



Somerset County Council

Environment Directorate

Let's make a difference



Local Transport Plan **2006-2011**

March 2006

Contacts and Obtaining Information

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The Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2) and Annual Progress Reports (APRs) together with various supporting documents can be viewed at:

- www.somerset.gov.uk under 'Transport & Streets'
- All libraries in the County and at Council information points.
- All County and District Council offices

A CD-Rom containing the full set of LTP2 documents is available and a summary document is also available upon request. This document is also available on request in Braille, large print, tape and discs and can be translated into different languages; or we can provide a member of staff to discuss the details.

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Striving for Excellence

Welcome to our second Local Transport Plan covering the period 2006-2011.

We are committed to providing excellent services that are accessible, responsive and sustainable to ensure Somerset is a healthy and vibrant place to live, work and visit.

Our vision is to deliver excellence in the eyes of our citizens, customers, partners, staff and peers, and to achieve this we have embarked upon a 'Transformation for Excellence' programme.

This includes embedding the processes and cultural change required in our organisation to deliver the objectives and targets set out in this LTP, and to deliver the best possible value for money.



Environment Directorate Senior Management Team, February 2006.

Sonia Davidson-Grant
Corporate Director, Environment
Somerset County Council

INTRODUCTION

Working Together to Tackle Transport Problems in Somerset

Welcome to our second Local Transport Plan (LTP2), which covers the period 2006-2011.

This plan has been produced by the officers and Members of Somerset (across local authority boundaries), working together and consulting with local people to clarify our priorities for the future of our community. We are fortunate to have strong planning and partnership links and a well developed Community Strategy in the County, which helps to inform and shape our transport plans.

The 'Somerset Vision', our community plan, outlines our priorities which are fed into the council's, and partners' plans to inform service delivery. LTP2 is one of those plans, and the priorities and actions from LTP2 are fed into our service plans and measured through our performance management framework.

Much has been achieved during the course of the last Local Transport Plan (2001-2006), which resulted in £88.6m of transport funding with an additional £16.6m for two major schemes in Taunton and Bridgwater.

Although this new plan continues to develop some of the successful initiatives and programmes of work that were funded through LTP1, we have identified a number of areas where increased investment and a fresh approach is needed to meet the increasing focus on transport priorities and targets.

LTP2 clearly sets out our new investment priorities and describes how the National Shared Priorities for improved accessibility and reduced problems of congestion, pollution and safety will be delivered. In practice, this means that we are prioritising road maintenance to ensure our roads provide good access to local services, we are going to help those who do not have access to a car, we are going to target and reduce the number of accidents and casualties, and are going to manage the growth in congestion to keep traffic moving and avoid deteriorating air quality. These are issues that really matter to the people of Somerset and on which we have pledged to work together.

We commend the plan to Government and, in doing so ask Government to support our shared priorities and to give further consideration to ensuring that its guidance and resource allocation is sensitive to the needs of rural councils including our own.



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SUMMARY

This is our second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) covering the period 2006-2011. Our LTP2 sets out our transport objectives, overall approach, investment priorities, and strategies for tackling key national, regional and local issues. The LTP also includes our transport targets which we will use to measure progress as we implement the plan, together with a strategic overview of our five year implementation programme.

Our County

Somerset lies in South West England and covers an area of 3450 square kilometres. The county is home to 498,093 people, about 10% of the population of the South West region. The settlement pattern is one of dispersal, only about a third of the population live in our four largest towns of Taunton, Yeovil, Bridgwater and Frome.

Our Objectives for Transport

The Government has jointly agreed with the Local Government Association Shared Priorities for local transport that seek to reduce problems of Congestion and Pollution, improve Accessibility and improve Safety. Local consultation has confirmed that these priorities are strongly supported by Members of Somerset at County and District level.

At a regional level one of the main priorities for the South West is to provide the infrastructure necessary to support the economic regeneration of a number of regionally significant settlements including the Taunton/Bridgwater/Wellington area and Yeovil.

A further regional priority is to complete a Second Strategic Route to the South West peninsular and improve regional 'connectivity' between major settlements.

