

APPENDIX 4

Public Transport Strategy



Chapter 1 – Context

Role of the Public Transport Strategy

- 1.1 This Strategy forms an annex to Wiltshire's second Local Transport Plan (LTP2), but is also a free-standing summary of the Council's public transport policies and strategies. It incorporates the Bus Strategy, which the Council is required to produce by the Transport Act 2000.
- 1.2 LTP2 covers the period from 2006/07 – 2010/11. This document is the final version of LTP2, and follows from the Provisional LTP2 that was submitted to Government in July 2005 and formed the basis for final consultations with stakeholders.

National context

- 1.3 The Department for Transport has issued detailed **guidance to local authorities in preparing their second LTP**. This emphasises that LTPs should;
 - Be set within the longer term and wider policy and planning context, and in particular the longer term transport strategy for the area and the 'shared priorities' agreed between central and local government (see below)
 - Set challenging but realistic targets and indicators, including the mandatory core targets proposed by Government and a number of locally-set targets that are expected to reflect the shared priorities
 - Identify the best value-for-money solutions, using evidence of what has successfully worked in the past or elsewhere, and making the best use of existing infrastructure and complementary measures that could address transport demand and supply. Unlike the first LTP, LTP2 will not act as a bidding document to Government for funds but will have to demonstrate how best use will be made of a predetermined funding allocation.
- 1.4 The Government has agreed a number of '**shared priorities**' with the Local Government Association. The shared priority for transport is:

"Improving access to jobs and services, particularly for those most in need, in ways which are sustainable: improved public transport, reduced problems of congestion, pollution and safety".

- 1.5 Emerging from this, the two themes with the greatest relevance for public transport are:
 - Delivering accessibility, and
 - Tackling congestion
- 1.6 Following the production by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2003 of their report 'Making Connections – Social Exclusion and Transport', the guidance for LTP2 requires transport authorities to take the lead in a new process of **accessibility planning**. This will require the production of a separate Accessibility Strategy (as a part of the LTP), and the development of cross-sector partnerships to identify key accessibility issues and actions that can be taken together to address these. The

actions proposed should not be limited to transport-based solutions, but should also consider how far access problems could be overcome by other measures such as changes in the way the activities to which people want to gain access are planned and provided, and where they are located. Nevertheless, transport will remain a key factor and the public transport strategy needs to be flexible enough to incorporate the recommendations of the accessibility partnerships where possible.

Regional and Sub Regional context

1.7 The **Regional Planning Guidance for the South West** (RPG10) was published in 2001, and will be replaced in due course by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) that is currently being prepared by the South West Regional Assembly. The vision of the RPG is to:

- Promote a sustainable development pattern
- Minimise the need to develop greenfield sites and to travel
- Develop an integrated approach to urban and rural areas
- Concentrate growth on the Principal Urban Areas (PUAs – there are none of these in Wiltshire, but Bristol, Bath and Swindon are all destinations for Wiltshire residents) and other designated centres of growth
- Recognise the different roles of market towns and key villages as places where development will be favoured locally.

The RPG10 spatial strategy objectives are designed to support this vision, including a focus on strengthening the role of the PUAs and aiming for greater self-containment in towns within commuting distance of the PUAs, and encouraging development of housing and other activities in sustainable locations to reduce social exclusion and rural need.

Although the RSS is a new type of plan, with a spatial dimension as opposed to just a land-use planning dimension, the thrust of RPG10 is nevertheless accepted as being broadly correct – the review of RSS refreshes RPG10 and rolls it forward to cover the period 2006 to 2026.

To deliver a more sustainable region, the overall spatial strategy of the emerging RSS states that there will be:

- significant change at 22 Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCTs) in order to support their economic, service and regeneration roles; and
- smaller change outside of those places to achieve more self contained, balanced communities and a better local environment.

1.8 The **South West Regional Transport Strategy** (RTS) forms part of RPG10, and has been updated through the document 'Developing the Regional Transport Strategy' (DRTS). The RTS has five key objectives:

- To support the spatial strategy of the RPG
- To reduce the impact of transport on the environment
- To secure improved accessibility
- To create a modern, efficient and integrated transport system
- To ensure the safe use of the regional transport network.

1.9 The DRTS identifies the key transport issues of the region as:

- Peripherality
- Sustainable transport in PUAs
- Accessibility and social exclusion
- Reducing the impact of transport on the environment
- Inter-urban routes
- Regeneration and Objective 1

The regional approach to transport set out in the emerging RSS provides guidance on major strategic issues, transport policies for the SSCTs and a framework for the development of LTP2s. The transport section of the emerging RSS also identifies the strategic and regionally significant transport links, a number of which have relevance to Wiltshire.

Local context

- 1.10 The adopted **Wiltshire Structure Plan** provides the strategic policy framework to guide development across Wiltshire, including Swindon Borough, up to 2011. The Plan Area Strategy supports the aims of the Regional Planning Guidance through continued concentration of development in the main towns (including Swindon); reducing the need to travel, including more emphasis on public transport; and providing scope in towns and villages to facilitate local job creation and economic and social regeneration. The transport objective of the Structure Plan is to reduce overall reliance on private motorised transport, particularly on roads, by supporting (among other things) greater provision of public transport. In order to keep the Structure Plan up-to-date, it has recently been reviewed to roll it forward to cover the period to 2016. The Plan is scheduled to be formally adopted in April 2006.
- 1.11 The detailed implementation of the Structure Plan is carried out through **Local Plans / Local Development Frameworks** prepared by Swindon Borough Council and the Wiltshire District Councils. The County Council works closely with the Districts to make sure that these make an important contribution to addressing transport and access issues.
- 1.12 There are three **Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB) in Wiltshire: Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs; Cotswolds; and North Wessex Downs. The Management Plans for each include adoption of strategies to encourage more sustainable and environmentally less damaging forms of transport (including public transport), and to provide improved accessibility for non-car users, both resident and visiting.
- 1.13 The County Council has endorsed the vision for Wiltshire set out by the Wiltshire Strategic Board in the document 'A County fit for our children'. The vision is being taken forward by the Board (the County's Local Strategic Partnership) through the Council's countywide community strategy, '**A Strategy for Wiltshire**'. The Strategy identifies all the major strategic issues facing the County, grouping these under ten strategic themes (social care and health; countryside and land based issues; housing and the built environment; the Wiltshire economy; transport; crime and community protection; education, skills and learning; culture; better access

to services; and good governance and community involvement) and describes the objectives, targets and work in progress to tackle each of these issues. The Strategic Board will seek to act as an 'integrative partnership', coordinating cross sector activity in each of the theme areas and in the overlaps between them. The Board has also selected four particular issues that it will champion over the next few years:

- To become the healthiest County in which to live by 2014
- To become the most waste efficient County by 2014
- To improve Wiltshire's street scene
- To improve adult basic skills

Two of these (health, and adult skills) have been reflected in the initial choice of priority areas for the Accessibility Strategy (see paragraph 4.16 below).

1.14 The community strategy also sets the context for the County Council's own plans, and by 2009 the Council aims to help to make Wiltshire a place:

- where all children and young people enjoy life and achieve their potential in and out of school;
- where people of all ages lead active and independent lives;
- where the need for growth is balanced with protection of the environment; and
- in whose communities people want to live and work.

Public transport contributes to most of these goals in a variety of ways, by facilitating access to opportunities and by helping to promote sustainable transport.

Chapter 2 – Key Aims And Objectives

- 2.1 Based on the Wiltshire Strategic Board's strategic analysis of the issues facing the County, Chapter 2 of the LTP establishes sixteen primary objectives and thirteen secondary objectives which together constitute the overall objectives of LTP2. The primary objectives are largely based on the Wiltshire Strategy key transport objectives, while the secondary objectives are transport-related objectives derived from the other strategic theme areas. The objectives that are of greatest relevance to public transport are as follows:

P1	To improve access to goods, services and employment opportunities for all sections of the community, particularly those living in rural areas or without access to a car
P2	To respond to the continuing growth in car ownership, and inappropriate use, by improving choice for local trips
P6	To maintain an integrated and efficient public transport network
P7	To provide greater access to demand responsive bus services across the County
P12	To reduce the volume of traffic entering Salisbury compared with 1999
P14	To improve access into Salisbury for shoppers by increasing the number of Park & Ride sites and reducing long stay public off street central spaces
P15	To limit the growth in traffic in Western Wiltshire compared to 1999
S2	To provide health and social care services which are integrated, timely and easy to access
S4	To assess and take appropriate action in relation to the impact of climate change on Wiltshire, both by adjusting to the changes that are already underway and by minimising our collective contribution to the future global situation
S5	To tackle social and rural exclusion in rural areas
S7	To ensure that housing is provided within the context of sustainable communities
S8	To ensure the right conditions prevail to raise productivity through innovation and sustainable development enabling increased investment in jobs and services to improve quality of life. Specific geographic priorities; Swindon and the city of Salisbury; priority market towns; deprived wards; communities heavily influenced by the MoD; Salisbury Research Triangle; A36, A303 and A350; strategic rail routes and station provision, as well as rail routes to Swindon
S10	To increase local people's access to, and participation in, Wiltshire's cultural activities and opportunities
S12	To identify barriers to access and participation and issues of social inclusion, with particular regard to cultural activities in rural areas

- 2.2 The first LTP identified an overall transport strategy based on an analysis of current problems and opportunities. This has been revised and updated, and the LTP2 core strategy (set out in Chapter 5 of the LTP) comprises the following components:

Using land use planning powers to encourage a better balance between housing commitments and local employment opportunities to reduce out-commuting to neighbouring areas; and to increase access to opportunities for all sectors of the population

Using planning powers and transport investment to focus development at existing urban centres where it can be most easily serviced, particularly by public transport, and help to reduce reliance on the car

Using transport investment and planning powers to improve accessibility by non-car modes, especially from rural areas, to bring environmental and social benefits

Maximising the use of existing transport infrastructure through effective management, maintenance and design to improve the attractiveness of the street scene, public transport, walking and cycling, and to contribute to road safety outcomes

Limiting motor vehicle access (except Public Service Vehicles) to sensitive urban and rural areas to deliver environmental and social benefits to local residents

Working in partnership with other service providers to address the implications to social exclusion, health, safety and the built and natural environment of increasing car dependency

Managing the urban and rural environment to protect the most vulnerable in society from road traffic dangers such as accidents and pollution

- 2.3 The public transport aims and objectives set out in chapter 4 of this appendix reflect and contribute to these key overall transport and access aims and objectives.

Chapter 3 – Analysis (Current Situation, Problems And Opportunities)

- 3.1 The public transport strategy adopted for the next five years needs to be grounded in a robust analysis of the current situation, the problems and opportunities it presents, and of the extent to which existing and previous strategies have succeeded in addressing these. It also needs to take into account the views of stakeholders. This chapter provides a brief summary of this analysis.

Current situation (as at January 2006)

Buses

- 3.2 Bus services in Wiltshire are provided by many different operators. There is no dominant operator over the whole County, although some smaller areas are dominated by one or other of the three largest operators (First Somerset & Avon, Wilts & Dorset, and Stagecoach). About two thirds of services are provided commercially, without any funding from the County Council, particularly in Salisbury and on the major inter urban routes during the working day. However, elsewhere and at other times of the day or week a very substantial proportion of services rely on financial support. The County Council has sought, over the last fifteen years, to maintain bus services and to improve frequencies where possible. Major improvements were achieved in 1998-99 due to the new Rural Bus Subsidy Grant (RBSG) funding from central Government, and the proportion of the rural population with access to an hourly (or better) weekday bus service increased by 20%. A total of 64% of the rural population currently have access to an hourly or better weekday daytime service, and 90% have at least a daily weekday service – relatively high proportions in comparison to many other rural counties. Since 1999 it has been possible to maintain most of the improvements that were achieved at that time, but only because there have been substantial increases in expenditure (the Council's revenue support budget increased by 100% between 2000-01 and 2005-06, and RBSG by 62% in the same period). It is anticipated that transport costs will continue to increase at a rate faster than inflation, and that this will put increasing pressure on budgets.
- 3.3 Supported bus services are very closely integrated with school transport requirements through joint tendering, and the revenue from the school transport is crucial in underpinning the viability of the public services. Many services run through into neighbouring authorities' areas, particularly Swindon and Bath which are major attractors for residents in adjacent parts of Wiltshire, and the Council works closely with the relevant authorities to co-ordinate service provision (including tendering of supported services) and to promote and develop services.
- 3.4 Good progress has been made over the past five years in improving the quality of bus stops and shelters, focussing on the Salisbury urban area and the Key Bus Route Network of main inter-urban services. On the Key Bus Route Network an ongoing programme of bus stop and shelter improvements has been established, with over 250 shelters installed on eight routes by March 2005.

