Sustainability Services, Estates

TRAVEL PLAN 2022-23

Contents

Introduction

Environmental sustainability is at the heart of the University of Reading's organisational identity; positioning it as one of its 4 key principles in its latest Strategic Plan, with a commitment to:

"…play our part in tackling climate change and be recognised as a University that leads on global environmental sustainability."

2020-2026 Strategic Plan

This Travel Plan and its predecessors form a key part of our ISO14001 certified Environmental Management System, setting out the objectives and targets to be achieved with respect to continuously improving the options for and uptake of sustainable modes of travel, encompassing travel to, from, and on behalf of the University.

In 2022, the University met its latest headline sustainable travel target, for 87% of its staff and student population to travel to and from its campuses by sustainable modes[1].

This Plan sets out objectives and targets for the 2022-23 academic year, which will be developed further into a new 5-year Travel Plan during 2023-24.

Scope

The scope of this Strategy is as follows:

- Applicable to the University's three main UK campuses, including MERL, but excluding wholly tenanted buildings.

- The primary focus is staff and student commuter trips to and from the University.

- Travel by visitors and contractors is considered, as well as deliveries and fleet vehicles.

- It also considers business travel between its campuses, as well as wider business travel both within and beyond the UK, interlinking with the University's Net Zero Carbon Plan

We work closely with UPP (Universities Partnership Programme) who since 2012 have been responsible for our halls of residence, to monitor and help manage the travel impacts of the halls.

The University is a significant community of approximately 18,000 students and 4,000 staff. The main Whiteknights and London Road campuses (including MERL) are conveniently situated within easy reach of Reading town centre and train station with its excellent transport links. The Henley Business School, Greenlands campus is in a more rural location outside Henley-on-Thames, where alternative transport options are more limited.

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[1] *Defined as the percentage of journeys taken by modes other than single occupancy vehicles (SOVs)*

Travel Hierarchy

As set out in our 2017 Travel Plan and re-iterated in the University's 2022 Travel Principles, the University alternatives to single occupant car travel are prioritised by hierarchy in terms of their carbon costs as follows:

a. Reducing the need for travel (including between campuses);
b. No carbon modes (walking and cycling);
c. Low carbon modes (public transport, e.g. train and bus);
d. Car sharing and responsible car use (including lower emission vehicles);
e. Removing the need to travel at peak times.

Objectives

The Travel Plan aims to:

1. Improve sustainable travel options to and from the University's campuses for students, staff and visitors.

2. Promote sustainable travel options to and from the University's campuses.

3. Reduce the environmental impact of travel to and from the University's campuses.

4. Reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles coming to the University's campuses.

5. Reduce the environmental impact of travel between the University's campuses.

6. Align with the University's Net Zero Carbon Plan to reduce the environmental impact of business travel taken on behalf of the University.

Progress To Date

The 2022 Staff and Student travel survey results showed that the University has exceeded its 5-year sustainable travel target of 83% and is close to meeting its stretch target of 87% of commuter journeys to be met by alternatives to SOVs (86.51% achieved). Figure 1 breaks down this these results by travel mode.

Figure 1 - Overall (weighted) modal split for University of Reading 2022
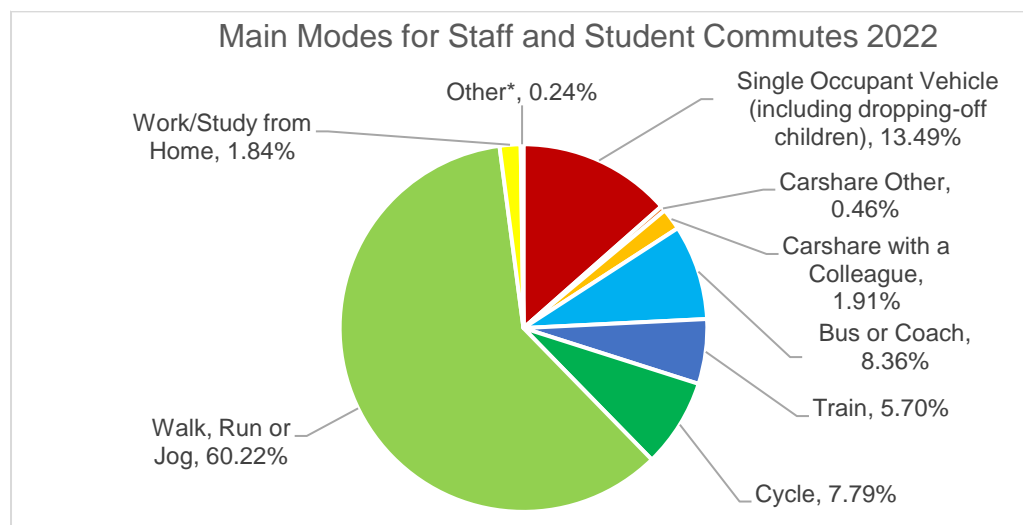
While the overall stretch target is very close to being met, Figure 2 shows the staff travel target is significantly off-track - with only 57% of staff travelling sustainably compared to a target of 63% (the target being the inverse of the SOV rate).

Figure 2 - SOV modal proportion 2012-2022

	2012	2014	2016	2018	2020	2022	2022 target	Target difference
Staff	49.4	46.8	40.4	42.4	43.7	43.4	37%	-6.4
Student	11.3	5.9	8.4	8	11.2	6.2	5%	-1.2
Overall	19.9	15.5	16.2	15.2	17.8	13.5	13%	-0.5

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly altered working from home and travel patterns, in particular with regard to significantly increased rates of reported working from home. The 2022 survey sought responses based on a particular 'typical' week with no travel restrictions, but will inevitably be somewhat impacted by the realities of the pandemic at the time. As a result of increased working from home, the frequency of other travel modes reduced, particularly the number of people driving, cycling or taking the train. More granular reporting on working from home will be needed in the future to maintain the relevance of the survey, which to date has focused on 'main mode of travel'.

