To: Learning and Leisure Services Committee
From: Head of Educational Resources
Head of Roads and Transport
Date: 12th August 2008
Ref: MM/NR

Subject: SCHOOL TRANSPORT

PURPOSE OF REPORT
This report raises issues associated with the school transport arrangements, particularly walking distance criteria and safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The learning and leisure committee is recommended:

(i) to note the financial implications of the distance criteria adopted in the council's school transport policy

(ii) to note the evaluation procedures for walking route safety and their application to the routes listed in the report

(iii) to note the general school transport issues highlighted in the report, particularly the action taken to encourage sustainable school travel choices

(iv) to refer this report to the environmental services committee for information

Members wishing further information should contact
Murdo Maciver, Head of Educational Provision on 01236 812269
Ron Dufour, Education Officer on 01236 2258
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The 2008-09 budget for home to school transport in North Lanarkshire is £8,974,918, comprising £4,365,607 for mainstream pupils and £4,609,311 for pupils with additional support needs (ASN pupils). Further details of the provision is shown in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1 – transport for mainstream pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No of entitled pupils</th>
<th>No of schools</th>
<th>No of contracts</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary Sector</td>
<td>2878</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary sector</td>
<td>5393</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 – transport for ASN pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASN units/ mainstream schools</th>
<th>No of entitled pupils</th>
<th>No of schools/units</th>
<th>No of contractors Internal transport/taxis</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASN schools</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>£4,609,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASN units/ mainstream schools</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Under an agency agreement, Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) manages the tendering of mainstream transport and makes recommendation to the council on the awarding of contracts. ASN transport is arranged by learning and leisure services with contracts awarded either to internal transport or private taxi firms. SPT is also commissioned to monitor the performance of all contracts, including the inspection of vehicles and adherence to contract specifications.

1.3 The feedback from SPT monitoring and parental surveys indicate that in general the school transport provision is very effective. Complaints are followed up rigorously and where contract failures are established action is taken against the contractor, including financial penalties and contract cancellation.

1.4 This report outlines the main considerations which underpin the council’s transport policy. In particular it highlights the financial implications of the more generous distance criteria adopted by the council and as requested at an earlier meeting, provides further information about the school transport provision on routes not considered to be safe for walking.
2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Section 4.2 of the Education 1980 Act establishes the maximum distance that pupils can be expected to walk to school. This is:

- (i) 2 miles for pupils under 8
- (ii) 3 miles for other pupils

Section 51 requires education authorities to make such school transport arrangements as they consider necessary for pupils residing in their area and attending their designated catchment schools. In addition, authorities are required to have regard to safety when considering whether to make transport arrangements. Authorities can make a charge for vacant places, taking account of the financial circumstances of the parent.

3. WALKING DISTANCE TO SCHOOL

3.1 North Lanarkshire operates distance criteria which are substantially more generous than the legal requirements. Under the policy, transport is provided for:

- (i) all primary age pupils living over 1 mile from the catchment school
- (ii) all secondary age pupils living over 2 miles from the catchment school
- (iii) any pupil who would be required to walk a route assessed as not safe
- (iv) pupils affected by capability issues, with confirmation from a designated medical officer

3.2 In assessing entitlement under the distance criteria, the service measures the shortest safe walking route and applies the appropriate thresholds rigorously in all cases. This ensures equal treatment across the council area but has the disadvantage that there is no flexibility to respond to specific problems, for example where the distance cut-off divides a street or a small community.

3.3 Over recent years a number of authorities have reviewed their distance criteria and there has been a trend towards increased walking distance and reduced entitlement to free transport. Table 3 shows the criteria operating in selected authorities.
### Table 3: Free transport criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angus</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
<td>3 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Edinburgh</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Dunbartonshire</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Lothian</td>
<td>2 mile</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Renfrewshire</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
<td>3 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falkirk</td>
<td>Under 8 and over 1 mile</td>
<td>Over 8 and greater than 2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fife</td>
<td>Under 8 and over 1 mile</td>
<td>Over 8 and greater than 2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLC</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth &amp; Kinross</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
<td>3 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renfrewshire</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLC</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirling</td>
<td>&lt;8=1 mile, &gt;8=2 miles</td>
<td>2 mile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Dunbartonshire</td>
<td>1 mile</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Lothian</td>
<td>1.5 miles</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 The cost of the more generous entitlement in the North Lanarkshire policy is shown in table 4.
4. SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The safety of pupils on the journey to school is given the highest priority by the service. In addition to legal requirements, various strategies have been implemented to support this priority. These include the following:

(i) specific conditions in the contract between the council and contractors, for example a code of practice for drivers, contingency plans for emergencies, a ban on sub-contracting and the reporting of operational or pupil behaviour problems

(ii) the monitoring of contract performance by SPT

(iii) the provision of seat belts beyond legal requirements

(iv) the provision of supervision on some contracts

(v) safety advice to pupils, including disciplinary action in cases of unruly behaviour

(vi) rigorous scrutiny of the suitability of drivers and escorts

(vii) the obligation on heads to make suitable arrangements in liaison with SPT to ensure safe boarding and alighting.

