# SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR SOLVING THE 'SCHOOL RUN'?

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper details the latest research from the Northern Ireland School Travel Study, performed by TRAC, and looks at several case studies examining the likelihood of cycling to school in rural and urban areas

The NI STS has involved questioning primary and secondary school pupils throughout Northern Ireland to examine their current travel modes. The overall aim of the study is to reduce the impact of the 'school run' by examining the issues that influence parents into driving their children to school, how they could travel to school, as well as shedding light on the differences between the pupils who are driven to school and pupils who walk to school.

TRAC have categorised these measures as the 3Ts: 'Travel', 'Township' and 'Time'. 'Travel' measures are the range of schemes designed to provide an alternative to car use, these can include new public transport arrangements, walking buses and cycling trains. 'Township' measures are the Safer Routes to School type schemes that are designed to make pupils and their parents feel more comfortable about walking and cycling to school. 'Time' is the concept of staggering school and business start times with the aim of lowering peak period traffic flow, and hence congestion.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The 'school run' is one of the most controversial transportation issues in the current political arena after congestion charging and fuel duty. It encompasses a range of issues close to the hearts of the typical British family; personal freedom and travel, choice of school, and child safety/security.

There are a number of factors that have an impact on the 'school run'. These are complex and inter-related, but include:

- rising car ownership,
- increasing choice of schools,
- changes in where people live,
- low levels of bus service,
- increasing levels of traffic and road safety fears,
- increasing personal safety fears, including bullying, drugs and abduction,
- increasing weight of baggage and equipment,

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- increasing parental time pressure of time.

As a result, traffic and congestion is increased, and in many areas a vicious circle comes into being – fears about safety in traffic lead to less walking and cycling and more driving which in turn increases traffic.

The 'school run' is therefore proving to be one of the trickiest issues to address and various government administrations have made gestures towards reducing car use and encouraging sustainable travel. The current Labour government have set up the School Transport Advisory Group (STAG) to disseminate examples of best practice and promote the various government health, safety and travel initiatives as well as being a point of information.

However, tackling the 'school run' will eventually involve challenging every motorist over their personal travel habits as the 'school run' does not exist in isolation from congestion and the rest of the general public's car use. According to the most recent research carried out by the Transport & Road Assessment Centre (TRAC) at the University of Ulster, 89% of drivers would still use the car in the morning, even if they didn't have to drive children to school.

Unlike most 'regular' commuting, school travel is (i) Consistent, (ii) Compulsory and can be (iii) Counted. Children have to travel to school every day for the same time, and many of them travel to their nearest school. Thus, school travel behaviour is easier to quantify and therefore should be more easily tackled than any other journey type. Given that the majority of children travel relatively short distances to school, under 5 miles, there is the potential to develop a range of initiatives to reduce the 'school run'.

It is with this in mind that we shall examine some local case studies of school and specific suggestions solutions.

In Northern Ireland the private car has been elevated to the position of a status symbol, second only to one's home. The growth in car ownership is the fastest in the whole of the UK and we have the youngest fleet age. (*DRD Northern Ireland Transport Statistics 2002-2003*) The symbol of improved car ownership is the BMW, and in Northern Ireland the BMW 3 Series is the 9$^{th}$ best selling car. *(Belfast Telegraph, 2004.*)

The costs to society of such trends are obvious, and we have become victims of ever increasing congestion. Too many people are endeavouring to travel to compact concentrated locations for the same time in their own private cars and they are not paying for usage of the facilities at peak periods. During the rush hour in GB over 60% of cars are single occupancy vehicles, and in NI the figure is estimated to be as high as 90%. Levels of car use, for commuting to work, is highest in NI, at 80%, and is increasing year on year. While car journeys increase, journeys by public transport have decreased by 10% in the last 5 years, and in a ten year period from 1988 to 1998 road traffic levels rose by 22 per cent. (*DRD Travel Survey for Northern Ireland, 1999 – 2001*)

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With levels of car ownership and car usage at an all-time high in Northern Ireland, the population is regularly becoming a victim of the success of the motor-car, and left unchecked traffic congestion will eventually curtail all 'freedom' to movement. According to the CBI the ensuing congestion costs the UK economy £20 billion per year. (*BBC News, No Date.*)

All this has been happening at a time when the real cost of motoring has been decreasing and the cost of using public transport increasing. Over the past 20 years the overall cost of motoring has decreased in real terms by 5 per cent while bus and rail fares have risen by 30 to 40 per cent.