Within this context our key challenges locally are that:

- We have a dispersed rural settlement pattern and an ageing population, which means that many of our residents are dependent on travelling by car to larger towns for work or access to other basic services such as healthcare. This creates pressure on our road networks but also means that people who do not have access to a car have increasing difficulties accessing services;
- We have a slower than average rate of economic growth, below average earnings and skills training is a significant issue for us. Many people in our rural communities find it difficult to access work or skills training;
- Our population is growing quickly, focused on our three main urban areas Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil, which are our key centres for employment and economic growth. Congestion and pollution may therefore rise significantly in these settlements and we need to address this;
- Much of our landscape is of national importance and many of our towns have a rich history in terms of layout, architecture and historical importance. Our County is also one of the richest for biodiversity in the UK and our plans must protect and where possible enhance this unique environment;
- We have a huge number of visitors each year and whilst this means we have a significant tourism economy, the large number of visitors to a limited number of tourist destinations can adversely affect the quality of the environment in those areas;
- The quality of life in our rural villages is often affected by the intimidating nature of through traffic and strategic routing is therefore a key challenge; and
- We have successfully tackled clusters of road accidents over the last 20 years and now have a very dispersed pattern of casualties.



SUMMARY

The Somerset Strategic Partnership (local councils, other public services such as health and education, the voluntary and community sector, and business representatives) has developed our community strategy; 'A Vision for Somerset', to deliver: "A dynamic successful modern economy that supports, respects and develops Somerset's distinctive communities and unique environments".

To tackle these major challenges, we have identified a series of transport objectives which reflect the national and regional priorities, but also reflect the economic and environmental issues which are so important in Somerset. The objectives are set out below and are developed in more detail throughout this LTP.

- Improve **safety** for all who travel;
- Reduce social exclusion and improve **access** to everyday facilities;
- Reduce the growth of **congestion and pollution** and improve health;
- Support sustainable **economic growth** in appropriate locations; and
- Protect and enhance the built and natural **environment**.

Our Overall Approach

We are committed to developing our transport infrastructure and our overall policy is to direct investment towards schemes and initiatives which help deliver our five objectives. We use capital funding approvals through the LTP together with our own revenue funding, other external sources of finance and developer funding to:

- Deliver the Shared Priorities;
- Promote economic regeneration, facilitating appropriate development that improves rather than exacerbates problems, to develop more sustainable communities;
- Ensure our strategic routes and highway assets are fit for purpose to strengthen our economy whilst also protecting quality of life and the historic environment of our villages;
- Improve the safety and accessibility of our communities in close partnership with other authorities and agencies;
- Promote alternative travel choices and encourage behavioural change;
- Help strengthen the role of our smaller market and coastal towns as centres for people to access basic services;
- In all this, make best use of the infrastructure we already have.

The Local Area Agreement

A three year Local Area Agreement (LAA) setting out the priorities agreed between the Government, the local area (in our case the geographic area of Somerset), and the Somerset Strategic Partnership (SSP) commences at the same time as this new LTP, and transport has a major role in delivering many of the agreed outcomes. Our LTP Accessibility Strategy will play a key role in delivering better access to services, a key issue in the LAA, and our proposals for promoting physical activity through walking and cycling, and for improving road safety also help deliver important outcomes included in the LAA.

Our LTP2 Strategy for 2006-2011

A new overall strategy has been developed for this LTP through a comprehensive evidence base covering both quantitative analytical evidence and more qualitative evidence from consultation and partnership work.

Investment Priorities

We have considered a range of influences including the Audit Commission's 'Comprehensive Performance Assessment' (CPA) requirements and our current performance in meeting transport targets to establish a clear set of priorities for investment over the LTP2 period. These will be used to determine how we allocate our funding to deliver our programme of transport schemes and initiatives over the next five years. Our investment priorities are:

- Maintaining the road network across the county;
- Reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads;
- Increasing the number of people using public transport;
- Investment to support economic regeneration in the Taunton area and Yeovil;
- Ensuring lorries use appropriate routes to improve life in rural communities;
- Promoting 'smarter travel choices' such as cycling, walking and car-sharing through marketing campaigns and travel plans for business and schools; and
- Targeted implementation of other integrated transport schemes particularly to improve access to basic services in our Market Towns.

We are aiming for a 'step-change' in investment and overall approach, particularly in casualty reduction and public transport patronage in order to successfully meet the Government's targets.

