

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report forms the second Annual Progress Report (APR) and outlines the progress made by the County Council in implementing the Local Transport Plan (LTP) during the 2001/02 financial year. The format of this report has followed the Second APR Guidelines published by the Department for Transport in May 2002.

Worcestershire's LTP was deemed an "impressive" submission by the Government, and the County Council is proud of the progress that is being made in delivering the transport strategy contained in the LTP. Over the 2001/02 period much has been done and this report concentrates on reporting these achievements. Worcestershire has responded positively to the comments made to last years APR, incorporating all comments in the on-going delivery of the LTP strategy.

The County has, during the 2001/02 period, made headline achievements in progressing its Integrated Public Transport Strategy, providing an affordable, available, acceptable and accessible network of public transport services as a viable alternative to using the private car. A new 'Bus & Information Strategy' has been adopted, and Bus Quality Partnerships (BQP) are being progressed throughout the County (most notably in Redditch). New bus vehicles are now a common sight in Worcestershire. Successful bids have been made for an Urban Bus Challenge and two for Rural Bus Challenges. The Worcester Park and Ride scheme opened in 2001 is continuing to achieve record ticket sales (from a peak of 1,300 weekly sales in July 2001 to a peak of 3,700 in November 2001) and feasibility studies for two more schemes have been completed.

In order to enhance the use of rail transport, station improvements have been carried out at Pershore Rail Station, which include the provision of connecting cycle-ways. Significant improvements are to be introduced at Bromsgrove Station following the findings of a feasibility study and a successful RPP bid. A study has been completed for improvements to Kidderminster Station and a similar study is underway for Malvern Link Station.

Significant progress has been made in introducing School and Employer Travel Plans, following the appointment of full time officers in these areas. The Safer Routes to School (SRTS) programme is well advanced, with 90 schools having at least one SRTS initiative in place, and 85 currently developing School Travel Plans. The County Council is on target to ensuring that all schools have benefited from this initiative during the LTP period. 16 employers have introduced Travel Plans, which are now an integral part of the development control process. Improvements to cycling and walking networks have taken place throughout the county, and the sustainable transport message continues to progress well through the TravelWise campaign, promoted by Worcestershire, which runs regular conferences, organises 'one-off' special events and issues travel update newsletters.

Freight can significantly affect the quality of life for residents in rural villages, and real progress is now being made on the Freight Strategy. A Freight Quality Partnership has been established and measures such as 'Lorry Route Maps' are being developed.

In terms of road safety the county has seen a sustained reduction in casualty figures over the year, with a 16% reduction in those killed or seriously injured on our roads. The County Council has entered into a Public Service Agreement which commits it to achieving the 2010 national targets for casualty reduction as early as 2005. The Council is also working with West Mercia Constabulary, neighbouring highway authorities, the Highways Agency and Magistrates Services to develop a Safety Camera Partnership which should become operational during 2003.

The County Council has applied the Government's "Rethinking Construction" initiative in its approach to Road and Bridges maintenance, which is continuing through a quality partnership with a contractor and has since adopted the National Code of Good Practice for Highway Maintenance.

Construction of one major scheme, the Wyre Piddle and Upper Moor Bypass, started in February 2002 and should be completed by December 2002. This will allow the existing A4538 between Evesham and Worcester to be designated the strategic route, thereby relieving communities on the existing A44 through Pershore. To maximise the benefits of this strategy, the Chadbury – Twyford Link Road is necessary to replace sub-standard sections of the A4538 in north Evesham. Work on developing this project is underway, and a supplementary funding bid for the project is being submitted as part of this APR.

Following major flooding incidents during 2000 and 2001, the County Council commissioned a number of studies into the transportation impact of the floods on the local network. These studies

have concluded that the impact is severe, and have identified a number of measures that would improve this situation. Accordingly, the APR outlines these measures, and a bid for supplementary funding has been included. These bids are being made because the County Council wishes to build on its current achievements in making Worcestershire a safer place to live, work and visit, but cannot undertake these schemes out of existing identified resources or reprioritising from other LTP resources.

Through its LTP strategy, the County Council has had a vital role to play in delivering the objectives of the Government's Urban and Rural White Papers, and 2001/02 has seen the implementation of several initiatives that support both. Bus Quality Partnerships, the Urban Bus Challenges and railway station improvement schemes contribute directly to the Urban White Paper objectives, whilst the Rural White Paper is being supported through initiatives such as 'Vital Villages', Quiet Lane schemes, the Rural Bus Challenges and Community First Partnerships.

The County Council has been tackling the problem of social exclusion through improving access for all via the development of walking schemes and 'Rural Interchange' proposals at Hartlebury. Various Community Strategies have been developed through local strategic partnerships in order to meet the LTP transport strategy. Community Strategies have been formed for Malvern Hills, Redditch and Wyre Forest District with the ones for Worcester and Wychavon District being currently progressed. The County Council has submitted a successful bid for funding to promote a Home Zone. This has yielded a grant of almost £600,000 to develop a Home Zone in Malvern.

The county has also seen strong economic growth through transport network improvements, examples including the Bromsgrove and Pershore Station improvements, and the Redditch and Pershore Town Centre studies that have mapped out the accessibility improvements to be implemented later this year. The Birmingham – Worcestershire High Technology Corridor is another initiative that is expected to bring economic prosperity through improvements to the transport infrastructure.

The County has been keen to ensure that regional and strategic planning assists in meeting LTP objectives. The West Midlands Multi-Modal Study (WMMMS) has identified transport schemes that have a bearing on the county and these include the Wolverhampton and Stourbridge Western Bypasses and the Regional Express Railway. Regional Planning Guidance has also identified some schemes that would have an impact in the County and these include the above Western Bypasses, the A435 Studley Bypass and Parkway Stations at Worcester and Kidderminster. Worcestershire has continued to work closely with neighbouring authorities to ensure that the County is not adversely impacted by transport schemes implemented outside of the County boundary, including participation in the Cotswold Line Study.

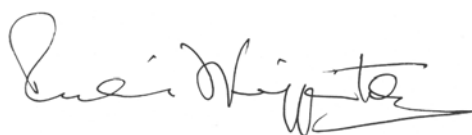
The Best Value programme for transport functions continues at pace. A Review for Traffic Signals was completed in 2000/01 and the Implementation Plan is now underway. A Pre-Best Value Review was completed for Fleet Transport in April 2002 that will be combined with a Best Value review for Passenger Transport to be undertaken later this year.

Consultation remains at the forefront of the delivery of all transport schemes in the County, with community input sought at all stages of the development process.

The County recognises the need for extensive monitoring both before and after scheme implementation, which assists the County in assessing its own performance, and also enables schemes to be modified where appropriate in the light of actual usage.

Throughout the last year the County has looked to share its experiences with other transport professionals, both in the public and private sectors, and regularly disseminates information through active involvement in seminars, conferences and workshops.

Signed:



Richard Wigginton, Director of Environmental Services.