4.2 As indicated in 2.1 above the authority is obliged to have regard to safety when considering whether to make transport arrangements. This applies irrespective of walking distance and includes placing request situations. The authority discharges the safety obligation towards successful placing request applications by requesting information from the parent on how they propose to ensure safe travel.

4.3 The arrangements for deciding the safety of walking routes to catchment area schools involve both learning and leisure services and environmental services. Learning and leisure provides the route details and the safety assessment is carried out independently by environmental services roads division. The assessment criteria are nationally approved and are shown in appendix 1. It is important to note that the safety evaluation assumes adult accompaniment reflecting the responsibility of parents for safe walking.

4.4 At present there are eight instances where transport is being provided to pupils on the grounds of safety rather than distance. The details involved are shown in table 5 below and in paragraphs 4.5 – 4.9.
Table 5 – safety related transport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Route Details</th>
<th>No of pupils (2008-09)</th>
<th>Annual cost (2008-09)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calder Primary</td>
<td>from Jerviston</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>£26,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleland Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary’s Primary</td>
<td>from Parkside</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>£62,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenboig Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Lady &amp; St Joseph’s Primary</td>
<td>from South Glenboig</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>£16,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Maurice’s High</td>
<td>from Croy</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>£32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brannock High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor High</td>
<td>From Dalziel Park</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>£12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>£150,850</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Calder Primary School, Motherwell

The Jerviston walking route is similar to many other urban walking routes and has been evaluated as a safe route. The first assessment was carried out in March 2006 and it confirmed the route to be safe but with the recommendation that work be undertaken to install dropped kerbs. Learning & Leisure Services paid for this work to be carried out. Parents were advised of the plans to remove transport at the end of June 2007. However, in July 2007 the committee considered a petition against transport withdrawal and a decision was postponed pending a review of all safety related provision. In October 2007 Environmental Services again confirmed the walking route from Jerviston as safe. At present 48 pupils are transported from the area but only 16 are entitled on distance grounds.

4.6 Cleland Primary School and St Mary’s Primary School, Motherwell

The route was assessed in 2002 and failed because of a 5 metre length of narrow footpath on a slight bend in Biggar Road. There is no scope to widen the footway without land acquisition and pavement reconstruction costs.

4.7 Glenboig and Our Lady & St Joseph Primary Schools

New residential development and the opening of new school buildings necessitated walking routes being assessed for distance and safety. The walking route from south Glenboig failed due to 2 lengths of narrow footway adjacent to private front gardens. The number of pupils requiring transport will increase with the completion of new houses.

4.8 Croy to St Maurice’s High School, Cumbernauld

In the late 1990’s the only walking route available at the time was assessed as unsafe. With further residential development in the area alternate routes are now open. With the completion of footpath lighting, environmental services anticipates that in the future a safe route will be available.
4.9 Brannock High School and Taylor High School

Routes from Dalziel Park to these schools have failed because a significant section of the footpath along a country road, Chapelknowe Road, is less than 1.4m wide.

5. WIDER ISSUES

5.1 The trend over recent years has been for an increase nationally in the proportion of children being driven to schools (22% in 2004) and a reduction in walking (53% in 2004). This reflects a number of factors, including an increase in the number of working mothers, greater social affluence and higher car ownership, safety concerns about other modes of travel and concerns about stranger danger and bullying. These travel-to-school changes have raised concerns about the safety and environmental impact of increased car use and about the implications for children’s health.

5.2 In response to these concerns, there has been very close collaboration between learning and leisure services and environmental services in the development of various initiatives to promote alternative and sustainable travel choices, including safe walking, cycling and bus use. Particularly important are the health promoting school policy and the establishment of a road safety education section based in environmental services. The priorities in the road safety section are the phased development of school travel plans for each school and the promotion of road safety awareness, including a range of curriculum based initiatives.