When examining the modes of travel to school the most obvious issue that comes to mind is the distance that pupils walk to school. School Transport Legislation in Northern Ireland has effectively remained unchanged from the 1944 Education Act when distances were set for Transportation Assistance to school. However, levels of car ownership have increased ten-fold over the last 50 years and many parents of school children are not prepared to permit their children to walk up to 2 miles to primary school or up to 3 miles to secondary school. (*DRD Northern Ireland Transport Statistics 2002-2003*)

When parents are questioned about why their children are driven to school, the two main reasons that parents will quote for protecting their children are Road Safety and Stranger Danger risks. According to research by the University of Westminster 66% of parents were concerned about traffic danger and 52% are concerned about Stranger Danger. (*Jones, P., Bradshaw, R., 2000*)

However, in Northern Ireland another major factor that exacerbates the 'school run' is the freedom of choice of school, as parents are able to choose the type of secondary school that they wish their child to attend, ie a Comprehensive School or a Grammar School. A previous paper from TRAC has shown that socio-economic factors play a greater part in the choice or school travel mode that safety or security fears. (*Woodside, A.R., Gunay, B., Seymour, J.R., 2002*)

One of the untapped benefits of independent travel is improved long term health and fitness of children.

"*The Health Education Authority (HEA) recommends a minimum of one hour of moderate physical activity every day for young people. Examples of moderate intensity activities include brisk walking, swimming, cycling….and most sports.*" (*Sustrans 2000*)

A child who is driven to school and other leisure time activities is therefore missing out on all or part of their recommended daily exercise and research has shown that the overwhelming majority of children are not active enough. "*Only 55% of boys and 39% of girls under 16 undertake at least 60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week.* (*Sustrans 2000*)

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The result of this is that children in the UK are fatter: "*around 20% of four year olds in the UK are overweight and 8% are obese.*" (*Health Development Agency, 2002.*)

Levels of cycling are relatively low, especially for the journey to school, in the UK. National statistics indicate that only 2% of pupils cycle to school but there are no comparable statistics to indicate the level of cycling to school in NI. The actual level of cycling is expected to be low as many schools have discouraged pupils from cycling and have even removed cycling facilities from their sites. (*DfT Personal Travel Factsheet 2 – January 2003*)

## 3. NI STS - RESULTS

As part of the NI School Travel Study two areas, rural and urban, were chosen for a comparison of cycling habits.

This survey was conducted at two schools in County Antrim, Cambridge House Grammar School in Ballymena town and Cullybackey High School in a rural village several miles outside Ballymena. The aim of the study was to examine the current levels of cycling between urban areas and rural areas, and how to best promote cycling as a safe form of school travel.




The questionnaires were distributed to 2 classes in each year of the 2 schools. 500 questionnaires were distributed and the usable response rate was high at 80%.

### 3.1 Current Modes

How do children travel to school? It can be seen from the table below that the main travel mode is the bus, but that levels of car use are much higher than the national average.