- 3.5 In Salisbury, implementation of the Salisbury Transport Plan has resulted in the construction of Park & Ride sites at the Beehive, Wilton, Britford and London Road (opens July 2006), and an Urban Traffic Control system has been introduced which will improve bus reliability through smoothing overall traffic flows and also through GPS-based bus priority at signal controlled junctions. Real Time Passenger Information displays have been installed at over 60 stops across the city. A special grant was also won to extend real time information to four inter-urban routes radiating from Salisbury. With displays at over 200 stops, the combined system is the largest in the UK.
- 3.6 A full audit of public transport interchange locations was completed in 2000, and made outline proposals for improvements to passenger facilities at 57 locations where interchange between bus services, or between bus and rail, takes place. Many of these are being incorporated into the Key Bus Route Network programme, while others are being taken forward as part of wider town centre enhancement schemes. Major improvements have been made at Chippenham Bus and Rail stations, and at the Trowbridge Town Hall and Devizes Market Place interchanges.
- 3.7 Improvements in quality have also been sought from the operators of commercial bus services to match the Council's investment in infrastructure, and this has resulted in investment by the major operators of £10.8 million since 2000. Quality Partnerships have been signed with Wilts & Dorset and Stagecoach South, and an agreement has also been reached with First Somerset & Avon. In Salisbury, all of the city services have for several years been operated by new low floor buses due to major investment by Wilts & Dorset, and new low floor buses have also been introduced on several of the Key Bus Routes. First have also recently (early 2006) introduced six new low floor vehicles onto 'Key Network' services in West Wiltshire. Unlike in most other parts of the country, Wilts & Dorset and First have also contributed both capital and revenue funding towards the real time information project. However, despite these successes it can sometimes prove difficult for the local operating subsidiary companies to compete internally (within their operating Group) for investment funding due to the predominantly rural nature of Wiltshire and the limited scope for bus priority outside of Salisbury.
- 3.8 A bid for Government 'Kickstart' funding for a package of quality improvements on the Swindon – Chippenham corridor was successful in late 2005. The Government grant of £319,000 (over 3 years) will pay for an increased service frequency, with matching investment of £1.3 million by Stagecoach in new low floor buses and an extensive marketing campaign, and £280,000 by the County Council on 60 new shelters and bus stop improvements. The aim is to attract an additional 120,000 passengers a year, which will make it commercially viable for the operator to continue to run the higher frequency service when the 'Kickstart' grant runs out.
- 3.9 On bus services funded by the Council, a pragmatic approach has been taken to improving vehicle quality where the opportunity has arisen to do this without major increases in costs, and several routes have been upgraded. However, due to the recent history of significant rises in contract prices, the priority has been to maintain service levels and there has been no consistent source of funding for quality improvements. A Supplementary Bid for £400,000 of LTP funding was

submitted in 2002-03 but was not successful. As a result of these constraints, vehicle quality on many routes remains below the standards that would be required to make public transport an attractive alternative to other means of transport. Only 10% of routes in the County are currently operated by low floor vehicles (the majority of these being in Salisbury city), and this also limits access for people in wheelchairs or with a mobility impairment. Although this proportion will increase steadily as newer vehicles are introduced, it will be many years before all services are fully accessible.

- 3.10 High bus fares continue to be a major source of concern, but one over which the County Council has little influence. As in the rest of the UK, fares in Wiltshire have risen steadily in real terms over the past twenty years, while the costs of motoring have remained broadly the same. This has had an impact on the competitive position of bus travel compared with the car, and has contributed to the continued decline in the number of passengers carried. It also makes travel increasingly less affordable for those on low incomes. Bus fares, and in particular the non-availability of child fares before 9.00am on some commercially-operated services, have also been raised as a matter of concern for young people through the Wiltshire Assembly of Youth.
- 3.11 The County Council co-ordinates the countywide half fare bus pass scheme for the elderly and disabled on behalf of the District Councils, who have the statutory responsibility for concessionary fares and fund the scheme. Swindon Borough Council has been a partner in the scheme since 2001, enabling half price bus travel to be offered throughout the whole County and also in the Swindon Borough area. Some of the Districts also offer tokens or vouchers as an alternative to the bus pass. In his 2005 budget the Chancellor announced that free bus travel for pensioners would be introduced from April 2006, and the Wiltshire scheme is being amended to accommodate this. Although free travel will benefit many older people and should (following the experience in Wales and Scotland) increase bus patronage, it may lead to equity concerns among those who are unable to travel by bus and pressure for comparable concessions for travel by other modes.
- 3.12 Overall satisfaction with local bus services increased from 30% to 66% between 2000 and 2003. The number of bus passenger journeys in Wiltshire declined in 2003-4, but increased again in 2004-5 back to the 2002-3 level of 9.29 million.

Demand responsive transport

- 3.13 Wiltshire is at the forefront of developments in demand responsive transport, with the nationally-acclaimed Wigglybus services established in the Pewsey Vale, Calne and Mere; the Royal United Hospital Hopper minibus service; and 'taxilink' services in Bradenstoke and Wootton Bassett. Further taxilink schemes are being developed in the Wylde Valley and around Malmesbury. The number of passengers carried on demand responsive services has increased from 54,934 in 2002-03 to 112,821 in 2004-05. All of the services were initially funded through successful bids to the Rural Bus Challenge, and as this funding is time-limited there is an issue about securing long term support to continue their operation. Demand responsive transport can be cost-effective in providing a relatively high level of opportunity to

travel to a wider geographical area than would be served by a conventional bus, but experience across the country shows that the costs of provision (even where smaller vehicles are used) tend to be high. Work is continuing to seek ways of reducing the costs of operation and increasing income, to develop a model that would allow for further expansion of sustainable demand responsive services.

Community and voluntary transport

- 3.14 Community transport plays an important role in meeting a range of needs that can not be met by conventional public transport. There are currently around 70 schemes in the County, including 45 car and 25 minibus schemes, carrying an estimated 300,000 passengers a year. Most schemes are small scale and locally based, and many provide a service predominantly to older and less able residents. Many of the car schemes are offered by local LINK 'good neighbour' groups, which are supported through the countywide LINK Development Project. This has worked to increase the number of schemes from 35 to 39 since 2000, with a further 4 new schemes in development. The Wiltshire and Swindon Rural Transport Partnership, set up in 1999 to improve transport and access in rural areas, supports and develops community transport (working with the Wiltshire & Swindon Community Transport Association) and has secured over £2million for a range of transport and access projects to date. Funding for the partnership is secure until 2007, but following the transfer of responsibility from the Countryside Agency to the South West Regional Development Agency in 2005, future funding arrangements for rural transport and access are being reviewed by the RDA.

Rail

- 3.15 From 2006 all rail services in the County will be provided by First Great Western or South West Trains. Financial support for rail services is provided by Government, although the County Council seeks to influence the service that is provided. The general level of train services in Wiltshire remains above pre-privatisation levels, but the improvements made to local and regional services since privatisation are now being cut back for financial reasons. The number of rail passengers using Wiltshire stations has increased from an estimated 3.5 million per annum in 1999 to around 4.4 million in 2004. The increase at Bradford-on Avon, Chippenham and Salisbury stations is particularly significant. The Council has welcomed recent moves towards a clock face service pattern on the Bristol – West Wiltshire – Southampton / Weymouth routes, and the introduction of an hourly service from London – Yeovil Junction via Salisbury. There is however a lack of capacity at peak times on Bristol – West Wiltshire services. A considerable number of bus links (offering through ticketing onto existing bus services) have been set up by the rail franchises and these are also welcomed. The through service between West Wiltshire and London Waterloo is proposed for withdrawal despite its popularity and its inclusion in the 'Network Utilisation Strategy'.
- 3.16 The Council has in the past investigated the possible re-opening of several stations, including Corsham, Wilton, Porton and Wootton Bassett. However, a bid to re-open Corsham station failed at an advanced stage due to the loss of SRA funding and

the withdrawal of the local service that would have stopped there, and major rail schemes in Wiltshire are unlikely to be approved in the near future given current priorities for the rail industry. Substantial improvements to interchange facilities at Chippenham were however completed in 2004. Small scale station improvements, including additional cycle rack provision, have also been made at several stations. The Council is an active member of the Heart of Wessex Line Partnership which seeks to promote the Bristol – Weymouth service and has contributed to passenger growth of 22% between 1992 and 2002.

Taxis and private hire vehicles

- 3.17 Taxis and private hire vehicles are an important part of the overall transport 'mix' and play a variety of roles in an integrated transport system, complementing other types of public transport in a number of ways. They can be particularly important in providing a flexible, demand responsive service where a conventional bus service is not available (particularly in the evenings or on Sundays); providing door-to-door transport for the mobility impaired or those with heavy or bulky items; or as feeder services to rail, bus and coach interchanges and airports. The County Council also makes extensive use of taxis and private hire cars for transport of schoolchildren and social care clients, and has experimented with their use to provide demand responsive public transport such as the Hopper and 'taxilink' services.
- 3.18 There are currently 1,100 licensed taxi and private hire cars in the County. Vehicles and drivers are licensed by the District Councils.

Publicity and information

- 3.19 The County Council issues and distributes a County Bus Map and Guide, and a range of timetable and promotional leaflets, to complement those produced by the bus operators. These are currently being reviewed to improve their quality and to reduce the number of separate leaflets issued. The Council also maintains timetable displays at 387 bus stops, with operator displays at a further 885, giving 30% coverage in total. Telephone enquiry and internet journey planning services are provided by the national 'traveline' service, which in the south west is run by a regional partnership of local authorities and bus operators, of which Wiltshire is an active member. Real time information displays have been installed at over 200 stops in Salisbury and selected inter-urban routes, as described above. The Council's revised Bus Information Strategy, developed after widespread consultation, was adopted in 2003.

Education, Social Care and Health transport

- 3.20 Free home to school transport is provided for over 9,000 entitled children (including over 800 with special education needs) in accordance with statutory requirements. In addition, 1800 sixth form and college students take advantage of the Council's post-16 transport scheme. As noted above (paragraph 3.3), statutory education transport is closely integrated with public transport to maximise the availability of services to the public. Public transport services are also used in many areas

by schoolchildren who are not entitled to free transport. However, funding is not available to significantly extend such provision, nor to provide transport to 'parental choice' schools. The Passenger Transport Unit liaises with the Education Department and schools where changes are proposed to education provision or to school start and finish times so that transport and access issues are considered alongside other factors.

- 3.21 A 16-19 Education Transport Partnership has been set up with the schools, colleges, Learning & Skills Council, Local Education Authority and Connexions to seek greater participation in further education through improved access. Funding has been used for a survey to identify the extent to which transport is perceived as a barrier to participation, and for a range of specific projects including a website to raise awareness of the transport services and sources of financial assistance that are available (including the Council's post-16 transport scheme, and the assistance that may be available from the Colleges themselves). The Partnership has also been successful in fostering a greater awareness of the importance of considering at an early stage the transport and access implications of any proposals to change the way education is provided – for example the development of the 14-19 Curriculum and Strategic Area Reviews.
- 3.22 The Schools White Paper (published in late 2005) proposes significant changes to school transport legislation, including;
- free transport for children from low income families to one of the three nearest suitable secondary schools within a radius of 2 – 6 miles;
 - a new duty on local authorities to assess the travel and transport needs of all pupils, and to promote safe and sustainable methods of travel to school;
 - a duty to support choice and flexibility of education provision, particularly for children from low income families;
 - the opportunity for authorities to apply to become 'Pathfinders', with the power to charge for transport that is currently provided free as part of a scheme to extend the range of transport available to other children.