The survey also showed there is a lot of potential interest in using alternative modes of travel, with the most popular alternatives identified as being cycling, travelling by foot or by public transport. Interestingly the majority of those respondents live close enough for these alternatives to be viable.

The survey identified key issues to be addressed through future travel initiatives, in this Travel Plan and the forthcoming 5-year Plan.

2022-23 Targets

The Strategy objectives are supported by the following headline SMART[2] targets:

Target 1.   Active Travel (Walking & Cycling)

Significant investment has been made in improved shared spaces for pedestrians and cyclists in recent years on the Whiteknights campus in particular, resulting in much fewer reported clashes in our biennial travel surveys.

Target 1.1.   Improved cycle storage

The dedicated Library cycle shelter, which can house 118 bikes, will be redesigned to be a test-bed for more secure cycle storage solution for the future, providing enclosed storage with robust entrance locks, dedicated CCTV and a tannoy system. This is in recognition that universities can be hotspots for cycle thefts, and new solutions are required to curb the recent rise.

Target 1.2.   Maintain cycle hire scheme

Secure ongoing support for the RUSU and University of reading's popular Unicycle scheme for the 2023-24 financial year. This scheme enables the low cost hire of bicycles to staff and students per term or year.

Target 1.3.   School of Art active travel initiatives

Install 22no. additional cycle spaces at the new School of Art in addition to existing 8no. Install dedicated cycle/pathway route into central campus and from Pepper Lane to connect up with new building entrance.

Target 2.   Public transport

The University seeks to ensure regular, frequent, reliable, attractive, and cost effective public transport services are available that reach a majority of the surrounding area. The Whiteknights and London Road campuses are well-served by Reading Buses, with buses up to every 8½ minutes during term time. The Henley Business School Greenlands campus is served by Arriva Buses every 30 minutes. Reading has a mainline rail station plus 3 local interchange stations, while Henley is on a branch rail line off the Reading/Paddington mainline.

Target 2.1.   GWR rail discounts

Extend the GWR 20% discount for Advance Single fares (dependent upon availability) for events at the University to those attending the Visit, Open and Graduation days in 2023.

Target 2.2.   Park & Ride connection

Introduce a free Park & Ride service from Mereoak (junction 11 of the M4) to Whiteknights and London Rd campuses for all staff and students during Autumn 2022. This service will be delivered in collaboration with the Reading Buses and Royal Berkshire NHS Trust. Options to bring the service onto campus in order to increase its usage will be explored in 2023/24.

Target 2.3.   Service 19 to Earley Gate

Investigate by July 2023 the potential to bring the number 19 Reading Buses service onto Earley Gate campus, in consultation with Reading Buses, Wokingham Borough Council and ECMWF. Implementation will be planned for 2023/24.

Target 3.   Responsible car use

Responsible car use includes car sharing, use of car clubs, electric vehicles, eliminating speeding, eliminating use of our campuses as a cut-through, and minimising travel at peak times.

Target 3.1.   Lift sharing

Launch a new lift sharing service through the Doing UoRBit sustainable behaviours platform, during Autumn 2022.

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[2] SMART targets should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound

Target 3.2.   Car sharing at London Road

Install a new CoWheels car sharing facility (preferably fully-electric) at London Rd campus, to compliment those already in place at St Pat's and Dunsden Crescent halls of residence. For use by students, staff and the general public. By September 2023.

Target 3.3.   EV charge points at London Road

Install new electric vehicle (EV) charge points at London Road, in place of the now-redundant ReadyBike stands at the entrance to Acacia Road (or nearby) . By September 2023.

Target 4.   New 5-year Travel Plan

Following the publication of the University's new Estates Strategy, develop a new 5-year Travel Plan by December 2023 covering travel to and from the University's key UK operations by students, staff and visitors.

Target 5.   Business travel

Target 5.1.   New Travel Policy

By June 2023, introduce a new University Travel Policy, setting new rules to reduce emissions from business travel, led by Procurement and the implementation group resulting from the Sustainable Travel Working Group.

Target 5.2.   Introduce travel carbon budgets for each School/Function

Aligned to the new Travel Policy, set carbon budgets for travel for each School/Function to be introduced from the 2023/24 year, aimed at reducing business travel emissions by at least 30% by 2026 and 50% by 2030.

Target 6.   Improved measurement

Target 6.1.   TRACC transport mapping software

By July 2023, implement TRACC mapping software to enable student and staff commuter travel to be mapped and compared with available travel mode options, to help inform future improvements.

Target 6.2.   Measuring impacts of working from home

In time for the January 2024 travel survey, introduce new measurements to better-assess the proportion of time staff spend working at home rather than on campus.

Target 6.3.   Assessing Whiteknights ANPR data

By July 2023, analyse the Whiteknights ANPR (automatic numberplate recognition) data to better understand traffic to campus, including the extent of traffic 'cutting through' the campus as a shortcut.

Governance

The Travel Plan is approved and overseen by the University Estates Committee. It will be managed on a day-to-day basis by Sustainability Services, underpinned by the University's ISO14001:2015 certified environmental management system.

Monitoring of travel modes to and from the University is undertaken through a biennial travel survey for students and staff, with the next survey due to take place in January 2024.

Progress against targets are reported through the annual Environmental & Sustainability Report compiled by Sustainability Services.

This Plan has been approved by the University's Estates Committee on 26 June 2023.