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The actual levels of car use are at least twice the national average but levels of walking are also significantly lower.

| How pupils 'Travel to School' (T2S) & Season | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **School & Season** | **Walk** | **Cycle** | **Bus** | **Car** | **Train** |
| Cambridge House (Sum) | 8 | 1 | 55 | 37 | 1 |
| Cambridge House (Win) | 5 | 0 | 52 | 44 | 0 |
| Cullybackey High (Sum) | 6 | 0 | 55 | 39 | 0 |
| Cullybackey High (Win) | 9 | 0 | 57 | 34 | 0 |
| *National Statistics ** | *43* | *2* | *31* | *18* | *2* |

*DfT Personal Travel Factsheet 2 – January 2003*

| How pupils travel home from school (T2H) & Season | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **School & Season** | **Walk** | **Cycle** | **Bus** | **Car** | **Train** |
| Cambridge House (Sum) | 17 | 1 | 60 | 23 | 0 |
| Cambridge House (Win) | 15 | 0 | 56 | 28 | 0 |
| Cullybackey High (Sum) | 17 | 0 | 66 | 16 | 0 |
| Cullybackey High (Win) | 14 | 0 | 66 | 20 | 0 |
| *National Statistics (T2S)* | *43* | *2* | *31* | *18* | *2* |

*DfT Personal Travel Factsheet 2 – January 2003*

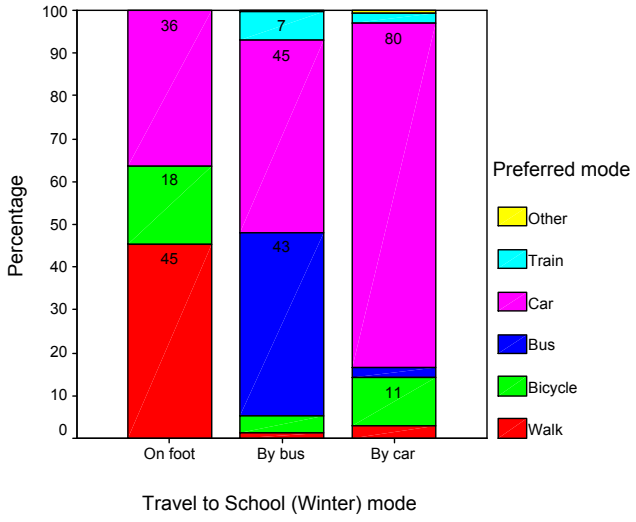
If the Travel to Home (T2H) modes are examined it can be seen that levels of car use are still higher than the national average. Bus use increases for homeward journeys as do levels of walking.

How could pupils travel to school, what is their preferred mode? At both schools it would appear that:

| Preferred choice of mode for travel to school | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **School** | **Walk** | **Cycle** | **Bus** | **Car** | **Train** | **Other** |
| Cambridge House | 4 | 6 | 19 | 65 | 5 | 0 |
| Cullybackey High | 5 | 9 | 28 | 53 | 4 | 1 |
| *Mean* | *5* | *8* | *24* | *59* | *5* | *0* |

- More pupils would prefer to be driven to school.
- Fewer pupils would want to walk to school.
- Fewer pupils would want to use a (school) bus.
- More pupils, 8%, would prefer to cycle to school.

When these travel preferences are examined against the current travel mode some surprising statistics can be seen:




*Pedestrians*

- 45% of pedestrians would still prefer to walk to school.
- Over $^1/_3$ of pedestrians would prefer to be driven.
- 1 in 6 pedestrians would like to cycle.

*Bus passengers*

- 45% of bus passengers would prefer to be driven.
- 43% of bus passengers would still prefer to go by bus.

*Car passengers*

- 80% of car passengers would still prefer to be driven to school.
- 1 in 9 car passengers would like to cycle.

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The question must be asked, why are so many pupils driven to school. Looking at the table below it would appear that the distances from school are very similar to the national mean and that approximately $^{2}/_{3}$s of pupils live more that 3 miles from school.

| How far do you travel to school (Miles) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **-1** | **1-1.9** | **2-2.9** | **3-3.9** | **4-4.9** | **5+** |
| Cambridge House | 16 | 13 | 12 | 14 | 13 | 33 |
| Cullybackey | 14 | 5 | 14 | 27 | 8 | 32 |
| *Mean* | *15* | *9* | *13* | *21* | *10* | *33* |