When detailed proposals become available, the Council will need to consider the implications for its transport strategies – including the respective roles of passenger transport services, walking, cycling and car sharing in different local circumstances; and whether to apply to become a 'Pathfinder'. In a predominantly rural county such as Wiltshire, it is anticipated that the high costs of bus transport provision and the relatively low charge which is likely to be acceptable to parents would make it difficult to devise a 'Pathfinder' scheme that did not cost significantly more than the existing arrangements or result in a net increase in car use for the 'school run'. It will also be a major challenge to respond to the duty to 'support choice and flexibility', as to provide additional transport in support of this (except in very limited circumstances) would be extremely costly.

- 3.23 The Council's integrated Passenger Transport Unit also arranges transport for some 1200 social care clients (adults and children) each year, using a mixture of taxi and private hire cars, minibuses and voluntary drivers. Changes to the way social care services are commissioned, due to the 'Valuing People' agenda, are leading to more dispersed transport requirements which are generally more expensive to

provide and this is leading to consideration of the scope for greater use by clients of public and community transport services where these are available. It also raises issues about accessibility of mainstream public transport services – not only for people in wheelchairs but also those with learning difficulties or other disabilities. The Council's Department for Adult and Community Services has for many years provided funding for 'LINK' (social car / good neighbour) schemes and the Rural Transport Partnership, and the RTP also funds a project which is addressing some of the barriers to disabled people using public transport (driver training, availability of information, and 'travel training').

- 3.24 Transport to hospitals is provided (for patients who meet the appropriate criteria) by the Ambulance Services using either non-urgent ambulances or 'Medicar'. Public transport and the LINK schemes are also important for access both to hospitals and to other health services such as GP surgeries. Financial pressures have led some of the Health Trusts to apply the criteria for ambulance and Medicar transport more strictly, and this has led to increased pressure on the LINK schemes. The acute financial pressures on the Primary Care Trusts are also forcing them to fundamentally review the way health care services are provided, and the resulting changes will inevitably have access implications. Access to health care has been identified as a key priority for the Council's Accessibility Strategy, and a cross-sector Working Group has been set up.

Consultation feedback

- 3.25 The public transport strategy for 2000/01 – 2005/06, contained in the first Local Transport Plan (Annex 4, Public Passenger Transport Action Plan) was developed following extensive consultation, including a wide-ranging Review of Funding for Public Transport carried out in 1997. This established a 'vision for public transport' on which the emerging LTP strategy was based. Consultation on the 'vision', and on the emerging strategy, was generally supportive and confirmed that the top priority should be maintaining or improving services in rural areas.
- 3.26 The 'Peoples Voice', a survey panel of over 3,800 Wiltshire residents set up by the County and District Councils and other partner organisations, has been used on a number of occasions to provide feedback on public transport issues. The response has consistently been that public transport is seen as one of the most important issues in the community (a view that is reinforced by the feedback from local Community Area planning groups). In the latest survey, in November 2003, public transport was ranked amongst the top five most important issues in the community. Over 80% of respondents regarded it as very important to provide buses to improve access for those without private transport, while rather fewer (47%) gave priority to spending money on public transport to provide an attractive alternative to the car. The most significant factor in encouraging greater use of bus services (from a list of 13) was believed to be lower fares (42%), followed by a wider choice of destinations (23%). However, 26% of respondents said that nothing would encourage them to use the bus.
- 3.27 A Best Value Review of the passenger transport service within the County Council was carried out during 2004-05, and one of the key issues on which the review

focussed was to examine the factors underlying public satisfaction with local bus services, and whether the Council's current policies and strategies should be revised in the second Local Transport Plan (satisfaction with local bus services in Wiltshire has increased from 30% in 2000 to 66% in 2003). Extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken, which identified the main factors likely to result in improved satisfaction as being lower fares, better evening and Sunday services, better reliability and punctuality, better rural access, and improved information and marketing. It was recognised that many of these are not under the direct control of the Council, and that, in order to address them, partnership with the operators will be needed. It was further recognised that there are significant resource constraints limiting the action that can be taken by both the operators and the Council. Although the review concluded that the existing strategy is sound, the Implementation Plan that has been adopted includes some changes of emphasis (for example, closer partnership working and a greater emphasis on joint action to tackle reliability and punctuality) and these have been incorporated into the strategy and programme set out below.

3.28 There have been further consultations as part of the development of LTP2:

- Consultation events held in each of the twenty Community Areas showed public transport as the second highest priority (after road safety), demonstrating its importance as a key element at the heart of the LTP2 strategy. Particular concerns included cost, frequency, punctuality, image, poor information, lack of integration, lack of rail stations, lack of rural bus services particularly in the evenings, maintenance of bus shelters, and how to reduce car use.
- A Consultation Issues Paper was widely circulated to stakeholders and the general public, and 289 responses were received. From a list of twenty transport issues, public transport emerged as the top priority, again confirming its importance at the heart of the LTP. Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the public transport objectives and an outline of the public transport strategy presented in Chapter 4 below. Responses were broadly supportive, and also included detailed comments that have been taken into account in developing the final strategy
- An opportunity was given to comment on the provisional LTP2, including distribution of a Summary questionnaire, resulting in 204 responses. These confirmed overall support for the priorities, proposals and targets relating to public transport in the provisional plan.

The three major bus companies were also consulted specifically about their priorities for the Council's capital expenditure on public transport, and confirmed that their highest priorities are for the Council to complete its programme of bus stop and shelter improvements on the Key Bus Network; to work with the operators to improve punctuality and reliability (including bus priority where appropriate); and to improve vehicle quality.

Issues and opportunities

Rural accessibility

- 3.29 Accessibility is a key challenge in a rural county such as Wiltshire, and has always been at the heart of the Council's public transport strategy. Chapter 6 of the LTP2 summarises existing evidence of the nature and extent of rural accessibility issues, drawn from a range of relevant studies and reports. These demonstrate that although car ownership is higher in Wiltshire than the national average, there can be significant problems in gaining access to a range of services, facilities and activities for those who do not have ready access to private transport. These are particularly prevalent among certain groups of people, including those on low incomes, older people, those with disabilities, women and young people. However, because those affected are relatively small in number and are likely to be dispersed across a wide area it is often difficult to meet their needs in a cost-effective way. It also causes difficulties for statistically based analysis, because as soon as data is aggregated the true picture of social exclusion becomes lost, hidden amongst apparent affluence. The evidence also demonstrates the impact of changes over time in the places where services are provided and activities are located, resulting from the growth of widespread car ownership. The decline in rural service provision (such as village shops and post offices) is well documented, and there has also been a trend towards centralisation, specialisation and the encouragement of consumer choice in the delivery of other services such as health and education. This delivers benefits to those who can get there by car, but can make access very difficult for those without a car available. A further aspect of the access problem is 'relative deprivation'; as the opportunities available to car owners increase and peoples' expectations and horizons become wider, those who can not easily share in these opportunities may increasingly feel disadvantaged and excluded from society.
- 3.30 The new process of Accessibility Planning provides the opportunity to integrate accessibility into the wider policy agenda, and to encourage other service providers to think about how people (including those without private transport) will access the services or facilities they provide. However, with no additional resources being made available, it will be a significant challenge to influence or respond to the trends in society (based around an assumption of car-based access) that are continuing to exacerbate the problem for those who do not have ready access to a car.

Environmental and economic impacts of traffic growth

- 3.31 There has in recent years been a growing awareness of the environmental and economic disbenefits of continued traffic growth, and a realisation that it is not a sustainable option to continue to rely entirely on the private car. This is reflected in the consultations carried out for LTP2 which confirm that the public see congestion as one of the key transport priorities to be addressed, and also in the Government's 'shared priorities' for transport discussed above. Buses can make an important contribution to dealing with these issues, particularly in the urban areas and on the

key inter urban corridors where reasonable service frequencies can be maintained. However, road based public transport is itself at the mercy of traffic congestion and will need assistance to allow reliable services to be provided. The key is in reducing the variability in journey times, and to some extent measures that improve general traffic flow will also help the bus. In some cases though, it will be necessary to consider bus priority so that punctual services can be provided – including working with neighbouring authorities (particularly Bath and Swindon) to identify and address the knock-on effect of disruption occurring in their area. Rail services also have an important role to play, especially for commuting to large employment centres (which is growing and likely to continue); in increasing the accessibility and attractiveness of towns as a basis for urban regeneration, particularly in West Wilts; and in countering increasing capacity problems and worsening journey time reliability on the interurban road network and in the A350 corridor.

- 3.32 Although encouraging travel by public transport rather than the private car has a net benefit for the environment, this is counteracted to some extent by the higher level of CO2 emissions by buses. Emissions standards for new buses are already being improved as a result of EU legislation (although at the expense of higher operating costs and fuel consumption), and the Council already encourages operators to invest in newer vehicles where possible for a variety of reasons. It is however considered that the benefits of taking more direct action to encourage low-emission vehicles (e.g. through a requirement in supported service contracts or by giving vehicle grants) would be outweighed by the impact on bus service levels (and hence passenger use and mode transfer) that would result from the diversion of scarce financial resources from the key priority of maintaining bus service frequencies.

Service / infrastructure issues

- 3.33 Although bus services on weekday daytimes are generally relatively good for a rural county (see paragraph 3.2 above), many journeys are still difficult to make by public transport – particularly those to destinations outside the main town centres, such as health and leisure facilities and out of town retail or employment centres. Evening and Sunday services are also sparse and ‘commuter’ services to work are often also relatively infrequent even in many of the towns. High bus fares are a concern, and quality and reliability need to be further improved if more people are to be attracted to using public transport. However, if recent trends in the costs of bus operation continue (see paragraph 5.4 below), there will be increasing pressure on the viability of commercial services and on the Council’s public transport budget and it will become increasingly difficult even to retain existing levels of service, let alone seek the improvements to frequency and quality that will be needed to achieve Local Transport Plan objectives.
- 3.34 Part of the Strategy should therefore be to continue to seek alternative ways of meeting rural access needs. However, providing acceptable levels of access in rural areas will always be expensive due to the low levels of demand and the increasingly dispersed patterns of travel that are a feature of modern life, and this has been confirmed by the experience of local authorities across the country with

new schemes funded through Rural Bus Challenge or by the Countryside Agency. Community and voluntary transport is likely to be called on to play an increasingly important role – not just to replace marginal bus services where these can no longer be supported, but also to address some of the local and specific access needs identified by the Accessibility Planning process. However, the ability to expand community transport is constrained by the increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers, the capacity and size of existing schemes in Wiltshire, and the need for strong local commitment to develop a scheme in the area where a need has been identified.

- 3.35 Changes in the nature and commissioning of social care and health sector transport (the 'Valuing People' agenda, the establishment of Care Trusts and the opportunity for joint commissioning, new criteria for non-emergency patient transport, and the focus in Accessibility Planning on access to health care) will provide opportunities for greater co-ordination of public, community, social care and health sector transport, although experience in other authorities has shown that this can be difficult to achieve in practice.
- 3.36 Rail service provision is now determined by the Department for Transport's new rail policy division following the abolition of the Strategic Rail Authority, although local authorities continue to have the opportunity to comment on timetable and franchise proposals. It appears likely that the focus of rail policy over the next five years will be to contain costs and improve reliability across the network, and in particular in the south east and on the main inter-city corridors, and that there will be little opportunity for local authorities to promote improvements to services or infrastructure that do not match national priorities.