The broad strategy for Somerset is described briefly below, based upon the Shared Priority headings:

Safety

The LTP sets out how we will improve community safety, primarily focusing on road safety, irrespective of mode of travel. We have outlined the key issues that we are currently addressing in our Casualty Reduction Strategy, and described how we plan to meet the objective of reducing the number of road accident casualties in the County. We will also help reduce fear of crime through improved street lighting, security on transport services and improved urban street design.

Between 1999 and 2004 our road safety investment has delivered:

- 9% reduction in people killed and seriously injured;
- A reduction in pedestrian and pedal cyclist casualties;
- 15% child casualties reduction, with part of this achievement affecting the pedestrian and pedal cyclist group; and
- 24% reduction of children killed and seriously injured.

Although some significant achievements have been made, this is not enough to meet the targets we have set ourselves, and we are behind on progress towards the 2010 target of a 35% reduction in people killed and seriously injured, and the number of slight casualties has increased by 5%.



SUMMARY

In order to deliver a step-change in our casualty reduction performance, we need a fresh approach and increased investment, and will be producing a new Casualty and Accident Reduction Strategy (CARS), which will tackle a number of key issues, particularly the number of:

- Car drivers and passengers injured on rural main roads and urban areas;
- Pedestrians and cyclists injured in towns; and
- Two-wheeled motor-vehicle users injured in towns and on rural main roads.

Improving Accessibility

We established an Integrated Passenger Transport Unit (IPTU) in April 2003, responsible for the co-ordinated provision of education and social services transport along with voluntary/community transport and traditional public transport contracts. We are therefore already a long way towards delivering the Government's vision of Accessibility Planning which aims to improve access to basic services through more joined-up service delivery.

New partnership working has developed with the health, education, employment and food sectors through our Transport for Somerset partnership network and includes 'non-transport' actions from those partners to improve access to their services.

The Accessibility Strategy sets out a strategic analysis of our County, quantifying the scale of the problems with access to different types of service in different areas. The strategy includes a phased programme of further localised assessments and development of action plans to tackle the problems with our partners over the next five years. The highest priority issues, which will be examined in detail over the first year of this new LTP are identified as:

- Access to key services for residents in Bridgwater and its rural surrounds;
- Access to hospitals for residents in Burnham-on-Sea; and
- Access to hospitals for residents in West Somerset.

Further priorities, set out in the Accessibility Strategy, will be examined in detail with our partners over the next five years. However, in parallel with this further study, our IPTU will ensure that the development of public and community transport services take these priority areas into account in developing their annual service plan.

Whilst the development of our action plans will help partners identify actions to improve access to services, core elements of the Accessibility Strategy have already been developed through our recent Passenger Transport Strategy Review (PTSR) including:

- Demand responsive transport in deeper rural areas linking our communities through continued roll-out of our successful 'Slinky' bus services;
- Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) focused on key routes to town centres;
- Improvements to the local rail network in terms of physical and timetable integration and station upgrades to provide a safe waiting environment for passengers;
- More integrated bus ticketing and more accessible passenger information; and
- Better marketing of new and existing services.

Our smaller market towns, which are spread across the County, play a key role as centres for provision of basic services and feature as key interchanges for planned quality bus partnership routes within our Transport Strategy.

We have also identified the need for cycling improvements in these towns to provide better access to town centre facilities from within the settlements and from nearby villages within cycling distance. The scope to encourage cycling in these towns varies immensely and our study 'Establishing the demand for cycling in the Somerset Market Towns' established that the following settlements have the greatest potential to encourage more cycling and will therefore be priority areas for cycling investment in addition to the investment planned for cycling in our main urban areas:

- Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge;
- Wellington;
- Cheddar;
- Minehead;
- Wells;
- Street; and
- Glastonbury.

There may also be instances where a value-for-money case can be made for specific cycle schemes which would generate significant numbers of cyclists in non-priority towns, and opportunities of this nature in Frome and Chard have been raised during consultation.

We also recognise the value of the public rights of way network in improving accessibility. We are committed to improving the ease of use of the public rights of way network and providing sustainable off-road links between communities. The emerging Rights of Way Improvement Plan will concentrate on improving the provision for users of public rights of way, in particular those people who have visual and mobility impairments as well as equestrians.