So what modes do pupils use in relation to their distance from school?

| SUMMER Modes & Distance (Miles) | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **School** | **Mode** | **-1** | **1-1.9** | **2-2.9** | **3-3.9** | **4-4.9** | **5+** |
| Cambridge House | **Walk** | 53 | 40 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Cycle** | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Bus** | 5 | 3 | 11 | 14 | 16 | 51 |
| | **Car** | 24 | 21 | 16 | 16 | 10 | 13 |
| | ***Mean*** | *16* | *13* | *12* | *14* | *13* | *33* |
| Cullybackey High | **Walk** | 79 | 16 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Cycle** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| | **Bus** | 0 | 0 | 9 | 35 | 6 | 50 |
| | **Car** | 19 | 10 | 24 | 23 | 14 | 10 |
| | ***Mean*** | *14* | *5* | *14* | *27* | *8* | *32* |
| All Schools | **Walk** | 68 | 27 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Cycle** | 0 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 50 |
| | **Bus** | 2 | 1 | 10 | 25 | 11 | 51 |
| | **Car** | 21 | 16 | 20 | 19 | 12 | 11 |
| | ***Mean*** | *15* | *9* | *13* | *21* | *10* | *33* |

Looking at the table on the left for Summer travel modes we can see that:

- Walking is generally only popular within 1 mile of school, especially in rural areas but in the urban area walking is popular within 2 miles of school.
- Buses are mainly used by pupils who live 3 or more miles from school.
- Car use is most popular within 3 miles of school, however in the urban area 61% of car passengers live with 3 miles but in rural areas 53% of car passengers live within 3 miles of school. This may show that in rural areas there is a greater perceived 'necessity' to use the car.

Looking at the table on the left for Winter travel modes we can see that:

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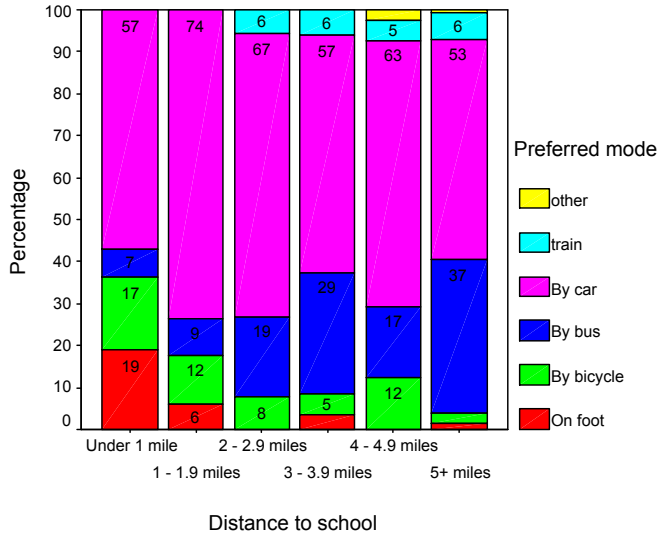
| WINTER Modes & Distance (Miles) | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | Mode | -1 | 1-1.9 | 2-2.9 | 3-3.9 | 4-4.9 | 5+ |
| Cambridge House | **Walk** | 44 | 44 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Cycle** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Bus** | 7 | 3 | 11 | 15 | 14 | 50 |
| | **Car** | 23 | 21 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 18 |
| | ***Mean*** | *16* | *13* | *12* | *14* | *13* | *33* |
| Cullybackey High | **Walk** | 92 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Cycle** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Bus** | 0 | 0 | 10 | 33 | 6 | 51 |
| | **Car** | 20 | 11 | 23 | 24 | 13 | 10 |
| | ***Mean*** | *14* | *5* | *14* | *27* | *8* | *32* |
| All Schools | **Walk** | 73 | 23 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Cycle** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | **Bus** | 3 | 1 | 10 | 25 | 10 | 51 |
| | **Car** | 21 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 12 | 14 |
| | ***Mean*** | *15* | *9* | *13* | *21* | *10* | *33* |

- Walking is again generally only popular within 1 mile of school, especially in rural areas but in an urban area walking is popular with 2 miles of school.
- Buses are mainly used by pupils who live 3 or more miles from school.
- Car use is most popular within 3 miles of school, however in the urban area 57% of car passengers live with 3 miles but in rural areas 54% of car passengers live within 3 miles of school. Approximately ¾ of car passengers live within 4 miles of school. This shows that there may be a switching of mode for pupils i.e. from walking to being driven and from bus use to being driven.