5.3 To date school travel plans have been agreed in 14 schools and a further 63 are at various stages of development. The travel plan initiative is managed by the school travel co-ordinators and the finalised plans take account of the issues raised by the whole school communities. Each travel plan identifies safe walking routes to the school and encourages a reduction in the number of cars on the school run. Where necessary, road infrastructure improvements are made to address concerns. Selected examples of engineering works completed in association with travel plans are shown below:

(1) Kirk O'Shotts Primary, Salsburgh

- path upgrading from School Road to Hirst Road, including provision of footpath lighting
- drop off/pick-up facility and staff/visitor car park in School Road
- improvement of School Road at its junction with Hirst Road, for the benefit of vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists

(2) Newarthill Primary

- footway extension and construction of missing section of footpath
- guard rail and dropped kerb installed at corner of High Street and the approach road to the school

(3) Cumbernauld Primary & St Andrew’s Primary

- changes to car park and drop off/pick up facility layout
• enhanced signing and lining measures around the car park and drop off/pick up facility layout to better manage traffic flow and improve access for school buses
• main footpath to the school widened to accommodate the large numbers of children walking and cycling to school

(4) Old Monkland Primary School

• development of drop off/pick up and turning area

5.4 Environmental services also provides school crossing patrols taking account of the number of primary age children on the route and the number of vehicles on the road at the school start and finish times. Currently these are 221 sites where provision is made. A future review of the school crossing patrol assessment criteria is proposed following the current revision to the national guidelines by the local authority road safety association. A further safety related initiative is the 20 mph speed limit at all schools, including mandatory 20 mph areas and 20’s plenty zones. In many schools inappropriate parking by parents is a safety risk for pupils, and heads are encouraged to seek support in addressing the problems from parent bodies and, if necessary, the police.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The learning and leisure committee is recommended:

(i) to note the financial implications of the distance criteria adopted in the council’s school transport policy

(ii) to note the evaluation procedures for walking route safety and their application to the routes listed in the report

(iii) to note the general school transport issues highlighted in the report, particularly the action taken to encourage sustainable school travel choices

(iv) to refer this report to the environmental services committee for information
Appendix 1

North Lanarkshire Council Guidelines

Guidelines for the Assessment of the Safety of Walking Routes to School

Principles for assessment:

1. In assessing the safety of a particular route, consideration is given only to danger relevant to traffic/road condition.

2. Each case will be measured against the criteria set by North Lanarkshire Council.

3. The criteria is based on the fact that the child will be accompanied as necessary by a parent.

Procedures:

1. Education Department must define accurately the actual route to be assessed.

2. The route will then be split into discrete lengths with similar conditions.

3. Assess the safety of each discrete length based on the criteria for assessment.

4. If any discrete length fails then the route will be deemed to be inadequate.

5. Recommendations will then be made to the Education Department.

Criteria:

1. Assessment will be carried out in the morning at the time when pupils are on their way to school. Note should be taken of any special circumstances on return journey which may apply on afternoon return from school. If decided necessary the return journey will be assessed as well.

2. Each discrete length will be examined and safety assessed.

3. Safety will be assessed by considering the following:-
   a) is a footway/footpath provided? Yes/No
   b) if yes, adequacy of footway/footpath.
   c) if yes, number and type of crossing points.
   d) if no, see flow chart "No footway/footpath provision."
Record of Assessment

Adequacy of footway/footpath will be assessed by identifying:-

1. Type of footway/footpath
2. Width of footway/footpath
3. Surface condition of footway/footpath
4. Lighting provision on footway/footpath

Number and type of crossing points will be identified for:-

1. Road crossings
2. Junctions
3. Access
ASSESSMENT OF SAFE WALKING ROUTES TO SCHOOL

NO FOOTWAY/FOOTPATH PROVISION

ROAD TRAFFIC CALMED?*

NO

ROAD WIDTH ≥ 5.5m

YES

TRAFFIC VOLUME ≥ 240 vph

YES

ROAD WIDTH ≥ 6.5m

NO

STEP OFFS ADEQUATE?

NO

ROUTE UNACCEPTABLE

YES

VISIBILITY ADEQUATE?

YES

ROUTE ACCEPTABLE

NO

* Includes Shared Surface Areas
Definitions:

Footway/Footpath: An adequate footway/footpath is defined as one at least 1.4 metre wide on average even in the surface and without ruts and potholes – suitable for walking on, 1 metre is required at any obstruction.

Road Width: Is the width of surfaced carriageway between edge lines or raised kerbs. An adequate width or road has been determined as “A minimum of 5.5 metres of usable road surface”.

Traffic Volume: The term “Traffic Volume” applies to the two way volume of traffic on a route at the time of assessment.

Step Off: The Term “Step Off” refers to the facility for pedestrians to be able to step clear of the roadway onto a reasonably even and firm surface at kerb level or level with the roadway and a minimum width of 1 metre.

Visibility: The term “Visibility” means the distance of unobstructed vision from the driver to pedestrian when measured from the eyepoint of a driver (usually taken as being 1.05metres above the road surface).

Stopping Distances:

Shortest Stopping Distances in Metres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speed (mph)</th>
<th>Overall Stopping Distance (m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(on a dry road, in a good car with good brakes and tyres and an alert driver. Remember distances increase greatly with set and slippery roads, poor brakes and tyres and tired drivers.)