Tackling Congestion and Pollution

We aim to minimise congestion on the strategic road network, most acutely observed on the A303 and A358 (Ilminster to M5), by ensuring strategic routes are fit for purpose and through better route management linked to maintenance, safety and public transport programmes.

We also aim to minimise traffic queues and delays in Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil through better traffic management and control, and a range of other measures tailored to each town including:

- Improvements to public transport services and information particularly in Taunton through quality bus partnerships;
- Increased focus on 'smarter choices' such as travel planning and car-share schemes backed up by hard-hitting marketing and publicity campaigns;
- Increased 'demand management' through parking controls and charging, particularly in Taunton and Yeovil. New parking policies reflect the role and function of settlements, ensuring for instance that the tourism needs of our smaller towns are taken into account;
- Better walking and cycling facilities targeted at the large proportion of people who drive very short distances across town to work each day;
- Highway improvements to increase capacity at key congested junctions and improve facilities for walking, cycling and public transport; and
- Expansion of Park & Ride in Taunton to include a site to the east of the town.



SUMMARY

We have identified the detailed congestion problems in each town through transport studies, including extensive traffic modelling. We selected an appropriate strategy for each town following a sequential approach, which considered a number of possible solutions starting with lower cost measures through to major transport infrastructure improvements, until we identified a complete package. This 'value for money' approach has ensured that we make best use of the existing infrastructure before major new schemes are proposed.

Our traffic manager will play a key role in co-ordinating activities across the organisation and with partners to tackle problems of congestion in Somerset, and this role is set out in detail within the congestion and pollution chapter and in an Annex on the Traffic Management Act Network Management Duty.

Government air quality thresholds are currently exceeded in East Reach and Henlade in the Taunton area, as well as central Yeovil. There are likely to be further sites in Taunton identified in the near future. Our strategy for tackling congestion includes specific schemes aimed at reducing the air quality problems at these sites.

Delivering Our Strategy

Our Excellence Programme

Operational delivery of our strategy will be undertaken through day to day activities and our overarching excellence programme. This seeks to achieve excellence in the eyes of our citizens, customers, partners, staff and peers across our full range of services.

Strategic Routes and Cross Boundary Planning

We are working with partners in the region to manage and develop our strategic routes particularly in the context of freight movements and managing the highway network. We have also developed a Passenger Rail Strategy which has the support of the rail operators and are closely co-ordinating cross-boundary transport operations with our neighbouring authorities.

Major Schemes

The South West Region published its advice to the Government on regional funding allocations in January 2006. The Region's investment priorities for transport include Taunton 'Thirdway' route between Wellington Road and Bridge Street, and the Taunton Northern Inner Distributor Road (NIDR). The Region has recommended to the Secretary of State for Transport that these be given scheme entry into the regional funding allocation.

Our LTP therefore contains bids for these 'major transport schemes' (schemes costing more than £5m). Both schemes are an integrated part of the town centre redevelopment set out in the Taunton Vision along with a wide package of smaller schemes and initiatives, and will be delivered from a mixture of major scheme and private sector sources.

Only about half of the required re-development is deliverable in Taunton without these major schemes, but if the Government agrees with the Region's recommendation the Taunton Vision can truly be realised with development of 47hectares of brownfield land including:

- 52,600sqm workspace/office space;
- 8,000sqm retail space;
- 1,350 dwellings; and
- Enhanced river frontage including a cultural centre.

The schemes would enable the removal of through traffic from North Street, the retail heart of Taunton, during the day and improved bus access through the town centre, with people able to move around the town much more freely and safely on foot and cycle. This will help create a cultural and retail environment within the town of a standard expected in a regional centre.

The schemes play a major role in fulfilling the considerable economic potential of Taunton, which due to its central location in the Region offers the potential to spread economic opportunity westwards; a high priority in all of the regional strategies.

The Region's investment priorities also include the A358/A303 Ilminster Bypass to help deliver a Second Strategic Route for the South West. The recommendation to the Secretary of State is to include the scheme in the Government's targeted programme of improvements (TPI) including the need to make the route a trunk road. We will continue working with the Highways Agency to consider options for delivery.