We have already seen that more pupils would like to be driven to school by private car and that fewer children would want to walk to school. However, we have also discovered that there is a small but significant suppressed demand from the pupils to cycle to school.

If we examine the distance of the pupil's homes from their school and their preferred modes we also discover that the preference for the private car is not restricted to those pupils living quite far from school but includes those pupils living within easy and comfortable walking distance from school; 57% of pupils who live within 1 mile of school and 74% of pupils living within 1 to 2 miles of school would prefer to be driven.

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The ideal mode of travel for many of these children would be cycling. From the table on the left it can be seen that 90% of pupils have a bicycle and could therefore potentially cycle to school.

| Do you own a bicycle? | | |
|---|---|---|
| School | Yes | No |
| Cambridge House | 93 | 7 |
| Cullybackey High | 88 | 12 |
| *Mean* | *90* | *10* |

| Passed a Cycling Proficiency Test? | | |
|---|---|---|
| School | Yes | No |
| Cambridge House | 65 | 35 |
| Cullybackey High | 55 | 46 |
| Mean | *60* | *40* |

However, only 3 out of 5 pupils have passed the basic Cycling Proficiency Test, and the higher levels of training are evident in the urban school.

From the earlier tables it was seen that very few children cycle to school during the summer or winter. However, from the table on the left it can be seen that even those pupils who did cycle to school did not do so regularly throughout the week.

| Number of cycle journeys made in last 7 days to school | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | 1 | 2 | 3+ | None |
| Cambridge House | 0 | 1 | 0 | 99 |
| Cullybackey High | 0 | 0 | 0 | 100 |
| *Mean* | *0* | *0* | *0* | *100* |

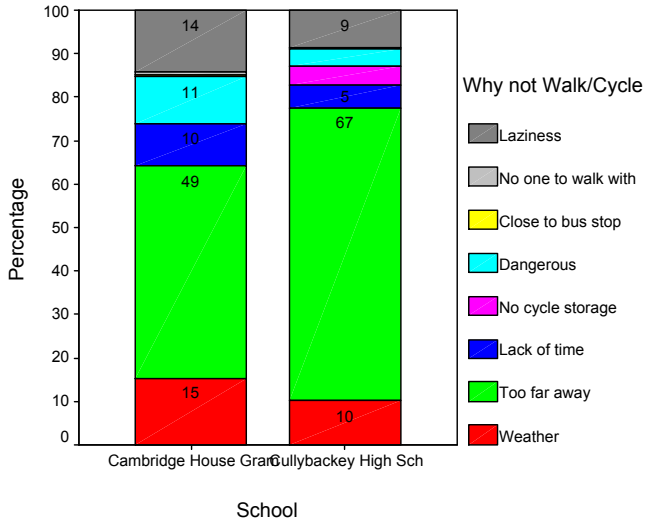
| Number of cycle journeys made in last 7 days other than to school | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | 1 | 2 | 3+ | None |
| Cambridge House | 9 | 5 | 9 | 77 |
| Cullybackey High | 9 | 7 | 16 | 68 |
| *Mean* | *9* | *6* | *13* | *73* |

However, in keeping with national cycling trends it can be seen that cycling is seen as a 'leisure' activity – not a serious mode of travel. Over ¼ of pupils made cycle journeys in the 7-day period before the School Travel survey was conducted, yet only 2% cycle to school during the summer.