Chapter 4 – Long Term Strategy

Aims

- 4.1 In order to contribute to the wider transport strategy set out in the Local Transport Plan, the Council seeks to promote and develop public transport for two primary reasons:
- To reduce social exclusion by providing access to a wide range of opportunities for those without a car available, and;
 - To provide the public with a wider range of travel choices as an alternative to the private car, thereby contributing to reducing congestion and air pollution and improving road safety

Objectives

- 4.2 To support the achievement of these aims, four public transport objectives have been established, against which targets will be set and monitored (see Chapter 6 below). The four objectives are:
- To maintain and seek to improve opportunities to access important services and facilities (for the general public and for specific groups at risk of social exclusion);
 - To reverse the historic decline in bus use;
 - To improve the quality of public transport travel, and reduce barriers to the use of public transport (information, image, reliability and interchange), and;
 - To improve satisfaction with public transport.

Themes

- 4.3 Three key themes link the elements of the strategy:
- Partnership;
 - Integration (between modes, and with other policy areas), and;
 - Access for all (recognising the particular needs of different groups within society, for example older people, those with a mobility impairment and those with learning difficulties or other disabilities).

Strategy

- 4.4 The strategy is based around identification of four categories of geographical area. It is envisaged that the priority given to each of the overall public transport aims and objectives will be different in each type of area, as will the nature of the services provided and the opportunities and constraints governing what can be achieved. In addition, there are other aspects of the strategy that apply countywide.

(a) Salisbury Urban Area (including Wilton)

- 4.5 Within the Salisbury urban area the bus can play a major role in helping to reduce congestion and the impact of traffic. The Salisbury Transport Plan, adopted by the County Council and Salisbury District Council in 2000, established a ten

year strategy which aims to reduce the impact of traffic and improve the local environment, reduce car dependency and encourage the use of other means of travel, improve accessibility, and maximise the efficiency of the transport system. The principal elements of the strategy include Park & Ride, improvements to public transport (bus priority, new bus routes, enhanced frequencies, consideration of extensions to concessionary fares for targeted groups, support for rail service enhancements, and improved bus-rail integration), Intelligent Transport Systems (including bus real time passenger information), demand management, and city centre traffic management measures. It is anticipated that the core bus network will be provided on a commercial basis, but that the local authorities will work in partnership with the operator to improve frequencies, quality and the attractiveness of the service and to use marketing to increase passenger numbers and improve commercial viability. There has already been substantial progress in implementing the strategy, and it is proposed to carry this forward into the LTP2 period with a focus on completing the ring of Park & Ride sites around the city, taking measures to alleviate congestion and give bus priority on the main city approaches, demand management, and further development of Intelligent Transport Systems.

(b) Services within other larger towns

- 4.6 Wiltshire has a number of other settlements with a population of 9,000 or more (Chippenham, Trowbridge, Melksham, Westbury, Warminster, Bradford-on-Avon, Corsham, Calne, Wootton Bassett, Amesbury / Durrington / Larkhill / Bulford, and Tidworth). These settlements are large enough for public transport to be needed for some journeys within the town, as well as to other destinations (for the latter, all of the above settlements are on the strategic inter-urban network – see below). For local journeys within the town, the aim is to provide services that offer a realistic and attractive alternative to car on the best-used routes, as well as meeting the essential access needs of those without private transport. It is likely that this will require financial support in many cases, especially where a dedicated town service is provided, and the most cost effective way of providing a service may sometimes be to divert or extend inter-urban or rural services instead. The level of service that can be provided will depend on available funding, and a pragmatic approach to improvements is therefore likely to be necessary due to funding and other constraints. Priority will be given to maintaining services to the major town estates at a minimum hourly frequency (better where this can be justified by use). Subject to ongoing discussions, consideration will be given to the possible use of revenues from decriminalised parking enforcement to fund public transport improvements in the larger towns.
- 4.7 Quality improvements will be sought where achievable, and the strategy will seek to increase passenger use through high profile marketing and measures such as ‘network branding’ where this is appropriate. Use of low floor buses will be encouraged, although this may in the short term be constrained by the lack of cost-effective replacements for existing minibus designs. Improvements to bus stops and shelters will be made on the best-used routes, although priority will be given to continuing to progress the established programme of improvements on the Key Bus Route Network. Consideration will be given to future installation of real

time passenger information. To encourage interchange and improve accessibility, through ticketing will be sought for cross-town journeys and for connections onto Key Bus Route Network services. Co-ordination with rail services will also be sought where relevant and feasible.

(c) Strategic inter-urban network

- 4.8 The first Local Transport Plan defined a key network of strategic bus routes (the **Key Bus Route Network**) linking the main centres within and outside the County, and which were considered capable of sustaining, within realistic financial limits, a service frequency of at least one bus per hour during weekday daytimes. Although they serve many of the larger rural settlements, they perform more than just a local function and can make a significant contribution to the aim of providing transport that is frequent and attractive enough to be seen as an alternative to the private car. The Key Bus Route Network will be given priority for improvements to infrastructure (bus stops, shelters, interchange facilities and real time passenger information) and used as the basis for developing quality partnerships with the operators, through which improvements in vehicle quality, reliability and marketing and promotion will be sought. It is anticipated that these routes will be given priority for the introduction of low floor buses. Targeted fares discounts will also be sought where this will increase passenger use and is consistent with maintaining commercial viability. Through ticketing, interchange improvements and timetable integration with long distance rail, and other strategic network services, will also be sought.
- 4.9 It is expected that most Key Bus Route Network services will be operated commercially during weekday daytimes, and priority will be given to maintaining a minimum hourly service frequency at these times. Financial support will also be used where appropriate, and subject to the availability of funding, to enhance service frequencies and provide evening and Sunday services (although financial pressures and the high cost of operation at these times is likely to limit what can be achieved within the plan period). 'Kickstart' initiatives (such as already approved for the Chippenham – Swindon corridor) will be explored to boost frequencies through packages of improvements including frequency enhancements, new vehicles, bus stop and shelter upgrades and aggressive marketing to maximise passenger use and achieve long term financial viability.
- 4.10 The extent of the Key Bus Route Network will be reviewed from time to time. Current Key Bus Route Network services are shown on Fig 4.1.

Fig 4.1
Strategic Inter-Urban Bus Network



- 4.11 **Rail services** also form part of the strategic inter-urban network, with a twin role in providing for local inter-urban journeys, and also linking to the national network for longer distance travel. The strategy is to press for improvements to Wiltshire rail services and facilities through influencing the DfT and the rail companies, and working in partnership with other authorities and through regional structures.
- 4.12 Service patterns and fares policies should seek to balance the importance of rail for local and sub-regional travel (including commuting) with longer distance and inter-regional travel. For example, trains on the Severn – Solent corridor provide an important inter-regional link and their management should not be dominated by consideration of the commuter market into Bath and Bristol, although this is also recognised as an important role. The development of rail services should also contribute to the Council's objectives of developing the local economy, relieving traffic congestion and encouraging sustainable travel patterns, for example:
- Fares policies on services to London should favour business and occasional travel rather than provide a subsidy for long distance commuting.
 - The Swindon – West Wiltshire – Southampton service should be developed as it has considerable potential to help relieve local traffic and environmental problems and to contribute to the Council's Western Wiltshire Transport Plan.

- The proposal to withdraw the West Wiltshire – London Waterloo direct service is considered detrimental to the vitality of the local economy, taking away the only direct link to London.

The Council also continues to support the aims of the Salisbury – Exeter Lineside Consortium of Authorities (SELCA) to develop an hourly service along the whole line.

- 4.13 New stations at Corsham, Wilton, Porton and Wootton Bassett remain part of the long term strategy, although it is recognised that pursuing these is unlikely to be productive until there are changes in the national rail funding situation. On the other hand, improvements to existing stations (particularly to facilitate interchange between rail and road transport) will be considered for inclusion in the 5-year programme.

(d) Rural areas and the smaller towns

- 4.14 Many of Wiltshire's larger rural settlements are on the Key Bus Route Network (above). Away from the key network, the primary aim will be to provide reasonable levels of accessibility to a wide range of services and opportunities for local residents who do not have access to private transport. It is however recognised that some services that are not part of the Key Bus Route Network still have more than just local significance (e.g. providing links at less-than-hourly frequency between nearby towns; or giving access to the countryside for visitors or urban residents). The aim will be to maintain or improve on current levels of access where possible, although this will inevitably be constrained by the level of revenue funding available. The highest priority will be given to maintaining at least daily (weekday) access to a local centre with a range of shops and other facilities.
- 4.15 It is recognised that meeting these needs will require significant ongoing revenue funding, and the strategy is therefore to seek the most cost effective way of providing the maximum access benefit within the resources available. Needs will be met by a mix of conventional bus, demand responsive transport and community transport services as appropriate. It is anticipated that the bus (integrated with school transport) will continue to be the most cost-effective way of meeting a large proportion of needs in many areas, but the Council will continue to actively experiment with alternative ways of providing services and meeting access needs (including encouraging the location of facilities and activities in places that are already accessible by public transport). It will also continue to learn from the experience of other authorities in finding innovative solutions to access problems. The potential role of cost-effective demand responsive transport will be evaluated, based on the experience of services such as Wigglybus and taxilink, and similar services in other parts of the UK. Community and voluntary transport is also expected to play an increasingly important role, and this will be pursued through the Wiltshire Rural Transport Partnership and with funding from the Rural Development Agency and the Accessibility Partnerships.

(e) Accessibility Strategy

- 4.16 The Council's Accessibility Strategy is contained within the LTP. Accessibility planning partnerships have and will be established to identify access needs and to agree on the priorities to be addressed through accessibility action plans, under the guidance of the Wiltshire Strategic Board Executive (WiSBEx). Following work on the Strategic Accessibility Assessment, and reflecting the priority themes being championed by the Strategic Board (see paragraph 1.13 above), the three initial priorities that have been identified are:
- Accessibility to health services and facilities in the Kennet & North Wiltshire and West Wiltshire Primary Care Trusts' area.
 - Accessibility to education, skills and training.
 - Access to services in the South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance (the Local Strategic Partnership) area of Tisbury.
- 4.17 The accessibility partnerships will need to consider not only the availability of transport (or other means of access), but also affordability and whether there are other barriers (e.g. physical access to the vehicle) that prevent an individual from accessing a facility.
- 4.18 Many access needs are already met through the existing commercial and supported public transport network, and the evidence gathered through accessibility planning will be used to review existing services and make sure they are effectively targeting priority needs, or whether it is feasible to remove any barriers preventing their use. It is likely that accessibility planning will also identify many needs that are too dispersed to be met effectively by conventional public transport, and for which specialised services may be needed. These will inevitably be costly to provide, and given resource constraints, may not be affordable. A key element of the Accessibility Strategy will therefore be to encourage the providers of services and facilities (health authorities, other statutory service providers, local authority planners and commercial organisations) to consider access for those without private transport at an early stage when planning how and where they will deliver their services. It is hoped that this will reduce the need for expensive transport to be provided. Community and voluntary transport is also likely to be an important way of seeking to meet specific access needs, and the accessibility partnerships should be closely linked to the work of the Wiltshire Rural Transport Partnership in promoting and developing community transport.

(f) Bus Information Strategy

- 4.19 The Council's Bus Information Strategy (BIS) was reviewed and approved in July 2003, and is published as a separate document. It sets out a range of short, medium and long term measures designed to build public awareness of the bus and train services that are available and where to find information; to improve the provision of a telephone enquiry service, printed timetables, roadside timetable displays, publicity at interchanges, information on the internet and real time information; and to meet the needs of disabled users. These measures are underpinned by a countywide data management strategy and monitoring programme. The BIS also sets standards for the provision of information, with reserve powers, if operators

do not provide the required information, for the council to make the information available and recover from the operator the reasonable costs of doing so. However, the fundamental principle underlying the BIS is to work in partnership with the operators to co-ordinate activities and use the resources available to all parties to maximise the quantity and effectiveness of the information made available. A core element of the strategy is participation in SWPTI, the regional partnership of local authorities and operators which provides the 'traveline' telephone enquiry service and internet journey planner.