Transport and New Development

All development proposals will be expected to contribute positively to managing the demand for transport and to bringing about a shift towards more trips being made in the most environmentally, socially and economically appropriate way. To be acceptable, proposals for development should be compatible with the existing transport infrastructure, or if not, make provision for improvements to infrastructure to enable development to proceed. The LTP sets out our requirements of new development to be considered by developers when submitting planning applications and by District Councils in preparing Local Development Frameworks.

Maintenance

Efficient maintenance will play a key role in delivering all the shared priority and LTP2 objectives as it is a cross-cutting activity with wide benefits.

Our Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) develops our existing Highways Maintenance Policy Plan and highway hierarchy, and will dictate our maintenance strategy and identify scheme prioritisation to produce long term works programmes resulting in greater planned maintenance.

Our strategy is to provide integrated delivery of schemes incorporating maintenance, improvement and safety schemes to deliver the objectives of the and ensure we deliver appropriate levels of service and better value for money through more efficient service delivery.

Value for Money and Our Implementation Programme

We have developed a range of mechanisms to ensure we provide the best possible value for money in delivering our strategy. We will provide value for money through:

- Programme assembly and prioritisation;
- Programme management and cost control;
- Making best use of existing infrastructure;
- Asset management;
- Performance management; and
- Integration of capital and revenue budgets and non-LTP funding sources



SUMMARY

The LTP will enable us to invest about £15-£18 million per year on maintenance activities across the whole of Somerset to improve safety and support the economy, and about £4.5m per year for 'integrated transport' schemes and measures.

We have used a prioritisation framework to identify transport projects that best deliver the LTP targets and value for money, and develop a capital and revenue implementation programme which is set out in summary in the LTP. The following figure shows the proposed breakdown of expenditure for our LTP2 capital programme.

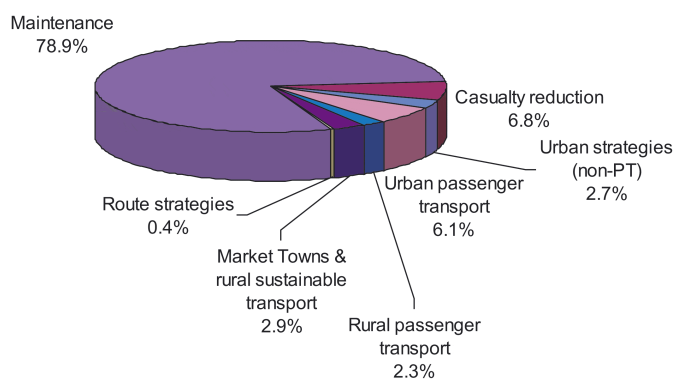


Figure 1 Investment Priorities

The following figure shows the how we have split our £23m funding approval for integrated transport measures. We have been allocated almost £4m less by the Government for integrated transport over LTP2, when compared to our expenditure over LTP1. Within this overall reduction in funding approvals, we have increased funding allocations for casualty reduction and passenger transport which are our key investment priorities.

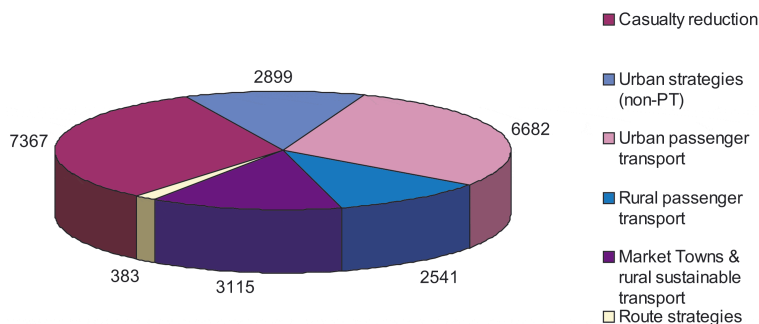


Figure 2 Capital Programme Allocations (£000's)

In preparing the programme we have established that the available funding is broadly sufficient to deliver the proposed step-change in casualty reduction and passenger transport, however we have been unable to fund, within this LTP programme, the full range of schemes and measures that our technical studies and models have identified are required to tackle congestion in our main urban areas.

Our evidence base and consultation processes have identified that congestion in these towns is a growing issue that needs to be tackled if the towns are to realise their economic potential. Our discussions with the District Councils have also identified economic regeneration in the smaller towns and rural areas as a key priority for Somerset which is not well aligned with the LTP targets.