### 3.2 Barriers To Cycling

So what are the barriers to cycling, or even walking, to school? What prevents pupils and/or their parents from allowing them to cycle?

The pupils were asked specifically why they did not walk or cycle to school. The main reasons for not travelling independently appear to be (i) Distance from School and (ii) Weather Factors.

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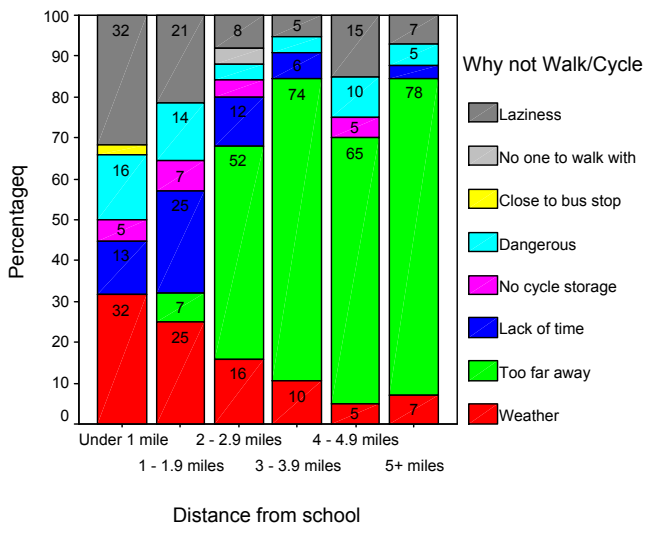


When this question is cross-tabulated against 'Distance from School' it can be seen that the 'Distance' factor is only an issue beyond 2 miles from school.

Within 1 mile of school 'Laziness/Lack of time' are the reasons for 48% of pupils, and 46% of pupils between 1 and 2 miles of school, not walking or cycling.

The next point to consider is Personal Cycling Equipment. Are the pupils adequately kitted-out for the journey to school during both summer and winter?

| Personal Equipment | Cambridge House | | Cullybackey High | | *Mean* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No | *Yes* | *No* |
| Helmet | 68 | 32 | 58 | 42 | *63* | *37* |
| Bicycle locks | 43 | 57 | 27 | 73 | *35* | *65* |
| Lights | 48 | 52 | 35 | 65 | *41* | *59* |
| Elbow/knee guards | 18 | 82 | 10 | 90 | *14* | *86* |
| Reflective/waterproof jacket | 27 | 73 | 18 | 82 | *22* | *78* |

From the table on the left it can be seen that pupils are poorly equipped to cycle, especially during inclement weather.

Less than $^{2}/_{3}$ of pupils have a cycling helmet and only 35% of pupils have a bicycle lock. Only 2 out of 5 pupils have lights on their bike and most surprisingly nearly 4 out of 5 pupils do not have adequate or suitable weatherproof gear.

Do 'Personal Security' fears also prevent children from travelling independently?

| Ever been bullied on the journey to school? | | |
|---|---|---|
| School | Yes | No |
| Cambridge House | 8 | 92 |
| Cullybackey High | 15 | 85 |
| *Mean* | *12* | *88* |

From the table on the left it can be seen that 12% of pupils have been bullied on the journey to school.

If Personal Security fears are probably unfounded then perhaps 'Road Safety' fears are important in determining modal choice?

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| Involvement in a road accident going to/from school | | |
|---|---|---|
| School | Yes | No |
| Cambridge House | 15 | 85 |
| Cullybackey High | 16 | 85 |
| *Mean* | *15* | *85* |

When an examination is made of the pupil's accident history it can be seen that only 15% of pupils have been involved in an RTC going to or from school.