(g) Punctuality and reliability strategy

4.20 Punctuality and reliability were identified in consultations for the Best Value Review as important factors in seeking to improve public satisfaction with bus services. The strategy that has been developed to address this has four elements:

- Closer working with County Council Highways managers (including the new Traffic Manager) and with the Highways Agency to provide better information to operators about, and to seek to mitigate the impact on bus services, of street works and road closures;
- Annual monitoring of overall (countywide) bus reliability, to establish and seek to influence trends;
- Punctuality and reliability partnerships with operators to identify and seek to address particular problem locations and issues, on both commercial and supported services (these will be piloted with operators who already have equipment for tracking the location of their vehicles), and;
- Increased attention to monitoring the reliability and punctuality of council – funded services.

(h) Serving new developments

4.21 As the local highway authority, the County Council has an important role to play through its development control function to ensure that the location, layout and impact of new developments do not exacerbate or cause new accessibility problems or contribute to increased congestion. The four District Councils, as planning authorities, consult the County Council on planning applications which have implications for highway design, traffic, parking and other transport matters. The wider policy framework is provided by national guidance, such as Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 'Transport' (2001), the Regional Transport Strategy and local development plans. In assessing Transport Assessments submitted with planning applications, the County Council makes use of the advice of the Institute of Highway and Transportation's 'Guidelines for Traffic Impact Assessment' and, in the absence of DfT good practice advice, the more recent Scottish Executive 'Guide to Transport Assessment in Scotland'. This includes making sure that the location and design of new developments is conducive to cost-effective public transport operation and that there is easy access to bus routes for those living, visiting or working there.

4.22 In addition, and reflecting Government guidance which states that LTPs should not solve problems caused or exacerbated by decisions made without reference to their transport implications, the development control process will seek to ensure

that the Council does not pay for development impacts. Funding from developers will therefore continue to be sought to provide appropriate transport services and infrastructure. The Council is currently actively investigating the adoption of a more formalised methodology for assessing and charging developer contributions. Priority for this work will focus on the Strategically Significant Cities and Towns in the County as identified in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy. The methodology will be developed in accordance with ODPM Circular 05/2005, and with the potential outcomes from the Planning Gain Supplement consultation in mind. The Council will then seek to have the methodology reflected in core transport policy through the four District Councils' emerging Local Development Documents.

Chapter 5 – Funding Prospects

- 5.1 Public transport is at heart of Wiltshire's LTP2 strategy. However, the ability to implement the long term strategy, and the pace of implementation, will be constrained by the funding available. As funding is likely to be limited, it is important to make a realistic assessment of what will be available for implementing the 5-year programme;

Revenue funding

- 5.2 Revenue funding is used to meet ongoing costs such as bus service support, community transport grants, and publicity and information. It is therefore of paramount importance to the achievement of the objectives set out in paragraph 4.2 above. Current sources of revenue funding include Wiltshire County Council's own budget, Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, District Councils, Rural Bus Challenge and the South West Rural Development Agency (who took over the Countryside Agency's responsibilities for funding Rural Transport Partnerships from April 2005). Contributions to the operation of cross-boundary services are also received from neighbouring local authorities. Salisbury District Council use parking revenues to fund various elements of the Salisbury Transport Plan, including the ongoing costs of running the Park & Ride bus services and the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). Concessionary fares for the elderly and disabled are funded by the District Councils, but as this does not contribute to the financing of additional levels of service (the reimbursement arrangements are designed to ensure that operators are 'no better and no worse off' for offering the concessions) it has been excluded from this analysis.
- 5.3 Although budgets are set and confirmed on an annual basis and will reflect circumstances and priorities at the time, Table 5.1 gives an estimate of the funding that might realistically be expected to be available over the 5-year plan period. Funding levels since 2000-01 are also shown for comparison. The following assumptions have been made;
- County and District Council revenue funding continues at 2006-07 levels in real terms.
 - Rural Bus Subsidy Grant continues at 2006-07 levels in real terms.
 - There will be no opportunity to bid for external funding to continue existing projects funded through Rural Bus Challenge when this funding expires.
 - Opportunities to bid for external funding may arise and will continue to be pursued vigorously (for example the successful 'Kick Start' bid in 2005) but any funding so gained would be ring fenced to specific new projects.
 - The South West Rural Development Agency continues to make funding available to continue the core activities of the Rural Transport Partnership in developing the capacity of the community transport sector, and approves annual project funding equivalent to 2005-6 levels. Other partners also continue to contribute to RTP activities (which it is proposed will become aligned more closely to Accessibility Planning priorities), and to the LINK funding partnership, at the same levels as in 2005-06.
 - Salisbury District Council will continue to use car parking revenues to fund the

operating deficit of the Park & Ride bus services. Consideration will be given to the possible use of decriminalised parking revenue to support local town bus services elsewhere in the County.

- Contributions will continue to be sought from developers to support new services and infrastructure, but the amounts of such contributions have not been included in the table below as they would be ringfenced for specific new services. Subject to new legislation, the opportunity of using Planning Gain contributions to provide revenue funding for bus services will be investigated.

Table 5.1 – Anticipated availability of revenue funding (all figures in £'000)

	Outturn					Budget	Budget Anticipated at 2006 prices				
	2000 /01	2001 /02	2002 /03	2003 /04	2004 /05	2005 /06	2006 /07	2007 /08	2008 /09	2009 /10	2010 /11
Wiltshire County Council	1384	1560	1865	2273	2516	2746	2783	2783	2783	2783	2783
Rural Bus Subsidy Grant	786	1004	1149	1173	1228	1275	1306	1306	1306	1306	1306
District Councils	377	389	357	283	197	170	170	170	170	170	170
Rural Bus Challenge	203	785	565	553	433	471	506	43	0	0	0
New external funding bids (inc. Kickstart)							161	88 (+n/k)	70 (+n/k)	n/k	n/k
Developer funding / Planning Gain							n/k	n/k	n/k	n/k	n/k
Countryside Agency / SW RDA	130	130	130	130	102	85	85	85	85	85	85
Primary Care Trusts	15	25	25	25	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
WCC Social Services	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Salisbury DC Park & Ride funding ¹	0	0	227	227	578	1306	1840	2518	2594	2672	n/k
Total	2916	3914	4339	4685	5115	6114	6912	7054	7069	7077	4405

1. 3% notional inflation added 2006/07 to 2010/11, except to the new costs arising in the year from new Park and Ride openings (2006/7 and 2008/9).

- 5.4 Although funding levels are anticipated to remain at broadly similar levels in real terms over the next five years (except for the loss of Rural Bus Challenge funding), public transport operating costs are expected to continue to rise at rates exceeding general inflation. Surveys by the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers (ATCO) have demonstrated year-on-year increases in contract costs across the UK of 10% or more over the last seven years, and the 2005 survey estimated that a budget increase of 9.9% would be required in 2006-07 to maintain services. A cost index produced by the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) showed a 7.8% rise in bus operating costs in 2004. The factors underlying these national trends are still in evidence, and it is widely expected that they will continue to lead to further significant cost increases over the next few years.
- 5.5 The growing difficulties over revenue funding represent the biggest challenge in delivering the Public Transport Strategy, and the greatest risk to achievement of the public transport targets in the LTP. The County Council has over the last six years given a high priority to maintaining rural bus services, and has doubled its spend on public transport to meet increases in the costs of transport contracts. As a result it is now in the top quartile of authorities for public transport spending per head of population. However, the pressures on local authority budgets are continuing to increase year on year – including for example above inflation increases in energy costs, landfill tax, growing demands for social care, ‘cost shunting’ from the NHS, as well as the above inflation increases in transport costs referred to above – and with the threat of ‘capping’ there is little room for manoeuvre. Wiltshire also received the second lowest increase in the country in its annual financial settlement for 2006-07, and the indications that the situation will be no better in future years. Although the Council would hope to maintain a level of per capita spending that reflects the high priority always given to transport in public consultations (subject to receiving adequate funding through the annual financial settlement), it will not be able to continue to fund above-inflation increases in costs or provide extra money if there are reductions in commercially-operated services. It is also very unlikely that County Council budgets will be able to be increased to replace the loss of Rural Bus Challenge funding.
- 5.6 Given these restrictions on local authority funding, all alternative sources of funding will be explored. These include the use of parking revenues (as already happens in Salisbury with the Park & Ride services); developer contributions and Planning Gain; further bids for ‘Kickstart’ funding; RDA funding for developing community transport; and a greater emphasis on partnership working with operators to improve commercial viability through the development and marketing of their commercial services. However, in a predominantly rural county there are few real alternatives to local authority funding to support the non-commercial but socially necessary services which meet the accessibility needs of those without ready access to private transport. It will be a real challenge to minimise the need for reductions in current levels of accessibility (let alone to seek to improve on these to respond to the priorities identified by the Accessibility Strategy), and the likelihood of service reductions will also impact on targets for bus passenger numbers and public satisfaction.

Capital funding

- 5.7 Capital funding for public transport improvements comes from the Integrated Transport block of the annual LTP settlement. This allocation also covers funding for cycling, walking, safety and traffic management schemes as well as public transport. During LTP1 there was also funding to implement the Salisbury Transport Plan as a major scheme, and some additional funding will be available during LTP2 to complete the development of Park & Ride. Table 5.2 shows the total amounts received by Wiltshire County Council (for all integrated transport not just public transport) since 2001-02.
- 5.8 Unlike the first round of LTPs, LTP2 is not a bidding document. Instead, Government provides each authority with a funding level (known as a planning guideline) based on a formulaic approach. The programme set out in LTP2 should be a prioritised programme to deliver the best value for the indicated level of funding. An authority's actual funding allocation (announced before the start of each financial year) may be adjusted by +/- 25% of the guideline figure to reflect the Government's assessment of the quality of the LTP, the Delivery Report for achievement under the first LTP, and achievement of the targets set out in LTP2. Wiltshire's allocation for 2006-07, and the planning guidelines for future years, are shown in table 5.2.

Table 5.2 – Anticipated availability of capital funding (integrated transport)

(£ million)	LTP1 outturn spend				Budget (LTP1)	LTP2 (allocation for 2006-7; guideline for later years)				
	2001 /02	2002 /03	2003 /04	2004 /05		2006 /07	2007 /08	2008 /09	2009 /10	2010 /11
Integrated Transport Block	2.89	5.02	4.72	3.47	4.50	3.45	3.67	4.00	4.34	4.71
STP	4.18	4.27	2.60	5.83	3.98	0.20	3.00	0.20	0	0

Chapter 6 – Implementation Programme (5 Year)

(a) Targets

- 6.1 Targets have been set against each of the four public transport objectives listed in Chapter 4, and these are shown in Table 6.1. This also identifies the main actions that are proposed to achieve each of the targets, and which form the foundation of the proposed five-year Implementation Programme. A more detailed explanation of the targets, with trajectories for each target and an analysis of the main risks, is given in Chapter 15 of the LTP.

Table 6.1 – Public transport targets

<i>Indicator (and LTP reference no.)</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Programme elements contributing to achievement of target</i>
Objective 1 – Maintain / improve access to important services and facilities		
% of rural addresses within 800 metres of an hourly or better weekday daytime bus service (ref. LTP1h).	To maintain access to an hourly or better service for at least 50% of rural households throughout the period up to 2010-11, despite anticipated continuation of above-inflation increases in transport operating costs.	Quality partnerships, marketing, Kickstart initiatives, punctuality partnerships to promote commercial viability of bus services. Revenue funding for non-commercial services, including demand responsive services where cost-effective. Integration with education transport to maximise provision.
% of rural addresses within 800 metres of a daily or better weekday bus service (ref. LTP1d).	To maintain access to a daily or better service for at least 80% of rural households throughout the period up to 2010-11, despite anticipated continuation of above-inflation increases in transport operating costs.	Revenue funding for non-commercial bus services, including demand responsive services where cost-effective. Integration with education transport to maximise provision.
% of rural addresses covered by voluntary car schemes (ref. LTP1v).	To increase the coverage of voluntary car schemes in rural areas to 94% of households by 2010-11.	Continue to support the work of the LINK Development Project to expand the coverage and capacity of LINK schemes.

