



Minutes of the meeting of the SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT AND ROAD SAFETY FORUM held on Monday 6 November 2006 at 7.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor Williams (Chair)

Forum Representatives

J Brown	Central Milton Keynes Women's Institute
J Dickson	Moulsoe Parish Council
A Dnes	Stony Stratford Town Council
E Dodworth	Hanslope Parish Council
M Fagan	Haversham and Little Linford Parish Council
A Francis	New Bradwell Parish Council
S Kennedy	Stantonbury Parish Council
E O'Rouke	Fenny and Bletchley Town Council
A Richards	Newport Pagnell Town Council
D Stabler	Great Linford Parish Council
G Stimpson	Haversham and Little Linford Parish Council
N Ward	Shenley Brook End Parish Council

**Officers:** T Dove (Traffic and Transport Manager), S Morris (School Travel Plan Adviser), S Mulcahy (Safer Roads Liaison Officer), K Whiteside (Chief Highways and Transport Engineer), R Townend (Parish Projects Officer), D Lawson (Senior Engineer) and M Toze (Committee Manager).

**Also Present:** J Freeman (Stagecoach East).

**Apologies:** J Belcher (Traffic Management Officer, Thames Valley Police), D Dodman (Moulsoe Parish Council), A Clark (Stantonbury Parish Council), L Courtney (Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council), K Goss (Emberton Parish Council)

**1.0 MINUTES**

**ACTION**

That the minutes of the Sustainable Transport and Road Safety Forum held on 4 July 2006 be approved as a correct record.

**2.0 MATTERS ARISING**

**ACTION**

(a) Minute 3.0 (a) Matters Arising.

Councillor A Dnes (Stony Stratford Town Council) asked if there had been any further action with regard to buses running before 7am

The Chief Highways Engineer noted that all bus services were under review, and that early morning services are subsidised where there is demand. However, if the number of pre-7 am services were to be extended that would be at the expense of existing supported services. The Chair

**K  
WHITE-  
SIDE**

asked the Chief Highways Engineer to give a detailed response on this issue at the next meeting. Letter to Cllr Dnes on this matter is attached.

- (b) Minute 3.0 (b) Matters Arising  
The Traffic and Transport Manager noted that all parishes should now have received SIDS data.
- (c) Minute 4.0 Review of Traffic and Transport Service Policy and Procedure  
The Traffic and Transport Manager noted that a policy on HGVs was being developed and he would report on this at a future meeting
- (d) Minute 5.0 (a) Use of Bio Fuels.  
The Chair noted that the Council was now investigating Bio Fuels in more depth. It was hoped that Bio Fuels would become more available in Milton Keynes from 2007 onwards.
- (e) Minute 5.0 (d) Income and Expenditure in respect of the Permitted and Special Parking Areas in Milton Keynes (section 55 of the RTRA 1984)  
Councillor D Stabler (Great Linford Parish Council) noted that he had not received a written reply to his question. The Chief Highways Engineer replied that this was because the Audit Commission had not yet issued a report.
- (f) Minute 6.0 (a) Any Other Business  
Councillor A Francis (New Bradwell Parish Council) noted that the report on the East-West Rail Link was still due shortly, possibly in December. A draft bus strategy would also be circulated to parish councils soon.
- (g) Minute 6.0 (e) Any Other Business  
The Chief Highways and Transportation Engineer noted that there were several proposed elements to the Junction 14 improvements, including improvement of slip roads, widening of the A509, improved park and ride (with a redeveloped coach park) and bus improvements to Fox Milne and Pineham roundabouts.

Councillor A Francis (New Bradwell Parish Council) asked if safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclists were being considered. The Chief Highways and Transportation Engineer answered that it would be considered but there were practical limitations. He would bring back more information about the Junction 14 development at the next S.T.A.R.S meeting when the plans would be finalised.

**T DOVE**

**K  
WHITE-  
SIDE**

### **3.0 UPDATE ON THAMES VALLEY SAFER ROADS PARTNERSHIP SID/VAS ACTION WEBSITE**

The Safer Roads Liaison Officer gave a presentation on the safer roads website. The website currently made a lot of information available to the public, including camera statistics and information on speed tickets. It was intended that in the future the website would carry information provided by the local authority, such as speed indicator device data and speed survey data.

The Safer Roads Liaison Officer gave a presentation on Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) and Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS). The former were temporary signs, intended to raise driver awareness of speed. The latter were permanently placed at hazards. Both could be set to activate when drivers were travelling within a particular range of speeds. Hi-visibility posters were being redesigned but were

only intended for temporary use as they had less impact after three weeks.

