



***Road
Danger
Reduction
Forum***

***Preparing Local
Transport Plans***

BRIEFING PAPER ⑧
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Allying the New Road Safety Strategy to Danger Reduction

Introduction

The DETR's new road safety strategy "Tomorrows Roads - Safer For Everyone", poses real challenges for authorities wishing to seriously promote sustainable, danger reduction strategies within their road safety policy. Whilst disappointingly visionless in its grasp of how road safety can contribute to broader integrated transport objectives, forward thinking authorities should still find enough within it to compliment their own policies. This position paper sets out to show how this can be done and more importantly incorporated within Local Transport Plan submissions. The starting point is inevitably the new casualty reduction targets.

Casualty Targets

The Forum has never been supportive of setting targets based on crude casualty totals. The data is both inaccurate and incomplete. Casualties for vulnerable road users have also fallen because of the increase in danger from more motor traffic scaring the vulnerable from our roads.

Whilst the new targets appear challenging, they are likely to be achieved by simply carrying on in the same manner as the last twelve years. In 1997 reported fatal and serious casualties were 42.5% lower than the 1981-85 base. The new target is thus to have a 40% reduction in KSI's in 2010, the same length of time after the new 1994-98 base. Looking at the graph in paragraph 1.2 of the strategy and continuing the trends shown in it, it is fair to assume that traffic growth up to 2010 will ensure the 10% slight casualty rate (per 100 million vehicle kilometres) reduction will also happen with no new interventions.

Traffic growth will probably continue to reduce casualty severity through greater congestion and consequent slower speeds. It will also continue to prevent increases in the use of vulnerable modes. And what will happen to children if there is more traffic about? Even more will be excluded from the road environment, probably bringing around a 50% reduction in KSI casualties. This means that if we are to see a real and sustainable improvement in our road environment we must set more radical targets than those given us by the DETR.

The DETR targets effectively mean little or no change in the total

number of reported casualties. A more radical approach would be to accept the targets for KSI's but to go further. A target of reducing total casualties by 10% linked to motor traffic reduction would promote danger reduction. This should be linked to existing targets in health and cycling strategies to increase levels of walking and cycling. Meeting such targets would require a real improvement in the safety of the road environment, particularly for vulnerable road users. The Strategy does give enough ammunition for authorities wishing to see such an outcome. These are set out below.

Child Safety Audits

Child Safety Audits are a central part of Government road safety policy. However, there has as yet been no advice from the DETR on how these are to be carried out. This provides yet another opportunity for progressive authorities to once again set the agenda. Clearly the intention of those thinking up the idea of these audits was not just a counting of the number of children injured but a more fundamental analysis of children's experience of the road environment. The Forum would suggest that child safety audits should also put as much emphasis on each of the following:

- measurement of how children get to school and other facilities and setting targets to increase the proportion walking and cycling. These should be authority wide and also linked to specific safe routes schemes.
- measurement of the proportion of children having access to pedestrian and cyclist training which conforms to best practice guidelines or any other higher standards at both primary and secondary school. Again targets can be set authority wide and locally.
- audit of the proportion of residential areas which are 20 mph zones or Home Zones, with targets set to increase these.
- audit of safe routes to schools setting targets for compliance with speed limits in and around these.
- audit of safe crossing, cycling and other related facilities to and at places which children would want to visit, ie. shops, leisure centres, parks.
- overall compliance with speed limits within urban areas and reclassification of the road hierarchy to take fully into account the mobility needs of children.
- consultation with children to discover where they feel particularly at risk, what services they would like and monitoring and responding to their experience of existing services.
- the needs of socially deprived areas should be given particular attention.

Engineering

Each authority should prepare an authority-wide child safety audit including these ideas. This could set targets and timescales for reviewing progress. If not already the case, child safety audit guided by the same principles should be incorporated within all standard highway safety audit practice.

The means by which we achieve overall targets and those we set ourselves as a result of our child safety audits, are contained in the road safety strategy. They will also be very familiar to many, having been borrowed from the practice of progressive local authorities. That said, it is moderately refreshing to see acknowledgement of many of these ideas for the first time in a “road safety division” document.

The key points are:

Safer for Children (Chapter 2)

- more safe routes to schools
- more 20 mph zones in residential areas and around schools
- support for the introduction of Home Zones
- safer crossing facilities on busy main roads where traffic calming is less appropriate
- development and introduction of child friendly areas on trunk roads outside schools and other areas where children require access
- more effective enforcement, especially using speed cameras

Safer Infrastructure (Chapter 5)

- basically safety audit paramount on all road schemes and in route planning frameworks
- local transport plans to promote safer neighbourhoods

Safer Speeds (Chapter 6)

- development of a framework for determining appropriate speed limits for roads. *Local authorities should attempt to set the pace on this revision. They might wish to consider reclassifying certain types of roads or changing speed limit policy for villages in a similar way to the Suffolk initiative.*
- recognition of the environmental, economic and social effects of “casualty reduction” strategies. *Could this be a recognition of risk compensation, that enabling drivers to go faster round “dangerous” bends creates a more hazardous environment for vulnerable road users?*

Safer for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Horse-riders (Chapter 9)

- A welcome recognition of the need to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists to encourage more walking and cycling and less car use
- Recognition of the requirement for local authorities to provide pedestrian and cycle strategies as part of their Local Transport Plans

Education, Training and Publicity

Unfortunately there is little new or enlightened on offer to those who deliver E,T & P. However, in the few paragraphs on cyclist training there is mention of best practice (paragraph 2.25) and also adult training (paragraph 9.8). These contributions are dwarfed by references to cycle helmets and other secondary safety measures. Relying on “voluntary bodies” to improve training for cyclists (paragraph 9.7) seems to ignore that local authorities provide 90% or more of current training. However, Ministers have said that local authorities can bid for cyclist training within their LTPs as long as this is linked to capital spend on safe routes schemes.

Enforcement

Clearly the introduction of speed cameras and better enforcement are areas where local authorities and the police need to co-operate closely. Local authorities should use their influence to encourage and assist the police in the rapid introduction of hypothecation for speed enforcement and other measures.

Conclusion

For authorities who have already adopted a danger reduction approach to road safety, the strategy poses few if any new demands. These and other authorities should continue to push ahead with radical new measures in the knowledge that DETR strategy will follow. As much of the strategy is open to interpretation this provides the opportunity for forward thinking authorities to determine what the eventual meaning will be.