<i>Indicator (and LTP reference no.)</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Programme elements contributing to achievement of target</i>
Objective 2 – Reverse the historic decline in bus use		
Total number of bus passenger journeys (ref. BVPI102).	To increase passenger journeys from 9,291,000 in 2004-05 to 9,820,000 in 2010-11 (an increase of 5.6%).	Quality Partnerships, Kickstart and other joint initiatives with operators; revenue funding for non-commercial services; actions to improve quality, reduce barriers and improve satisfaction; completion of Salisbury Park & Ride. However, current indications are that transport operating costs will continue to rise and that this will result in reductions in service and increases in fares that will more than outweigh the growth from these measures during the Plan period. However, the effect of the introduction of free OAP fares in 2006 will result in an initial growth of passenger numbers that will still lead to an overall increase between 2004-5 and 2010-11.
Number of Park & Ride passenger journeys in Salisbury (ref. LS27).	To carry at least 724,800 passengers per annum by 2010/11.	Open remaining P&R sites; parking policies and charges in city centre; bus priority on main approach roads; investigate city centre P&R terminus.
Rail passengers (ref. L5).	A 19.8% increase in passenger numbers in 2010 compared with the 2003 baseline.	Improving access to stations; promotion, including employer travel plans; continuing development of town centres to provide residential and employment use and enhance attractiveness of towns; engagement with DfT and rail industry to ensure service continuity and incremental capacity improvements.
Objective 3 – Improve quality of public transport and reduce barriers to its use		
No. of Key Bus Routes on which bus stop and shelter upgrades completed (ref. L29).	To complete stop and shelter upgrades on all Key Bus Routes (17 routes) by 2010-11.	Key Bus Route Network programme; interchange improvements

<i>Indicator (and LTP reference no.)</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Programme elements contributing to achievement of target</i>
Bus punctuality (ref. LTP5).	90% of observed bus departures at timing points to be between 1 minute early and 5 minutes late by 2014-15 (improvement from 77.7% in 2005-06).	Punctuality Improvement Partnerships leading to schedule adjustments, traffic management measures and bus priority where appropriate and feasible. Better information and coordination of street works and road closures.
% of routes operated by low floor buses (ref. L23).	To increase % of routes operated by low floor buses from 8% in 2003-04 to 25% in 2010-11.	Quality Partnerships on commercial services. Extra funding for low floor buses on supported services where affordable. Investment in raised boarders at bus stops on Key Bus Route Network, and bus stop clearways, to allow buses level access to kerb.
% of survey respondents satisfied with information about local bus services (ref. BVPI 103).	To further increase satisfaction from 60% recorded in 2003, to 65% in 2006 and 70% in 2009 (survey carried out every 3 years).	Work with operators to improve quantity and quality of printed and roadside timetable information, and encourage route or network marketing initiatives. Improvements to 'traveline', including SMS mobile phone information. Evaluate impact of real time information and consider extensions to other routes (subject to funding). 3 year programme of awareness raising activities (limited by revenue funding availability).
Completeness of traveline (SWPTI) data (ref. R1).	For data supplied by Wiltshire, to exceed the indicated regional target of 99% in 2010/11.	Ensuring details of service changes are promptly actioned and timeliness recorded.
Verification of traveline (SWPTI) data (ref. R2).	For data supplied by Wiltshire, to achieve the indicated regional target of 90% in 2010/11.	Ensuring details of service changes are promptly verified by the bus operator. This requires the willing cooperation of the operators – all large operators in the South West have signed an agreement with SWPTI and are committed to the project at senior level.

<i>Indicator (and LTP reference no.)</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Programme elements contributing to achievement of target</i>
Objective 4 – Improve satisfaction with public transport		
% of survey respondents satisfied with local bus services (ref. BVPI 104).	To further increase satisfaction from 66% recorded in 2003, to 68% in 2006 and 70% in 2009 (survey carried out every 3 years).	Quality partnerships, Kickstart, punctuality partnerships and marketing to improve commercial services. Encourage targeted fares discounts linked to marketing initiatives. Free OAP fares from April 2006. Investigate feasibility of countywide young persons offpeak fare discount scheme. Encourage ticket inter-availability. Will also depend on actions above to improve quality and reduce barriers to use. Target has been revised down from the provisional plan to reflect likelihood of service reductions and continued above-inflation increases in standard bus fares.

- 6.2 Several of the targets have been revised downwards since submission of the provisional LTP. This reflects the serious revenue funding issues identified in Chapter 5, which have been intensified by the Council's poor financial settlement for 2006-07, and which will make it increasingly difficult to maintain current levels of service.

(b) Funding Allocations

- 6.3 Table 6.2 shows the proposed spending profile to support the Implementation Programme set out below. This is an indicative allocation, based on the assumptions set out in Chapter 5 of the funding that may be available. The proposed allocations will be reviewed annually to reflect updated information on the funding that will actually be available, progress against targets and changing circumstances and experience.

**Table 6.2 – Indicative spending profile for Five Year Programme
(all figures in £'000s)**

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Revenue funding					
Bus service support (inc. demand responsive transport)	4712	4176	4115	4045	4045
Community transport	292	292	292	292	292
Publicity and marketing	68	68	68	68	68
Park & Ride	1840	2518	2594	2672	n/k
Capital funding					
Bus infrastructure schemes	515	500	734	809	874
Public transport interchanges	50	130	150	200	200
Bus priority schemes	30	0	60	150	150
Salisbury transport package	200	3000	200	0	0
SWPTI (traveline)	57	61	66	71	76

6.4 The above funding allocations are similar to those shown in the provisional LTP and were broadly supported by the responses from stakeholder and operator consultation. The rationale for the way the available funding has been allocated can be summarised briefly as follows:

6.5 Revenue funding

- Financial support for bus services (including demand responsive and other experimental services, and time limited Kickstart funding) continues to be the largest element of expenditure, and is where the Council's spending can have the most direct effect on improving accessibility and increasing (or at least maintaining) bus passenger use. However, it is anticipated that the overall amount of funding available will reduce over the period, although strenuous efforts will be made to identify and make use of any alternative sources.
- Community and voluntary transport will play an increasingly important role over the plan period, and it is proposed that funding will therefore be maintained. This depends however on the continued availability of funding from SWRDA, the District Councils, Primary Care Trusts and other partners.
- Publicity and marketing will also be crucial in encouraging greater use of bus services and improving satisfaction. Although a bid for additional funding to expand activity was not successful due to the revenue funding situation, it is proposed to maintain current spend and seek to make more effective use of this through partnership working with the operators. Publicity and marketing will also be an important element of any Kickstart initiatives.
- Salisbury District Council funding (from car parking revenues) will continue to be used to fund the Park & Ride bus services.

6.6 Capital funding

- The main priority will be to complete the Key Bus Route Network programme

of bus stop and shelter improvements. This priority is supported by the major bus operators, who have invested over £10 million in new vehicles on these routes and in Salisbury. It is thought that improvements to shelters, if carried out along a complete route, can lead to passenger growth of around 2.5%, or higher if accompanied by new vehicle investment. Stakeholder groups have also suggested that they are a significant factor in increasing public satisfaction. The raised 'bus boarders' also benefit mobility impaired people and have been requested in consultations with disabled user groups. It is estimated that it will cost £3 million to complete the programme.

- Other bus infrastructure schemes that will be considered later in the LTP period include the extension of bus stop and shelter upgrades to town services (other than Salisbury where these are largely complete); extension of real time passenger information to new routes; the scope for using capital funding to promote 'Kickstart'- style service improvements in partnership with bus operators; and grants to assist the purchase of vehicles by community transport schemes.
- Interchange improvements were given a high priority in responses to the public consultation, and funding is identified to progress a number of schemes including Trowbridge Rail Station and Salisbury Fisherton Street (for the Rail Station). Other bus interchange improvements will be incorporated into the Key bus Route Network programme or into wider town centre improvement schemes (including Melksham and Warminster).
- Bus priority is of major importance to the operators and would help to improve punctuality and reliability, which the Best Value Review identified as one of the main factors influencing public satisfaction. However, it is acknowledged that the scope for large-scale bus priority is limited in a predominantly rural county such as Wiltshire. An allocation is made to fund small-scale schemes that it is anticipated may be identified through the punctuality improvement partnerships – including in Salisbury.
- The allocation of funding for traveline represents the Council's ongoing commitment to the regional SWPTI partnership to update and develop the database used by the traveline telephone and internet enquiry service, and which is also a cornerstone of the Council's Bus Information Strategy.
- The Salisbury Transport Package funding will be used to complete the Petersfinger Park & Ride

(c) Programme

6.7 The programme which follows is geared towards achievement of the targets set out above, and towards delivery of the Council's long term strategy as set out in Chapter 4. It is based on experience from the delivery of previous programmes, learning from others through sharing of experience and best practice with other authorities, and on the evidence presented in the 'analysis' section of the plan (Chapter 3 above). The programme that has been developed represents what the Council considers to be the most effective way of using the limited funds that are available to achieve its objectives.

6.8 Bus – frequency and coverage

- The Council will seek to maximise commercial provision through the continued development and expansion of Quality Partnerships with the operators, and through joint initiatives to increase passenger use. This will build on experience

with existing successful partnerships, and the recommendations of the 2004/5 Best Value Review. The aim will be to establish partnerships covering all Key Bus Route Network services by 2010-11.

- The successful 'Kickstart' bid for the Chippenham – Swindon corridor will be implemented, with the intention that the increased service frequency will be commercially viable by the end of the three year funding period. Further opportunities to bid for 'Kick Start' funding on other routes will be pursued if and when they arise.
- Funding for bus services to supplement commercial provision will continue to be the most important element of the programme. Due to cost increases and budget constraints (see Chapter 5 above) it is likely that there will be service reductions during the plan period, and the aim will be to seek to make best use of limited funds by targeting resources. Decisions about what services to support will be guided by the 'Guidelines for Expenditure on Supported Public Transport Services' that have been adopted by the Council (Appendix A). These reflect the priorities of the long term strategy set out in Chapter 4, and were reviewed in April 2005 to take account of Accessibility Planning and the recommendations of the Best Value Review on service priorities.
- Value for money of supported services will be regularly reviewed through monitoring passenger use, subsidy per passenger trip, and evidence of the extent to which they meet the priorities and criteria established in Appendix A. Services will normally be reviewed in a four year rolling programme, although interim action will be taken if necessary.
- Services will continue to be closely integrated with education transport to maximise the amount of service that can be provided, and to secure value for money to the Council as a whole.
- It is anticipated that the Petersfinger Park & Ride will be completed by late 2007, subject to planning consent and availability of funding. This will complete the ring of Park & Ride sites around Salisbury city. An assessment will also be carried out of the ability of the existing P&R sites to accommodate extra capacity to allow for future demand.
- Agreements will continue to be made with neighbouring authorities to fund cross-boundary services.
- The need for supported services will be identified by a mixture of user and community feedback (new processes and protocols for consultation and community involvement are being established following the Best Value Review), experimentation, 'gap analysis' identifying settlements that are relatively poorly served or particular needs that are not met, and through the Accessibility Planning partnerships.
- Co-ordination and interchange with other buses and with rail will continue to be sought where possible.
- The Council will seek to ensure that new developments are well served by bus through planning guidance and by securing developer funding. Services will be reviewed at the end of the section 106 funding period to see whether they have become commercially viable.

6.9 Demand responsive transport

- Experiments with demand responsive transport (such as Wigglybus, Taxilink and the Royal United Hospital Hopper) will continue as part of the long term strategy of testing alternative ways of meeting transport and access needs in rural areas.

The emphasis will be on trying to improve cost-effectiveness so that the existing services become sustainable (within available levels of financial support) when the current time limited Rural Bus Challenge expires.

- A full review of the performance of existing demand responsive services, including comparisons with similar services elsewhere in the country, will be carried out during 2006 (towards the end of the Wigglybus Rural Bus Challenge funding period). This study will assess the extent to which the services provide a cost-effective way of achieving rural transport and access objectives, and will identify the future role that demand responsive transport should play in the Council's strategy.