And when the actual accident modes are examined it can be seen that the most common mode of travel to be involved in a RTC is the bus, 70%, then the private car, 23%. Only 4% of pupils involved in RTCs were involved as pedestrians, but 4% of pupils were involved as cyclists.

| Mode used when involved in accident | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | Walk | Bicycle | Bus | Car |
| Cambridge House | 4 | 0 | 64 | 32 |
| Cullybackey High | 3 | 7 | 76 | 14 |
| *Mean* | 4 | 4 | 70 | 23 |

This is discouraging as although 0-1% of pupils cycle to school 4% of them are involved in an RTC were cyclists. This shows a higher risk for cyclists than for some other modes.

Travel mode decisions are not necessarily dependent on actual experience of an RTC but even the experience of a 'near-miss' could be sufficient incentive, or disincentive, for the choice of mode

Although only 15% of pupils have been involved in RTCs, 40% of pupils have been involved in 'near-misses', and the urban pupils appear to have had greater exposure, 44%, than the rural pupils, 36%.

| Involvement in a 'Near Miss' going to/from school | | |
|---|---|---|
| School | Yes | No |
| Cambridge House | 44 | 56 |
| Cullybackey High | 36 | 64 |
| *Mean* | *40* | *60* |

So what are the main modes in which pupils have experienced a 'near miss'?

| Mode used when involved in 'Near Miss' | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | Walk | Bicycle | Bus | Car |
| Cambridge House | 20 | 1 | 44 | 35 |
| Cullybackey High | 12 | 3 | 56 | 29 |
| *Mean* | *17* | *2* | *50* | *32* |

Again it is the main modes that have offered a higher risk of 'near misses'. However, the more vulnerable modes also show higher levels of risk. Walking accounts for 5-9% of T2S journeys and 14-17% of T2H journeys yet accounts for 17% of near misses.

When the pupils were asked specifically about their perception of the 'safeness' of their school journey nearly half the pupils thought that the journey was 'Unsafe'/'Dangerous', 46%, and only 1 in 9 pupils, 11%, thought that it was 'Safe'.

| How safe is the journey to school | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | Safe | Average | Unsafe | Dangerous |
| Cambridge House | 11 | 48 | 24 | 17 |
| Cullybackey High | 12 | 38 | 29 | 22 |
| Mean | *11* | *43* | *26* | *20* |

### 3.3 Increasing The Popularity Of Cycling

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So how would one go about improving cycling facilities in the Ballymena and Cullybackey areas; to improve the facilities, increase the perception of improved safety and the standard of cycle training?

The pupils were asked how they would rate the current facilities. The majority of felt that there were no worthy facilities on their school sites.

| Rate of cycle facilities at school | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | V. Good | Good | Bad | V. Bad | None |
| Cambridge House | 1 | 16 | 25 | 12 | 47 |
| Cullybackey High | 0 | 4 | 12 | 6. | 78 |
| *Mean* | *0* | *10* | *18* | *9* | *63* |

Although, of those pupils at CHGS who felt that there were facilities, 37% believed that they were 'Bad' or 'Very Bad' and only 17% believed that they were 'Good' or 'Very Good.'

Of those pupils at CHS who felt that there were facilities, 18% believed that they were 'Bad' or 'Very Bad' and only 4% believed that they were 'Good' or 'Very Good.'

The pupils were asked how they would improve upon the current facilities at their school.

The majority of pupils felt that all the suggested measures could be introduced or implemented at their school sites.

| Would could be improved | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | Better Lighting | Something to lock the frame to | Shelters | Locker space | All |
| Cambridge House | 6 | 24 | 31 | 12 | 27 |
| Cullybackey High | 7 | 20 | 25 | 9 | 39 |
| *Mean* | *7* | *22* | *28* | *10* | *34* |

More specifically of all the measures that could be improved, 50% of pupils believe safer and improved cycle storage should be introduced.

One of the advantages of sustainable travel is the exercise that it affords the pupils. Without the opportunity of independent travel the vast majority of pupils in the UK would not benefit from the recommended 60 minutes daily exercise they need.