The LTP process offers the opportunity for the Government to allocate up to an additional 25% funding approvals for 'integrated transport measures', based on the quality of our LTP2 and our progress in delivering transport improvements during the LTP1 period. We therefore propose that any additional funding allocated to Somerset following the various performance assessments will be used to help us deliver our local targets for tackling congestion in Taunton and Yeovil and also for schemes linked to economic regeneration in some of our smaller market towns.

Monitoring and Managing Our Performance

The implementation of our strategy will test for value for money and our performance in delivery will be measured and monitored through a suite of performance indicators.

For LTP2, we have introduced a new ICT-based performance management system. This will link LTP expenditure and programmes with core and local LTP indicators as well as a series of operational measures, and enable us to actively manage our programmes and resources to ensure we deliver our targets.

Risk management will form an integral part of our overall approach to performance management, and we will actively manage risk through our service planning, financial planning and project planning frameworks.

Performance Indicators

We have identified the following performance indicators to measure our performance over the LTP2 period, including the Government's mandatory indicators together with 6 locally determined indicators to measure issues which are specific to Somerset:



SUMMARY

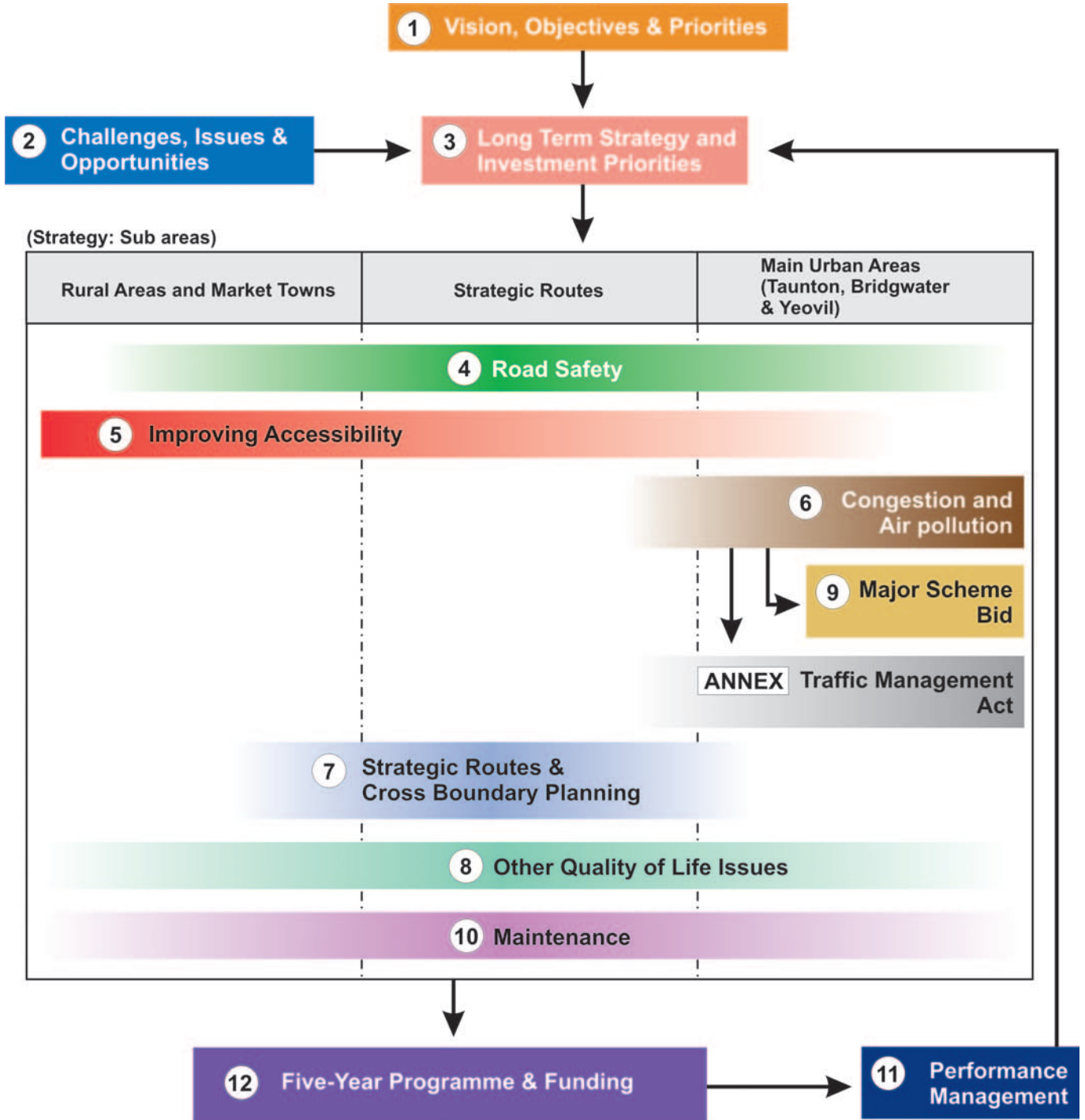
Table 1 LTP2 Targets

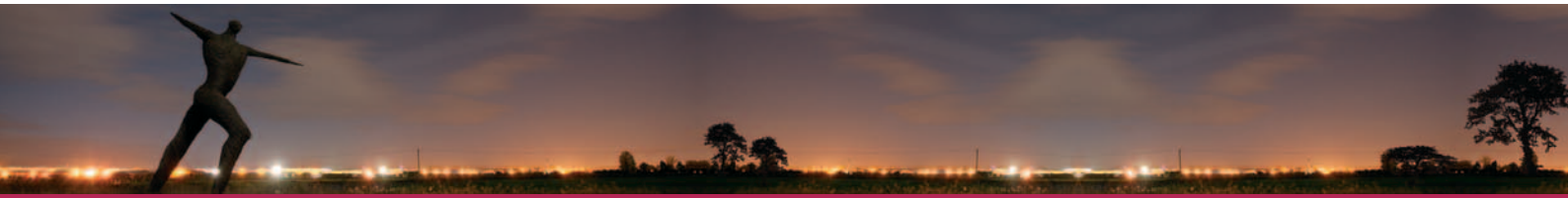
| Investment Priorities | Performance Indicators | Key Objectives |
|---|--|--|
| Maintaining the road network across the County | BVPI 223: Principal road condition | Safety, Congestion, Accessibility and Economy |
| | BVPI 224a: Non principal classified road condition | |
| | BVPI 224b: Non principal unclassified road condition | |