6.10 Community Transport

- The programme will include an increased emphasis on developing and supporting community and voluntary transport as a cost-effective way of meeting the dispersed access needs that are likely to be identified through Accessibility Planning.
- Funding for LINK schemes and the LINK Development Project will continue, and a priority aim will be to extend the coverage of schemes to cover the whole County (as far as possible given the voluntary nature of the schemes). A long term aim will be to seek better coordination with health sector transport.
- Grant funding for community transport minibuses will also continue. Revenue support funding may be considered (subject to availability of funding) for specific scheduled services provided for the general public in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Expenditure on Supported Public Transport Services'. LTP capital may be used to assist community transport groups with the purchase of vehicles to provide new services, although replacement will be expected to be funded by the groups themselves through provision for depreciation. Groups will also be expected to co-operate with each other to share and make best use of available resources.
- The Council will continue to work through the Wiltshire Rural Transport Partnership to support, develop and expand community transport, and to seek funding for projects that improve the coverage, capacity and sustainability of community transport schemes. This will depend on the continued availability of funding from the South West Rural Development Agency, and an important element of the programme in the short term will be to lobby for continuation of funding for community transport schemes, and the RTP itself, post-2007. It is anticipated that the activities of the Rural Transport Partnership (or its successor) will become more closely aligned with the work of the Accessibility Partnerships as these develop.
- 'Community Transport Hubs' are being developed through the Rural Transport Partnership in Wootton Bassett and Melksham, as a way of promoting the availability of, and improving co-ordination between, community and other transport services. These pilots will be evaluated and the idea may be extended to other areas if successful. It is hoped that they may help progress towards the long term aim of coordinating public and community transport with health, social services and Youth & Community Services transport.
- Funding will be sought to develop a pilot countywide "Wheels to Work" moped loan scheme, to address the issue of access to employment and training for young people that has been identified as a priority by the Accessibility Strategy.
- The Community Transport Directory will continue to be issued on a two yearly

basis, and the website 'www.wiltshirecommunitytransport.org.uk' maintained through the Rural Transport Partnership.

6.11 Bus stops, shelters and interchanges

- The five year programme will include:
 - completing the established Key Bus Route Network project of installing raised and drop kerbs, new shelters with seat and lighting, improved stop layouts and timetable display cases at main stops on inter-urban routes. Priority will be given to routes that have the greatest potential for the development of Quality Partnerships with the operator, and / or where low floor buses are in operation.
 - consideration to establishing a programme of bus stop and shelter improvements on town service routes, possibly through developing joint funding and maintenance agreements with the Town Councils.
 - installing Bus Stop Clearways at key stops to reduce parking obstructions and make it easier for the bus to pull up parallel to the kerb, so that mobility impaired passengers can board and alight in safety and comfort.
- Improvements to public transport interchanges, continuing to implement the recommendations of the Audit of Interchange carried out in 2002.
- In Salisbury, the Council and District Councils will work with the bus and rail operators to improve bus / rail integration through provision of an interchange facility focused on Fisherton Street (north of the rail bridge). This will make interchange more attractive without adversely affecting bus journey times and reliability, or reducing parking capacity at the station. Also in Salisbury, once the Petersfinger Park & Ride site is opened an evaluation will be carried out, if supported by the various stakeholders, of the need for a dedicated Park & Ride terminus in the city centre, and of the feasibility of locating this at the current 'country bus' terminal in New Canal.
- Grants will continue to be made available to town and parish councils in other parts of the County to assist with installing new bus shelters
- Developer funding will be sought for bus shelters, stops and interchanges required in association with any new residential or commercial developments
- Funding is provided from the Highways Maintenance budget for maintenance and regular cleaning of all County-owned bus shelters. It is recognised that the provision (through LTP capital funding) of new infrastructure has implications for the Council's revenue budget, which creates tensions in a situation where funding is limited
- Consultation with parish and town councils, Conservation Officers, residents and local Council members will continue to make sure that design of shelters is in keeping with their surroundings

6.12 Punctuality and reliability

- Measures to improve bus punctuality and reliability will be given more priority in the programme as a result of the Best Value Review, which identified this as a key stakeholder concern
- Punctuality Improvement Partnerships are being piloted with major operators who already have the capability to 'track' buses with vehicle location technology. This approach will be evaluated before extending Improvement Partnerships to other operators. If the technology proves cost-effective, LTP funding may be

used to encourage further development of this approach to other commercial and supported routes.

- Improvements will be made, with the Council's Traffic Manager, to the arrangements for informing and liaising with bus operators about street works and road closures, with the aim of seeking to mitigate (where possible) their adverse impact on buses and on general traffic flows
- The Punctuality Improvement Partnerships will be used to identify locations at which bus operations could be assisted by bus priority or traffic management measures, and these will be evaluated and, where appropriate, considered for funding through the LTP. Neighbouring local authorities (particularly Swindon and Bath) will be involved where delays to Wiltshire services are identified as being caused by problems in their area.
- In Salisbury, additional bus priority (using a mix of Urban Traffic Control, traffic management and 'traditional' bus priority measures) will be investigated on the main approaches to the city centre, including Southampton Road, Wilton Road, Downton Road and London Road.
- A main focus of activity in Salisbury will be to build on the newly installed Intelligent Transport Systems (bus real time information, UTC, car park guidance and CCTV) through phase 2 (integration, 2005-07) and phase 3 (expansion, 2008-11). This will maximise the capability of the systems through integration and data sharing and provide a platform for delivering additional benefits such as traffic light priority for buses, information to help operators manage delays and traffic incidents, and provision of better public information.
- Contract compliance and reliability of Council-supported services will continue to be monitored.

6.13 Quality

- The Council's aim will be to extend voluntary Quality Partnerships to cover all commercially-operated key routes and city services by 2010-11. Statutory Quality Partnerships will only be considered if both parties think positive benefits would arise. There are no plans to pursue Quality Contracts during the 5-year programme period, but experience elsewhere will be monitored.
- The Council will continue to work with commercial operators, through Quality Partnerships and by joint bids for 'Kick Start' funding (when available) to encourage them to invest in vehicles, marketing, customer care and disability awareness training. Where feasible and appropriate, Council investment and activity will be coordinated with operator plans to help them develop a strong business case for investment in Wiltshire.
- On supported services, the Council will continue to seek dual tenders offering a preference for low floor fully accessible vehicles. However, if resources are limited the first priority will be given to maintaining service levels. A pragmatic approach will be taken to improving vehicle quality where the opportunity arises, and then avoiding reversion to lower standards. The proposed new regulations permitting contracts of up to 8 year duration will be used selectively to encourage investment in new or accessible vehicles. Use of LTP funding will be considered, subject to availability and other priorities, to assist operators of supported services in acquiring low floor buses for use on Wiltshire contracts.

6.14 Fares and ticketing

- The Best Value Review identified high bus fares as a major area of concern.

However, it also recognised that the Council does not have control, and has little influence over, the fares charged by commercial operators. The bus operators are also constrained by the rapidly rising costs of providing services and their need to maintain their commercial viability. However, it is proposed to encourage operators, through Quality Partnership discussions, to identify specific opportunities that may exist to introduce targeted discounts linked to marketing initiatives. The Council will also investigate the feasibility of introducing a countywide young persons' off-peak discount card, based around existing commercial discounts for young people.

- Where fare levels are controlled by the Council (on contracted services) they will be set at a level that balances affordability for users with the need to maintain financial support at affordable levels. Fares will be benchmarked against those charged on commercial services in the same area.
- Inter-availability of tickets will be encouraged on commercial services (as far as is possible within a competitive deregulated market), and will continue to be a requirement on Council-supported services. The Council will continue to promote the Wiltshire Day Rover ticket which offers unlimited travel on nearly all operators' services throughout the County
- Following the April 2005 budget announcement of free bus travel for pensioners, the 'Wiltshire Bus Pass' scheme (which covers Wiltshire and Swindon) is being revised to offer free (rather than half fare) travel from 1 April 2006. The District Councils and Swindon Borough, who fund the scheme, are currently considering whether to restrict free travel to the off-peak in line with the budget announcement.
- Smart Cards would offer a number of benefits in permitting more flexible ticketing systems, and also through more streamlined administration of the concessionary fares scheme, but the cost of installing the necessary equipment in a rural county such as Wiltshire would be high. The costs and benefits will be explored through the concessionary fares partnership but it is expected that the business case for investment in the short to medium term will be weak.

6.15 Rail

- The level of train services in Wiltshire has improved since privatisation and the Council will continue to pursue the maintenance and improvement of services. Wiltshire's interests will be promoted through consultations on franchise renewals, annual timetable changes and other rail policy issues. Specific aspirations include:
 - Improved services for Pewsey and Westbury, both towards London and the West Country, including integration with the Bedwyn – London service and earlier westbound morning journeys for business / leisure travel.
 - Further development of the Severn – Solent route as an important inter-regional link between the medium-sized towns along the corridor, including regular clock-face stopping patterns and faster journey times (although the latter may be difficult to achieve with current national priorities on maintenance and investment). This should also include better connections with longer distance services and a clear policy for holding connections in the event of late running.
 - More frequent services between Swindon, Melksham, Trowbridge and Southampton.
 - Retention and improvement of the Bristol to Waterloo via Salisbury service,

including the possible enhancement of services mentioned in the SRA's June 2003 Capacity Utilisation Policy.

- Action to address the lack of capacity at peak times on the Cardiff – Portsmouth and Bristol – Weymouth routes.
 - Improvements to rolling stock on long distance services on the Bristol – Weymouth line to meet passenger expectations and the desire of the Heart of Wessex Line Partnership to encourage carriage of cycles for leisure use.
 - Last trains at no earlier than 2300 from the main urban centres (Bristol, Bath, Swindon and Southampton) to cater for increased travel to evening entertainment.
 - Retention of 'walk on' Saver fares.
 - Maintenance, expansion and greater promotion of 'bus link' through ticketing arrangements.
- The Council will continue to be actively involved in the Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership, formed to promote and develop the route. The categorisation of the line as a 'Community Railway' is welcomed.
 - No station re-openings are planned in the 5 year plan period. This is in line with DfT advice in respect of rail industry costs and deliverability issues. The reopening of Corsham station would require identification of specific trains able to stop there. Work on Wilton station has been postponed until the outlook for funding and scheme implementation looks brighter, but steps will be taken to retain the option of progressing a station adjacent to the Park & Ride site at a future date. Wootton Bassett station proposals are awaiting a decision on whether the nearby rail junction would be upgraded, and given the national rail funding scenario it is not expected that this will be resolved in the foreseeable future.
 - Land and access to the north of Melksham station will continue to be protected to allow future relocation of the station or access improvements to offer better parking and interchange opportunities (subject to identification of funding and development of a business case).
 - The Council will continue to encourage station operators to supervise and maintain cycle parking at stations, and may contribute to new facilities where appropriate. Bus / rail interchange facilities will also be improved through implementation of the Interchange Audit recommendations (see paragraph 6.11 above). The rail companies will also be encouraged to improve access to stations and trains for people with disabilities, and disabled access will be taken into account in any improvements funded or part funded by the Council.

6.16 Taxi / private hire

- The Council recognises that taxis and private hire vehicles are an important part of an integrated transport system, playing a variety of roles that complement other forms of public transport.
- The Council will seek to provide adequate taxi ranks in locations reasonably close to where people want to travel from, and will consult taxi operators on all traffic orders that might affect their business.
- Promotion of taxi – bus/rail interchange (through provision of appropriate facilities and information) will be taken into consideration when improvements are carried out at interchange locations.