Councillor A Richards (Newport Pagnell Town Council) asked whether a parish council purchasing its own SID could buy in Milton Keynes Council's services with regard to transportation, health and safety etc?

The Safer Roads Liaison Officer replied that she could provide details of companies selling SIDs. Most devices were similar, and the ones Milton Keynes Council had bought cost around £3,000. Moving a SID was a one-person job but the posts they were mounted on needed to be checked for health and safety. The Safer Roads Liaison Officer would provide detailed information on this to Cllr A Richards and anyone else who was interested.

**S  
Mulcahy**

The Traffic and Transport Manager noted that current Council policy referred to Health and Safety and training issues and could be used for advice.

Forum members noted that some parishes had already bought their own SIDs and were using them successfully.

#### **4.0 PROGRESS WITH SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANS IN MK**

**ACTION**

The School Travel Plan Adviser gave a presentation on School Travel Plans in Milton Keynes. Schools were encouraged to create travel plans in order to reduce car usage. This would have a beneficial impact on traffic flow, road safety and child health. The target was for every school in Milton Keynes to have a travel plan by 2010, including independent schools, special schools and pupil referral units. Currently 77 schools were engaged in the programme, out of 125 schools in Milton Keynes.

Since 2003 there had been a fall in the percentage of children using cars to get to school and a slight increase in cycle and bus use. Unfortunately a change to using data from the schools census would mean that next year's statistics would be harder to compare. The School Travel Plan programme was currently on target.

There had been media interest in schemes such as "Walk to School MK". Another scheme, "Walk on Wednesday" was being trialled and it was hoped that leisure centres would provide free swims to children as an incentive. An updated school travel strategy would go to consultation soon.

Forum members raised the following issues:

**Q:** Were walking buses still being used?

**A:** Walking buses had problems with organisation and insurance issues, and were reliant on volunteers. For those reasons the School Travel Plan Adviser was not actively encouraging walking buses, and there were not any currently operating in Milton Keynes. However, if a school wished to operate one the School Travel Plan Adviser would be happy to give advice and support.

**Q:** What funds were available for implementation of school travel plans?

**A:** Capital funding was available, based on a set amount per school with an additional sum per pupil. For a primary school of 250 pupils it worked out at around £5000 and for a secondary school of 1000 pupils it was around £10,000. This funding could be spent on items such as cycle or buggy shelters.

**Q:** Even with the improvements 2003-06, the proportion of Milton Keynes children travelling to school by car was still much higher than the national average. How was Milton Keynes Council trying to reduce this?

**A:** The School Travel Plan operated on a number of different levels. Targets were set from the bottom-up, looking at what schools could realistically achieve, but there were also top-down incentive schemes. The school travel strategy would provide more details. Schemes such as “Walk on Wednesday” were expensive but it was hoped they would be effective, and asking leisure centres to provide incentives would help cut costs.

**Q:** Many underpasses were poorly lit, even during the day.

**A:** Issues such as dark underpasses should be taken into account when drawing up the school travel plan, as safety concerns were often raised by parents.

The Traffic and Transport Manager noted that underpasses with particular problems were identified and where possible these issues were addressed through capital expenditure.

Forum members suggested that school transport should liaise more closely with Streetcare Rangers.

## **5.0 ISSUES RAISED BY PARISH COUNCILS**

## **ACTION**

The following issues were raised by Parish Councils:

- (a) Proliferation of Roadside Signs. (Councillor D Stabler, Great Linford Parish Council)

Councillor Stabler outlined research suggesting that too much information could be distracting and suggested that Milton Keynes Council should sign up to the CPRE scheme to reduce the number of road signs. He asked if Milton Keynes Council was prepared to undertake a comprehensive review of all roadside signs and remove all but those essential to safe driving and route direction?

**A:** The Traffic and Transport Manager agreed that in some places there were too many signs, and Milton Keynes Council intended to be more proactive in removing illegal and out-of-date signs. In addition, a new signing strategy was being brought in, which would affect the introduction of new signs. However, the costs of a comprehensive review of existing signs would be prohibitive.

The Chair noted that many signs not essential to safe driving or route direction had an entitlement to be where they were and had planning permission. Illegal signs should be removed.

The Chief Highways and Transportation Engineer noted that in some cases it was cheaper to put up a new sign rather than to replace existing signs with the new information integrated.

D Lawson noted that potential impact on road safety was scrutinised as part of the planning process for advertisements.

- (b) Grafton Gate/Silbury Boulevard traffic signal junction. (Councillor D Stabler, Great Linford Parish Council)

Councillor D Stabler outlined his concerns about the Grafton Gate/Silbury Boulevard junction and noted that all the research he was aware of suggested that roundabouts were more effective than traffic lights.

