on approaches to the Oxford Ring Road).

To improve the city's function as a regional hub, and accommodate future development – for example the significant expansion of the principal shopping centre (Westgate) planned for 2010, it is recognised that there is a need to upgrade the role of Park and Ride, through the creation of more 'remote' sites (see Bicester example above) and expansion of existing sites / improvements of facilities, where required. Currently Thornhill Park and Ride acts as a transport interchange site with London and Airport coach services calling at the site, along with more local park and ride buses to the city centre and local hospitals.

Buckinghamshire County Council will also progress a regional coach interchange at Handy Cross, High Wycombe (junction 4 of the M40) during the second LTP period. This relates to work commissioned by the Highways Agency, following the Thames Valley Multi-modal study, to

identify express coach routes for the region. Potentially viable express coach routes that have been identified and could serve this interchange include High Wycombe to Bracknell. Buckinghamshire County Council will be inviting views from Oxfordshire County Council, Network Rail, the Highways Agency, BAA Heathrow, and other local authorities to the south of Buckinghamshire in taking this work forward.

ACTION

- *Buckinghamshire County Council to progress 'The Aylesbury Hub'*
- *Oxfordshire County Council to develop an 'Access to Oxford' strategy and upgrade the role of Park and Ride*
- *Buckinghamshire County Council to progress the regional coachway at Handycross involving various partners including Oxfordshire County Council*

5 Local Liaison Procedures

Regular strategic meetings will be set up to consider policy and performance issues that are of concern to both parties. For Oxfordshire it will be the Transport Policy team and for Buckinghamshire it will be the Transport Policy and Strategy team who will be responsible for arranging such meetings.

The detail of joint working arrangements covering the requirements of the Traffic Management Act are included in the authorities' respective Local Transport Plan documents. It is proposed that operational staff, not already in regular contact, are put in touch with each other to liaise over specific issues with ad-hoc meetings taking place as required.

It is agreed that each authority should continue to be involved in any consultation work that is likely to have an impact on cross-border routes.

The system for reporting to the Department for Transport on the progress of LTPs is currently under review. Joint working between the authorities will be reported to the DfT if required and shared as best practice through various channels as appropriate.