

Local Accessibility Indicators for LTP2

10 November 2005

Accessibility planning - Local accessibility indicators for LTP2

Summary

Local authorities are required to develop and specify at least one local accessibility indicator and target within their second Local Transport Plan. The letter provides some further clarification on the development of these indicators and targets in response to requests for additional information from local authorities, raised during a recent series of successful DfT / withinreach seminars on accessibility planning.

Background

The Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans and the Accessibility Planning Guidance, both issued in December 2004, informed authorities of the DfT's expectation that their completed Accessibility Strategies (in their final LTPs) should include at least one target relating to accessibility. This target should be based on the DfT's core accessibility indicators, their own locally developed accessibility indicators, or both.

The guidance explained that the core accessibility indicators being calculated by the DfT focus solely on journey times to jobs and services and, as such, are unlikely to present a complete picture of accessibility within an area. Accessibility problems and solutions vary significantly between local areas and, in some cases, journey time might not be the most appropriate measure of local accessibility. Local authorities are encouraged to develop their own performance indicators, in support of their local accessibility objectives, and based on their own assessment and prioritisation of local accessibility problems. Authorities' local accessibility indicator(s) and target(s) for LTP2 should, therefore, focus on local priorities and might reflect influences other than journey time that are of importance locally.

Recent accessibility planning seminars

DfT, together with the 'withinreach' accessibility planning training and support programme, recently held three seminars for local authorities in Birmingham, Leeds and London. At these seminars a number of queries were raised regarding the development of locally appropriate, outcome based accessibility indicators. *In response, we would like to provide further clarification to authorities on the issues that they raised, and I would therefore be grateful if you would pass on the following information to all local transport authorities in your region as soon as possible.*

Clarification on issues raised regarding accessibility indicators at the 'withinreach' accessibility planning seminars:

LTP accessibility indicators

As part of their accessibility strategies, authorities are expected to develop and deliver action plans to tackle their identified priorities. As indicated in the December 2004 Accessibility Planning Guidance, a phased approach to the development of these action plans over the five year period, for example by geographical area or theme, is acceptable. However, authorities should, by March 2006, be in a position to set out a realistic schedule for tackling the identified priorities from 2006/07 to 2010/11, and more developed and detailed actions for at least the first year of the LTP period.

The Department still expects all authorities to adopt at least one accessibility indicator and target within their LTP submission in March 2006. The indicator(s) should, as far as possible, be outcome

based and at a spatial level that is not particular to a single project or scheme or a small geographical area. Where this is not possible, authorities are welcome to develop a basket of outcome and output indicators where they deem this to be appropriate and relevant. Authorities are encouraged to discuss their proposed indicators with regional Government Offices. These local indicators do not need to be related to the national core indicators. Local, validated, data should be used where possible to calculate the indicators.

We are aware that some authorities have chosen to phase the development and delivery of action plans through the five year LTP period, and that they wish to include more than one accessibility indicator and target within their LTP. It is possible that such authorities might find it difficult to identify and adopt realistic, challenging and relevant targets at this stage for those issues that are to be addressed later in the LTP period.

Authorities therefore also have the option of supplementing the accessibility indicator(s) and target(s) reported in their LTP with further indicators and targets which should be documented in the progress report that is to be submitted to the Department in 2008. This flexibility should enable authorities to adopt targets that reflect change against all of their identified priorities and allow for the possibility that additional priorities might be identified subsequent to the submission of the LTP.

Where an authority chooses to propose additional targets in their progress report to be submitted in 2008, they should first discuss these targets with their regional Government Office. Their performance against any such additional targets will then feed into the Government's assessment of progress in subsequent years.

Whether authorities choose to adopt a single accessibility indicator or a basket of indicators, they should ensure that they are framed in such a way as to be capable of demonstrating changes in accessibility throughout the lifetime of the LTP. Authorities should not set a target that is achievable in year one of the LTP, without setting further targets (which might cover different themes or spatial areas) to cover the remaining years of the LTP. Authorities should continue to monitor and report progress against the indicators documented in their LTP to ensure that action can be taken if there is any deterioration in accessibility levels.

Wherever possible, accessibility indicators should be outcome focussed and jointly owned by accessibility planning partners. In order for the contribution of transport measures to be identified, authorities are free to identify the respective influences of transport and non-transport factors. Authorities are also encouraged to consider how their local accessibility indicators and targets compliment and contribute to their developing local area agreements. Accessibility indicators are amongst the options for outcomes for which targets can be set in local area agreements, as set out in guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Local area agreements involve local strategic partnerships and hence are an important mechanism for the delivery of accessibility improvements.

DfT's core accessibility indicators

It is planned that the core indicators will be issued to local transport authorities shortly and that they will be published on the ONS Neighbourhood Statistics Service website, in due course. Whilst these indicators will be a very useful addition to authorities' evidence base, we also expect that most authorities will have additional local data and information that is not included within DfT's calculation of core indicators, and would therefore encourage authorities to calculate their own local indicators using this.

It is worth reiterating that the core indicators that we are producing will not be used to judge authorities' performance, unless they are selected by that authority as their LTP accessibility indicator(s). Given that they are based on a number of assumptions made at the national level, we will be much more interested in authorities' own indicators and targets which reflect local priorities. It is against these local indicators and targets, reported in the LTP and, where relevant, in the 2008 progress report, that authorities' performance will be measured, as part of the LTP process.

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If you need any more information on the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Caroline Fish