The Chair noted that this specific project had been designed and funded by English Partnership. When the traffic lights were turned on they had been set to a sequence inappropriate for that location, which had created severe delays. They had therefore been switched off again. When the lights were turned on again the sequencing would be correct and the roundabout would be reshaped to address visibility problems.

The Chief Highways and Transportation Engineer noted that there was no general answer on whether roundabouts or traffic lights were preferable – it depended on circumstances. Roundabouts tended to function better when there was low to medium traffic flow coming equally from all sides. However when there was higher traffic flow coming mainly from one direction traffic lights made it easier for cars to get onto roundabouts.

In this instance, although the junction was currently functioning reasonably well, modelling showed that in the future there would be severe delays unless traffic lights were introduced. The intention was not to make traffic flow better now but to prevent matters getting worse in the future. Modelling suggested that even at peak times cars should not be waiting at traffic lights for more than two minutes.

The Chair noted that Milton Keynes Council did not spend time and money working on junctions unless it was believed to be necessary. Modelling of future traffic flow suggested that 50 roundabouts in the city would require some work, but in many cases this would be other measures such as road widening rather than introduction of traffic lights.

Councillor Stabler observed that research suggested that removing both traffic lights and roundabouts was the most effective solution, as it placed the onus on the driver to drive safely.

The Chair expressed concern that this could be a rather risky solution.

(c) Street Signs. (Councillor D Stabler, Great Linford Parish Council)

Is MKC aware that some street signs in CMK are unreadable and others throughout the administrative area are obscured by verdures?

Does MKC have duty - and a regime in place - to inspect, replace and or clean road signs and what action will be taken to rectify the problems highlighted here?

**A:** There is no regular schedule of inspecting signs. If an officer or a member of the public reports a problem with a particular sign action will be taken. Highways Engineers will report problems with signs along with their other duties.

(d) The lack of disabled access on the footbridge on the V7 between Eaglestone and Coffee Hall. (Councillor R Gibbard, Woughton Parish Council)

**A:** The Chair agreed that this was a concern. Unfortunately it would be difficult to adapt the footbridge. Introducing a crossing would require a reduction in the speed on the grid road, and a recent consultation with Milton Keynes residents had suggested that reducing speeds on grid roads would be unpopular. The

**Cllr C**

Chair would bring a briefing paper on this item to a future meeting of the S.T.A.R.S Forum.

**Williams**

- (e) The possibility of introducing a 20 MPH zone around local schools. (Councillor R Gibbard, Woughton Parish Council)

**A:** The Traffic and Transport Manager noted that in actual fact there did not tend to be many road accidents outside schools. If a school did have particular problems with speeding or road accidents, measures would be introduced to make roads safer, and this had been done in some cases.

The Chair noted that schools and parents also needed to act to ensure child safety, and that 20mph zones would work best in conjunction with other efforts.

The Traffic and Transport Manager noted that a team visited schools to talk about road safety. This was always done when a new crossing was built near a school.

- (f) Concerns regarding the disregard some Private Hire Drivers have for the wearing of seat belts.

**A:** The Chair noted that private hire drivers were obliged to wear seatbelts. Not to do so was a breach of both the law and their licensing conditions, and private hire drivers who did not wear seatbelts could be reported to the Licensing Department. In practice, however, such offences were difficult to prove. Hackney carriage drivers were not legally obliged to wear seatbelts.

J Brown (Central Milton Keynes Women's Institute) noted that some taxi drivers chose not to wear seatbelts because they were concerned about the risk of assault.

- (g) Regarding Newton Leys development in Bletchley (Lisa Courtney, Clerk to Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council):

D Lawson (Senior Engineer) noted that the plans for the site currently showed a reserve site for the westward link, which developers would have to fund.

There were two access roads onto the site, but both feed onto Drayton Road, which is expected to lead to an increase in traffic flow there. Various options are being looked into, including stopping cars from using Skew Bridge and redirecting traffic onto the Drayton Parslow Road.

## **9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**ACTION**

- (a) Councillor A Dnes (Stony Stratford Town Council) asked if bus timetable books would be reintroduced, as they were more useful when a journey involved changing buses.

The Chief Highways and Transportation Engineer said he would look into the matter. Subsequent letter to Cllr Dnes attached

**K White-side**

Forum Members noted that some people had commented that they found the new timetables clearer.

## **10.0 DATES OF NEXT MEETING**

**ACTION**

RESOLVED –

That prospective dates for the next meeting be circulated for consideration. ***M Toze***  
Wednesday evenings were preferable.