- The Licensing Authorities (District Councils) will be encouraged, as far as they are able, to promote and maintain an adequate supply and coverage of taxi and private hire operators in their areas, including increasing the availability of vehicles accessible to those with disabilities.
- The County Council will use its position as a major customer of taxi and private hire companies (for school and social care transport contracts) to influence provision where appropriate.
- Operators and Licensing Authorities will be encouraged to give disability awareness training to drivers.
- The Council will seek to encourage taxi and private hire operators to take a greater interest in 'taxilink', 'taxibus', or other types of demand responsive transport provision (particularly in rural areas) as part of its efforts to explore and experiment with alternative ways of meeting transport and access needs.

6.17 Information and marketing

- The Council's Bus Information Strategy (BIS) was adopted in June 2003 and is summarised in paragraph 4.19 above. The Best Value Review also re-emphasised the importance of publicity and information. A bid for an additional staff resource to allow more rapid progress with implementing the BIS was put forward for consideration in the Council's 2006-7 budget, but was not successful due to the growing pressure on revenue budgets.
- Actions within the implementation programme include: a three-year programme of awareness-raising activities; improvements to the 'traveline' telephone enquiry service and a new facility to enquire by mobile phone texting for the next departures from any bus stop in the County; improvements to the quality and presentation of the timetable leaflets produced by the Council, and continued development of existing arrangements for provision of printed timetable information with the operators; joint working with the operators to improve the quality and coverage of roadside timetable information; improved information and signage at interchange locations; and further development of the 'traveline' internet journey planner service.
- The traveline timetable database is of fundamental importance to the Information Strategy, and an important part of the ongoing programme will be to ensure that this is kept fully up to date and accurate. The database is also vital in supporting delivery of the Government's 'Transport Direct' multimodal travel planning service, providing information for accessibility modelling and indicators, and providing data to drive real time information and bus punctuality monitoring systems.
- Marketing is recognised as a key factor in achieving passenger growth, and operators will be encouraged to carry out network or route marketing campaigns, particularly as a part of developing Quality Partnerships
- Real Time Passenger Information offers a completely new type of information provision and should improve passenger confidence and the image of bus travel. The technology also provides benefits to the bus companies in terms of managing their operations. However, costs of installation and maintenance are high, and the experience of existing installations in Salisbury and on the four key routes will be evaluated before deciding whether to fund extensions to other routes later in the LTP2 programme.

6.18 Transport for people with disabilities

- The five year programme set out above includes many actions that will gradually

improve access for people with disabilities to mainstream public transport (for example low floor easy access buses, raised and dropped kerbs at bus stops, bus stop 'clearways' to restrict parking at bus stops so that the bus can pull up next to the kerb, free bus travel for eligible categories of disabled people from April 2006, accessible taxis, real time information at bus stops, and disabled access to rail stations and trains). In addition, community transport (section 6.10 above) provides many specialist services designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities, particularly those with a mobility impairment who are unable to use ordinary buses.

- Funding has been secured for the two-year user-led Transport Access Partnership Project (TAPP). The aim of the partnership is to improve access to public transport for disabled people in Wiltshire (including those with physical and learning disabilities) by developing and disseminating targeted accessible information about accessible public transport; developing a volunteer 'buddy' scheme to support disabled people accessing public transport; and developing and promoting disability awareness training for public transport drivers and staff. The aim is to develop, through pilot schemes, cost – effective approaches that can be mainstreamed or replicated in other parts of the County.
- The Accessibility Planning process may identify disabled people (including those with physical and learning disabilities) as a target group who are at risk of social exclusion, and that this will lead to further partnership working with social care and health sector organisations and user / advocacy groups to identify and seek to overcome specific barriers to access.
- The traveline South West telephone enquiry and internet journey planner service is working towards provision of DDA compliant public transport information across the South West region.

6.19 Co-ordination of transport, and integration with other policy areas

- The development since 1992 of an integrated Passenger Transport Unit has permitted a co-ordinated approach to the provision of public, education and social care transport, and this will continue. Public and education transport requirements in particular will continue to be closely integrated both to achieve value for money, and also to maximise the amount of service that can be provided.
- Co-ordination of bus and train timetables, to promote opportunities for interchange, will continue to be sought where feasible.
- Opportunities will be sought to integrate social care, health sector, public and community transport, although experience elsewhere in the country shows that this is usually not easily achieved and should therefore be seen as a long term aim.
- It is recognised that co-ordination and integration of transport inevitably results in the need for compromises between the wishes of different groups of users (for example, serving a rail station can lengthen the journey or make the timing less convenient for other passengers; and carrying schoolchildren can make the service less attractive for other users) and an appropriate balance between the needs of different users will be sought in each case.
- There will be an increased emphasis on integration of transport with other policy areas, in particular through the development of accessibility partnerships and also through integration with the wider policy objectives identified in chapter 1. In terms of the five year programme, this will be reflected in the increased importance

of cross-sector partnership working to identify specific problem areas and work on potential solutions. These will build where possible on existing structures such as the Wiltshire Rural Transport Partnership, and the 16-19 Education Transport Partnership.

- The implications of the recent Schools White Paper will be assessed once details have been published of the draft legislation. This will include consideration of the costs and operational implications of the proposed new requirement to provide transport for children from low income families to a choice of schools, including any implications for integration with public transport; consideration of the respective roles of bus and coach travel, cycling, walking and car sharing in providing sustainable transport to meet the identified needs for travel to and from school; and whether to apply to be a Pathfinder authority in respect of charging for transport. It is at this stage thought unlikely that there would be an economic case for applying to be a Pathfinder given the rural nature of the County and the high costs of additional transport provision.

6.20 Consultation and community involvement

- Wiltshire County Council has for many years recognised the benefits of involving the community in planning and promoting services at the local level, and has a long-established network of parish public transport representatives that was one of the first of its kind. It has also recently won Beacon status for its work with Community Area plans, and community groups are actively involved in the development and promotion of the Wigglybus demand responsive services.
- However, it is recognised that there are issues about the ability to properly resource community involvement at this level. The Best Value Review identified as a key issue the need to develop a cost-effective framework for consultation and community involvement for which appropriate levels of resource could be identified. A review is under way to achieve this.
- At the strategic level, there was extensive consultation on elements of the public transport strategy during 2004-05 as part of the passenger transport Best Value Review, which has helped to develop the strategy presented in this document. Consultations during the development of the LTP itself have also influenced the public transport strategy.
- Strategic level consultation will continue to be carried out in a variety of ways:
 - Specific consultations around proposed changes to or reviews of policy.
 - Periodic use of surveys (including the People's Voice Citizens' Panel) to test public opinion on relevant aspects of the strategy.
 - Involvement in strategic level partnerships (including the Accessibility planning partnerships when established), and with groups representing the views of particular interests (e.g. Wiltshire and Swindon User Network, Learning Disability Forum, Wiltshire Assembly of Youth, bus operator Quality Partnerships).
 - In addition to the existing Local Transport Forum, an annual public transport stakeholders forum will be held to provide a regular opportunity to discuss strategic and policy issues. There will also be an annual operators' meeting.
 - There are specific protocols for consultation on bus stop improvements and the introduction of bus stop clearways.

(d) Monitoring

- 6.21 Progress against targets and with the implementation programme will be monitored regularly and reported in the LTP Progress Reports. Targets are also reported annually in the County Council's Best Value Performance Plan. Budgets are monitored monthly and action taken to respond to variations against planned expenditure. Bus service contracts are reviewed and re-tendered on a four year cycle, including a check on value for money and how far the services contribute to the agreed funding priorities. Partnership activities are monitored through the regular partnership meetings.

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL EXPENDITURE ON SUPPORTED PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

Scope of guidelines

These guidelines apply to Wiltshire County Council's own expenditure on public transport support, Rural Bus Subsidy Grant, and any other public transport revenue support administered by the Council.

Public Transport Aims

The aims of the County Council in spending money on support for public transport services are to:

- Provide access to a wide range of facilities and opportunities (including food and other shopping, personal business, health care, learning, employment, leisure, social and recreational purposes) for those without access to private transport; and
- Maintain and develop public transport services which contribute to reducing congestion and air pollution, and improve road safety, by making public transport an attractive alternative to car use.

Methods of identifying need for supported services

The County Council will:

- identify a network of strategic and urban services on which it will seek to maintain acceptable service levels;
- work with 'accessibility partnerships' to carry out accessibility assessments and identify potential ways of meeting access needs, which may include proposals for supported services;
- work with the Community Areas and local communities to identify their transport and access needs and appropriate ways of meeting these; and
- use experimental services to test demand, or to pilot innovative ways of providing services (subject to availability of funding).

Services that are identified for support as a result of the above may include conventional bus services, demand responsive transport, or community / voluntary transport as considered most appropriate in the circumstances.

Priorities

HIGH	H1	Maintaining acceptable weekday daytime service levels on strategic network services, and on key local services in the Salisbury urban area and the larger towns of Chippenham, Trowbridge, Melksham, Westbury, Warminster, Bradford on Avon, Corsham, Calne, Wootton Bassett, Amesbury / Durrington / Larkhill / Bulford and Tidworth (target service levels hourly on Key Bus Route Network and urban local services, two-hourly on other interurban services with more than local significance).
	H2	On other routes, maintaining at least daily (weekday) access to a local centre with a range of food and other shops, bank or building society, post office, library and doctor's surgery, and with strategic network services to a larger town.
	H3	Maintaining journeys catering primarily for work related trips where no reasonable alternative service exists.
	H4	Providing services for non-entitled children travelling to and from a catchment area school, where there is a minimum demonstrable level of demand of at least 20 children (see footnote).
MEDIUM	M1	Providing higher-than-minimum levels of daytime weekday service on strategic network services, or key routes in Salisbury urban area and the larger towns, where justified by the number of passengers carried.
	M2	On other routes, providing higher-than-minimum levels of weekday daytime service, or more convenient access, to food and other shopping, personal business, work or health care, where justified by the number of passengers carried and/or where it makes a significant contribution to achieving accessibility targets.
	M3	Providing services for non-entitled children travelling to and from a catchment area school, where there is not yet a demonstrable minimum level of demand but where the service would support a School Travel Plan, and there is a reasonable expectation that the minimum demand and subsidy per passenger guidelines will be met once the service has become established (see footnote).
	M4	Providing evening, Sunday or Bank Holiday journeys on Key Bus Route Network services, or where a significant proportion of the passengers are travelling for work, shopping or healthcare related purposes, or to meet the leisure and social needs of young people, where justified by the number of passengers carried and/or where it makes a significant contribution to achieving accessibility targets.
LOW	L1	Maintaining existing services which satisfy the value for money criteria (below) but do not fall into any of the high or medium priority categories above.
	L2	Providing services catering primarily or exclusively for leisure, social, tourism or recreation purposes (other than those included in priority M4 above).

FOOTNOTE – ACCESS TO EDUCATION; Children or students who are entitled under the County Council's Education Transport Policies will receive free or assisted transport to and from school or college as a matter of course, subject to receipt and approval of an application. This is funded from the Education Transport budget and falls outside the scope of these guidelines.

County Council funding will NOT normally be used to provide transport that is used primarily or exclusively by non-entitled schoolchildren attending an out-of-catchment school, or by post-16 students attending a non-designated school or college except under the provisions of the Education Transport Policy.

Criteria

The Council will use the following guidelines to ensure value for money:

- The Council will critically review the justification for services where the subsidy per passenger trip exceeds the following:
 - £1.25 per passenger trip for school services under priorities H4 or M3 above;
 - £2.30 per passenger trip for urban local services;
 - £3.50 per passenger trip for all other services.

(The lower values for school and urban services reflect the shorter trip distances and lower fares paid on these types of service).

- Where the subsidy per passenger trip is above these guide limits, the Council may decide to continue support if the service is meeting a high priority need and no reasonable alternative means of access is available.
- Exceptions may also be made for experimental services.
- The guideline values may be reviewed from time to time to reflect rises in operating costs and fares.

Application of the priorities and criteria

Decisions on which services to support will be made on the basis of a balanced judgement, taking into account:

- The subsidy per passenger trip for each service;
- The relative priority of the needs met, according to the categories as given above; and
- The contribution made by each service to the achievement of the objectives and targets set out in the Local Transport Plan.

