

## Appendix A

# Smarter Choices the low cost solution for Aberdeen City and Shire

### What are Smarter Choices

Smarter choices, are a set of tools that aid mobility management. Within Mobility Management there are “hard” and “soft” measures. The hard measures are parking and traffic control, cycling, walking and public transport infrastructure, usually small schemes that are tied to marketing measures to achieve behaviour change. Mobility Management can be described as a mixture of these conventional transport planning and marketing/psychology (hard measures) and soft measures, including the following:

- personal travel planning
- travel-awareness campaigns
- promotion of walking and cycling
- public transport marketing and information
- workplace and school travel planning

### Background

The origins of Smarter Choices grew out of the failure of the 1960's “predict and provide” model and the publication of the 1994 SACTRA report which quantified the, ‘more roads lead to more traffic’ effect, and showed a very weak link between new roads and economic growth.

Transport strategy started to move towards Mobility Management and Smarter Choices with central government making Travel Plans part of the planning process and the appointment of School and Workplace planning officers.

### Aberdeen City and Shire

Smarter Choices initiatives have been carried out in the area for the last 10 years or more including the Stepchange programme and local promotion of sustainable transport. These efforts have now been reinforced by the GetABout partnership which is working towards a seamless electronic delivery and monitoring of travel plans using Planning Guidance, an on line travel plan builder a monitoring system and a marketing campaign to back it up.

### Research in England (DfT)

In 2004, 3 towns were chosen to demonstrate the effectiveness of Smarter Choices, Darlington, Peterborough and Worcester. The spend in each was about £5m. The effectiveness of the programme was measured by amongst others Aberdeen University.

The results have been very positive, indicating, for the three towns taken together, the following (from 2004-2009):

- A reduction in car trips 9 per cent (there was an estimated fall of about 1 per cent in other medium-sized towns over the same period)

- Bus trips per person increased by 10-22 per cent (there was an estimated national fall of 0.5 per cent in medium sized towns).
- Cycle trips per person increased by 26-30 per cent (against other comparable towns seeing estimated cycling trips fall by 9 per cent).
- Walking trips per person increased by 10-13 per cent (there was an estimated national decline in trips in similar towns of 9 per cent).

The results indicate something different going on with the Sustainable Travel Towns compared to other similar towns in the country. They suggest the programme was successful in reducing travel by car and going some way towards reducing congestion, and increasing the use of other modes of travel. It is possible to infer that there were also many benefits:

- environmental benefits from the reduction of carbon and greenhouse gas emissions
- environmental and health benefits from the reduction in pollution
- benefits to the health of residents from increased active travel
- benefits for the quality of life of residents from factors such as reduced congestion and better access to transport
- benefits for social inclusion and more equality of opportunity, because of better access to transport for residents

When the above factors are taken into account, the programme's offered good value for money. Smarter Choices may also have the potential to enable growth (for example population growth occurred in Peterborough and employment growth occurred in Darlington) without increased congestion - which could have the resulting effect of enabling growth without deterioration in quality of the transport network or quality of life.

The results from these towns indicate that implementing a package of Smarter Choices - in other words encouraging more sustainable travel - could make an important contribution towards delivering a sustainable transport system.

### **Research in Scotland**

Seven towns or part of towns were chosen by the Scottish Government in 2008. The spend per town was much smaller than in England and only Dumfries is comparable with the English towns; research results are not yet available.

### **English conclusions (DfT)**

Two different policy scenarios for the next ten years were looked at:

The '**high intensity**' scenario identifies the potential provided by a significant expansion of activity to a much more widespread implementation of present good practice, albeit to a realistic level which still recognises the constraints of money and other resources, and variation in the suitability and effectiveness of soft factors according to local circumstances.

The '**low intensity**' scenario is broadly defined as a projection of the present (2003-4) levels of local and national activity on soft measures.

The main features of the high intensity scenario would be:

- A reduction in peak period urban traffic of about 21% (off-peak 13%);
- A reduction of peak period non-urban traffic of about 14% (off-peak 7%);
- A nationwide reduction in all traffic of about 11%.

The public expenditure cost of achieving reduced car use by soft measures, on average, is estimated at about 1.5 pence per car kilometer, i.e. £15 for removing each 1000 vehicle kilometers of traffic. Current official practice calculates the benefit of reduced traffic congestion, on average, to be about 15p per car kilometer removed, and more than three times this level in congested urban conditions. Thus every £1 spent on well-designed soft measures could bring about £10 of benefit in reduced congestion alone, more in the most congested conditions, and with further potential gains from environmental improvements and other effects, provided that the tendency of induced traffic to erode such benefits is controlled. There are also opportunities for private business expenditure on some soft measures, which can result in offsetting cost savings (DfT)

## **Conclusion**

Expenditure on Smarter Choices measures is significantly cheaper than investing in large scale infrastructure projects and can have a similar effect to those projects, while delivering key aspects of the Government and Councils agenda. In particular it has a key role to play to lock in the benefits of any improvements in the area. Smarter Choices measures provide good value for money.