

Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

Wednesday 4 March 2020

1.00 pm Taunton Library Meeting Room,
Paul Street, Taunton, TA1 3XZ



SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA

To: The Members of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

We are now able to enclose the following information which was unavailable when the agenda was published:

Item 7	Safe routes to school (Pages 3 - 12) To receive a presentation.
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Democratic Service Team, County Hall, Taunton

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Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee

10 March 2020

Safe Routes to School: Eligibility for free home to school transport due to road dangers. Should we be considering this in the light of the climate emergency?

Mike O'Dowd-Jones: Strategic Commissioning Manager Highways and Transport

William Rochford: Access, Admissions and Entitlements

Overview

Policy

Assessment Criteria

Impact – current numbers

Conclusion of previous work

Summary of remaining challenges

Climate emergency and de-carbonisation



School Transport – Road Dangers

Policy

Section 508B of The Act places a duty on Local Authorities in England relating to home to school travel arrangements for 'eligible' children which are defined under schedule 35B of The Act 1996

Children who attend schools beyond the statutory walking distance

Children whose route to school is deemed to be unsafe

Children from low income families

Children with special educational needs or disability (SEND)

Where children live within statutory walking distance of their transport area or nearest qualifying school the Local Authority has a duty to provide travel assistance where the nature of the available walking route is such that a child cannot reasonably be expected to walk (accompanied where necessary) in reasonable safety.

Courts have defined an "available route" as one "along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk to school with reasonable safety. It does not fail to qualify as 'available' because of dangers which would arise if the child is unaccompanied". The route measured may include footpaths, bridleways and other pathways, as well as recognised roads.

Policy

Walking routes are assessed against the following criteria:

That the child will be accompanied

Road width, visibility and the severity of bends

Existence of 'safe refuge' - this means footpaths and verges, road markings at the side of the road

The volume of traffic at the relevant time of day

The type of traffic and its speed

Difficulty of road crossings

Nature of road (urban or rural) and driver expectation

The presence or absence of speed limits and other warning signs

The accident record along the route

A range of factors are taken into account.

The fact that there is a high volume of fast-moving traffic is not in itself a reason to assess a route as unsuitable - there may be a footpath and good crossing points along the route that could mean it is safe.

Similarly, the lack of a footpath or verge would not be a reason to assess a route as unsuitable if there was, for instance, a very low volume of traffic and good visibility.

pact

omerset, we currently have 1,224 children with entitlement to school transport due to Road
nger.

se children attend 75 different schools.

ools with in excess of 50 pupils with a Road Danger entitlement are:

Wadhams School, Crewkerne
Stanchester Academy, Stoke sub Hamdon
Robert Blake, Bridgwater
Maiden Beech Academy, Crewkerne
Huish Episcopi Academy, Huish Episcopi
Holyrood Academy, Chard
All Saints, Montacute

ed on an average cost of transporting a child to a mainstream school of £1,123, the total
ual revenue impact of Road Danger entitlement is £1.374m.

Previous Work

Transport Service Review – “Road Danger Points” outline business case Feb 2013.

190 “Danger Points” creating additional entitlement to free home to school transport for 1200 pupils (approx. 10% of those entitled).

Reviewed 13 danger points affecting 11 routes, 400 pupils (£184k PA additional cost)

Considered engineering solutions, policy changes to allow use of footpaths & bridleways, reviewing historic designations in the light of new conditions.

High level engineering feasibility report on each of the locations. Found potential to reduce or remove entitlement on 9 of the 11 routes. (est. £128k saving for circa £430k capital)

Schools considered:

- Upton Noble CofE VC Primary
- Charlton Mackrell CofE Primary
- All Saints CofE VA Primary School, Montacute and Stanchester
- Maiden Beech Academy & Wadham
- Hugh Sexey CofE Middle School & Wedmore First
- St Vigor & St John CofE Primary
- Holyrood Academy
- Chewton Mendip CofE VA primary
- All Saints First/ Dulverton Middle

Engineering Pilot Projects 2014

Holyrood Academy.

Route C150B. 40 road danger pupils in 2013 (20 in 2020).

Danger due to need to cross on bend with poor visibility on A358 south of Chard/ Tatworth. Extend footway on west side to inside 30mph limit to give safe opportunity to cross.

Savings would be to reduce vehicle size and route change.

Estimated annual savings £4.2k. Initial estimated cost £9k.

Detailed engineering feasibility report Nov 2014 considered 2 options costed at £180k to £280k. Need for ground investigation and likely ground stabilisation.

Engineering Pilot Projects 2015

Maiden Beech Academy.

Route C107. 34 road danger pupils in 2013 (30 in 2020).

Danger due to need to cross on bend (Pye corner, Merriott) with poor visibility. 60m footway needed on east side to join with existing footway.

Saving would be to reduce vehicle and route change.

Estimated annual savings £11.6k. Initial estimated cost £32k.

Further engineering feasibility assessment concluded carriageway realignment, land acquisition and retaining wall needed and raised concerns about speed so suggested traffic calming also needed.

Significant cost increase likely Queried likely usage given the route would be an hour's round trip on foot for parent.

Key Issues for consideration

Rural nature of routes and footway provision in rural areas coupled with high speed traffic results in a continuing high number of pupils eligible for free home to school transport due to a road danger. Not much change between 2013 and 2020.

Engineering solutions are very challenging – land acquisition and ground conditions. Cost prohibitive in terms of a payback from savings in transport costs. If scheme not feasible then any capital costs revert to a revenue pressure.

Not certain that if eligibility for free home to school transport was removed that parents would walk the 3 miles to school and back.

Removing the road danger may simply transfer most people from bus to car.

Not likely to be a strategic solution to the problem through engineering solutions, however there may be case-by-case opportunities from local knowledge.

Climate emergency and decarbonisation

Climate change transport workshop 2019: Where best to focus efforts:

Low impact:

Removing short car trips (removing 80% of trips in Somerset <2km by 2030 only saves 1.4% of 'do-nothing' carbon).

Page 12

Medium Impact:

- Increasing vehicle occupancy
- Freight efficiency
- Car free developments
- Reducing demand for travel

High Impact:

- Private vehicle electrification
- Zero emission freight