

# Communications guide

This guide is designed to help travel plan coordinators develop a communications plan, working together with any communications or marketing staff in their workplace. The communications plan contains strategies to:

- **publicise** the travel plan to staff (what a travel plan is and why the workplace is creating one)
- **encourage** participation (to join in events and complete surveys)
- **inform** staff about new travel choices
- **publicise** the travel plan to external stakeholders.

Workplaces that actively publicise their travel plans generally achieve a greater increase in sustainable travel. Successful campaigns are characterised by dynamic and frequent communications and the use of a variety of marketing tools, such as branding the travel plan, staging promotional events and offering prizes.

The communications plan needs to be set up at the very beginning and will identify:

- **what** needs to be communicated
- **who** the audience is
- **how** information should be communicated.

## Goals and key messages

The first step in preparing a communications plan is to identify the key messages, in order to give the plan a focus. Setting provisional targets for the travel plan will help with the development of these key messages.

While it may not be possible to finalise targets before the research phase has been completed, most travel plans broadly aim to reduce car use and increase active travel modes. In addition, some workplaces may have specific goals for their travel plan, such as reducing business air travel by a certain percentage or increasing the use of video-conferencing.

Once these goals have been set, it is not difficult to develop some key messages for staff. The following are just a few examples of message topics that can be adapted (and given more impact!) for different workplaces.

### Car travel

- Did you know that xx empty car seats arrive at Name of organisation every morning?
- Driving is expensive [see [www.fuelsaver.govt.nz/distance.html](http://www.fuelsaver.govt.nz/distance.html) to calculate costs].
- Driving is bad for the environment.

### Walking and cycling

- Did you know that people who walk and cycle to work are more alert and less stressed?
- Walking and cycling to work each day benefits your health and the environment.

# Timing of communications

The timing of communications is linked to each of the five stages of the travel plan process and to the project milestones. Some of the reasons for communicating at each of these stages are listed below, although these may vary, depending on the workplace.

## 1 Set-up

- Gain management commitment to the travel plan.
- Explain the travel plan concept to staff and what it will entail.
- Promote the benefits to staff and management.

## 2 Data collection/research

- Encourage staff to participate in the survey.
- Publicise the research findings to maintain interest.

## 3 Planning

- Publish and promote the travel plan to all staff.
- Publicise the action plan to staff to create anticipation.

## 4 Implementation

- Launch the travel plan.
- Inform staff of policy changes and new initiatives.
- Encourage staff to try out new programmes and travel choices.

## 5 Continuous improvement/monitoring

- Publicise successes to maintain momentum.
- Introduce new initiatives.

# Communications tools

The tools used will depend on a number of factors, such as:

- intended audience
- budget
- stage of the travel plan process
- interest/awareness levels within the workplace
- audience access to email/intranet and geographical spread.

The following list provides a selection of possible tools.

- The **intranet** is useful for raising awareness, giving progress updates, publicising events and creating a sense of community.
- If the organisation has a public **website**, it is a good place to publicise the travel plan and raise the organisation's image with external stakeholders.
- **Emails** (to groups or individuals) are an excellent method of communicating rapidly with staff and externals. Reminders, links to public transport timetables and other useful information, and invitations to events may all be sent by email. Information about the travel plan or about walking, cycling and public transport access to the workplace may also be included in the **'signature' at the foot of the email**.
- **Letters** are a useful way to contact staff who don't have access to email. They're also more personal than an email. A personal letter to each new employee is a good way to introduce them to the travel plan.
- **Meetings** can be used to introduce the travel plan or provide an update on progress, eg by booking a slot in a regular team meeting, or to explore ideas with focus groups and interest groups, such as cyclists.
- Lively, funny, informative, colourful **presentations** help get buy-in.
- **Special events** can be held to mark milestones, such as the launch of new facilities, eg lockers or cycle racks.
- Promotional **posters** can be placed in high-visibility areas, such as bathrooms, meeting rooms, cafeterias, etc.
- **Branding**, such as a logo, special name or set of images, can create positive expectations around the travel plan.

## Audiences

The primary audience for the travel plan will, of course, be the staff in the workplace, but some communications will also need to target smaller groups or externals. These groups may comprise:

- project team
- management
- focus groups
- potential car poolers, cyclists, public transport users, etc
- interest groups, such as cyclists, walkers, etc
- media and the general public
- external stakeholders and partners.

# Putting it all together

A good communications plan will therefore combine all of the above information in a **timetable** that sets out **what** needs to be communicated **to whom**, and **by what means**.

A table like the one below may be used to map out the communications plan. Some examples are included.

Stage	Date	Purpose	Audience	Tool
Set-up	10 April	Get management buy-in	CEO and senior managers	Presentation at regular management meeting
	20 April	Introduce travel plan concept	All staff	Posters, intranet articles, email
Research				
Planning				
Implementation				
Monitoring and continuous improvement				