So how active are the pupils currently? It can be seen from the table on the left that less than ½ of the pupils have daily exercise and approximately 30% have sporadic or no exercise throughout the week

| How often respondent plays sport or exercises outside school | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School | Most days | Twice a week | Once a week | Less than x1 per wk | Never |
| Cambridge House | 47 | 25 | 15 | 7 | 7 |
| Cullybackey High | 46 | 25 | 15 | 11 | 3 |
| *Mean* | *46* | *25* | *15* | *9* | *5* |

And finally, what are the specific priorities for the pupils? How would they rate the importance of various statements of aspirations?

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| Rank | Pupil priorities |
|---|---|
| 1 | Importance of being fit healthy |
| 2 | Importance of making a safe journey |
| 3 | Importance of not harming the environment |
| 4 | Importance of travelling to school with friends |

The priorities for the pupils are to be fit and healthy and after that to have a safe journey to school.

## 4. CONCLUSION

1 As shown by previous studies by the University of Ulster, one of the main findings is that the 'school run' is mainly caused by children being driven from relatively close to school.

2 The main winter travel mode within 3 miles of school is the private car, 62%, followed by the bus, 22.1%, and the main mode beyond 3 miles is the bus, 50.3%, followed by the car, 49.7%.

3 More children could potentially walk to school than at present, but few of them would prefer to walk – less than ½ of current winter pedestrians would want to walk to school.

4 The vast majority of pupils prefer to be driven, even from relatively close to school.

5 The vast majority of pupils own a bicycle and $^{3}/_{5}$ have passed a Cycling Proficiency Test.

6 Levels of cycling are so small as to be insignificant for the school journey but over ¼ of pupils made a number of 'leisure' cycle journeys in the week before the survey.

7 Excluding cycling helmets the majority of pupils are ill-equipped for all weather cycle commuting.

8 However, there is a suppressed demand for cycling, from both pedestrians and car passengers. Levels of cycling could be much higher, 8%, if pupils were free to use their preferred travel modes.

9 Although RTCs levels are low for school journeys more pupils have been involved in 'Near Miss' situations. However, less than 1 in 5 of these have been as pedestrians or cyclists.

10 There were mixed feelings over the perceived 'safety' of the school journey.

11 Whilst current cycling facilities, in existence, were felt to be Bad, or Very Bad, the main suggestions to improve the sites involved cycle storage.

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12 Cycling is a popular activity for leisure in both areas (CGHS 16% & CHS 21%)

13 Weather factors are not the prime reason not to walk/cycle from less than 2 miles to school, but Laziness/Lack of time.

14 And finally, the top two priorities for the pupils are (i) Being fit healthy and (ii) Importance of making a safe journey.

To achieve a positive modal shift it is important to improve the perceived safety of the main routes to school. If schemes such as Safe Routes to School (SRS) or other simple measures such as cycle storage were to be provided there is great potential for cycling to become a serious mode of school travel.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Ultimately, to discourage pupils from being driven to school, it is necessary to develop safe, convenient, suitable and attractive travel options.

At the Transport & Road Assessment Centre (TRAC), researchers have categorised the possible counter measures into 3 groups – the 3 Ts: Township, Time and Travel.

Township
By improving the infrastructure around a school site it should be possible to improve traffic flow; ease congestion, and decrease accident risk by enhancing the crossing points.

These changes should make it easier and safer to use pedestrian and cycle routes and minimise the impact of vehicle drop-offs near the school site.

Schools need to be aware of how improvements can be made to the school site to accommodate off-street loading of buses in a seamless movement of pupils from home to school. One such example would be the dual use of asphalt playgrounds and recreational space for loading and unloading passengers.

Time
The majority of schools and business start at, or around, 0900 and the morning peak occurs just before 0900. By staggering the start times of schools and businesses it would be possible to reduce the peak period traffic flow and hence reduce congestion.

Travel
Engineering measures are limited in how they can effectively affect modal shift. The only realistic way to reduce the 'school run' is to change how we currently travel, to make the most of current transport or use current more sustainable modes or travel.

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As such, cycling has the potential to be the most efficient form of short/medium distance urban travel.

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