| | BVPI 187: Condition of footways | |
| Reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on our roads | BVPI 99a: Total KSI | Safety |
| | BVPI 99b: Child KSI | |
| | BVPI 99c: Total Slight Casualties | |
| Increasing the number of people using public transport | BVPI 102: Bus patronage | Congestion, Pollution and Accessibility |
| | LTP1 & LPI1: Accessibility target: Demand responsive transport | |
| | BVPI 104: Satisfaction with local bus services | |
| | LTP5: Bus punctuality target | |
| Investment to support economic regeneration in the Taunton area and Yeovil | LTP8: Air Quality | Congestion, Pollution, Accessibility and Economy |
| | LPI5: Congestion (vehicle delay) | |
| | LPI6: Pedestrian activity in Taunton | |
| Ensuring lorries use appropriate routes to improve life in rural communities | LTP2: Change in area wide traffic mileage | Economy, Environment, Congestion and Safety |
| | LPI4: HGV traffic on non-strategic routes | |
| Promoting 'smarter travel choices' such as cycling, walking and car-sharing through marketing campaigns and travel plans for business and schools | LTP4: Mode share of journey to school | Congestion, Pollution, and Accessibility |
| | LPI2: Mode of travel to work | |
| | LTP3: Cycling trips | |
| Targeted implementation of other integrated transport schemes particularly to improve access to basic services in our Market Towns | LTP3: Cycling trips | Accessibility |
| | LP13: Ease of use of Rights of Way | |

How to Use this Document

The LTP is mainly written for the Government and is structured according to some quite prescriptive guidance. This layout may result in difficulties for readers who wish to gain at a glance a comprehensive understanding of what is proposed for a particular mode of transport or a particular theme such as 'rural transport'. We have therefore included a set of 'quick reference tables' at the end of the document providing the main references in the plan for popular themes or issues.

The document is structured as follows:





SUMMARY

Notes: