

# Leading the way in travel behaviour change

**TravelSmart holds the key to one of the greatest challenges facing transport planners in the 21st Century – reversing the trend towards increased car use and tackling its impacts on climate, public health and quality of life.**

**By encouraging more walking, cycling and use of public transport through Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM), TravelSmart has demonstrated that changing travel behaviour is both possible and hugely important to a range of policy objectives. Robust evidence of its cost-effectiveness, drawn from pilot projects and large-scale campaigns dating back to 2001, has placed TravelSmart at the leading edge of the ‘Smarter Choices’ movement in the UK.**

**With a current programme targeting in excess of 175,000 households, including two of the three Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns (Peterborough and Worcester), TravelSmart is now proving its worth alongside road-user charging and other bold and innovative transport policy measures as a means of ensuring the success and sustainability of our towns and cities.**

TravelSmart works with households offering tailor-made information and support, enabling people to walk, cycle and use public transport more often.

It delivers measurable and sustained reductions in car use by enabling people to make a few changes to their daily travel choices when and where it suits them best.

TravelSmart has been pioneered in the UK by Sustrans, working in co-operation with *Socialdata*, a leading international transport and social research institute, which has developed the ITM technique over the past 20 years. The approach has been applied successfully in behaviour change programmes targeting a total of more than three million people in Australia, the United States, Canada, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and France, as well as the UK.

ITM was developed specifically to tackle the subjective barriers preventing greater use of walking, cycling and public transport. In particular, travel behaviour research has shown that a significant proportion of car trips could be made quite feasibly by other modes, but a lack of information and misperceptions about relative journey time and the quality of the alternatives frequently prevents these from being used.<sup>1</sup>

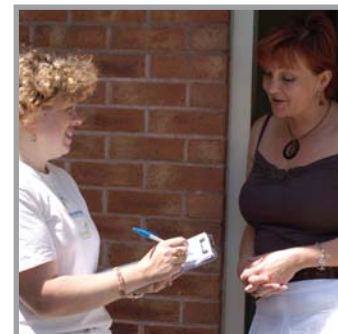
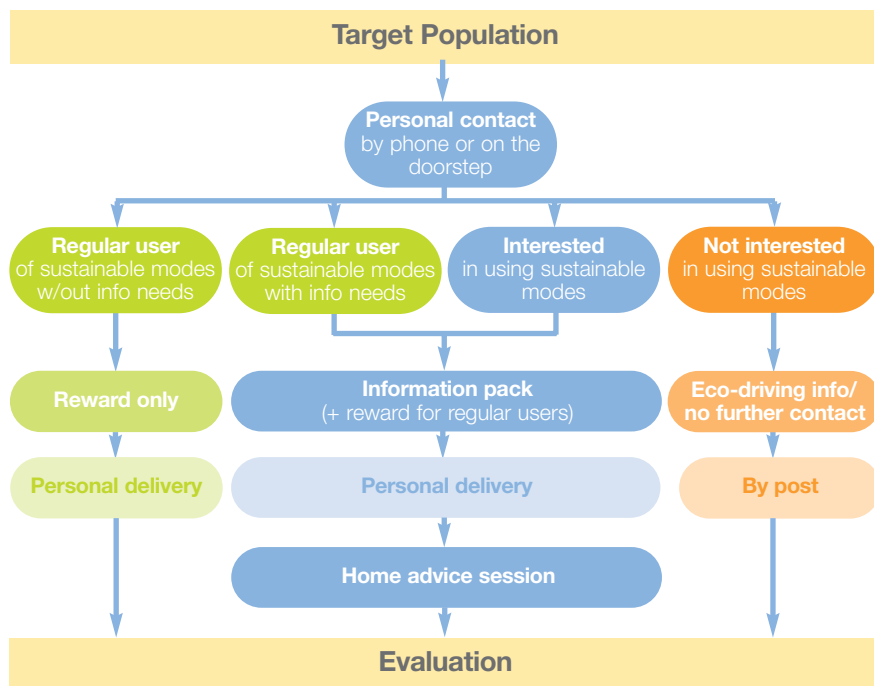
As a result, through a uniquely customer-focused approach, all ITM programmes undertaken by Sustrans and *Socialdata* since 2003-04 have delivered significant increases in use of all sustainable travel modes, leading to relative reductions in car trips of between 9 and 14%.



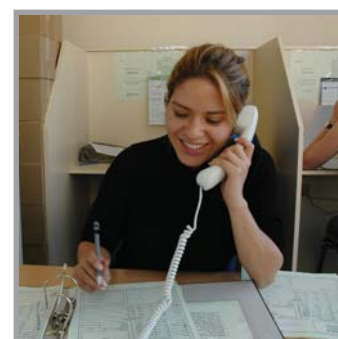
Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity and works on practical projects to encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport to benefit health and the environment.

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Making contact with households on the doorstep...



...and by phone.

## Why TravelSmart works

Extensive travel behaviour research, for example in the three Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns, has shown that:

- Most of people's day-to-day trips are local
- A quarter of all car trips are less than two miles
- Most people are concerned about traffic growth and support policies favouring public transport, walking and cycling above car travel
- Around half of all local car trips could be replaced by sustainable travel modes using existing facilities
- Lack of information about the alternatives to the car, and motivation to try them out, are key barriers to change

TravelSmart captures this potential for change by offering personalised information and support, encouraging people to discover the benefits of walking, cycling and public transport for themselves.

## The TravelSmart process

The TravelSmart process – known as Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM) – uses direct contact with households to identify and meet their individual needs for support, and to motivate people to think about their day-to-day travel choices.

It begins with personal contact, either by telephone or on the doorstep, with households in the target area. This initial contact enables the target population to be 'segmented' into three main groups: existing regular users of sustainable travel modes; non-regular users who are interested in receiving information on alternatives to the car, and those who are not interested in taking part.

Most of the ITM campaign focuses on households in the 'interested' group. They receive a TravelSmart order form enabling them to choose from a range of local travel information materials and other services, provided by the local authority, public transport operators and other project partners. The requested items are assembled into personalised packages and hand-delivered to the households who requested them.

## Outcomes of recent TravelSmart ITM projects

Location	Date	Target Population (households)	Relative change in car as driver trips	Relative change in trips by sustainable modes (average)
Peterborough (Stage 1)	2005	6,500	-13%	+20%
Peterborough (Stages 2 & 3)	2006	11,750	-10%	+12%
Worcester (Stage 1) <sup>1</sup>	2005	6,300	-12%	+20%
Worcester (Stage 2)	2006	8,600	-12%	+19%
Preston & South Ribble (Stage 1)	2006	10,700	-13%	+36%
Lancaster & Morecambe (Stage 1)	2006	8,500	-12%	+16%

<sup>1</sup>Both Worcester programmes were evaluated using telephone surveys (after) and postal travel behaviour surveys (before).

Households that are not regular users of specific sustainable travel modes are also offered a range of further services to enable them to try these out. These services include home visits, conducted by a local bus driver or other local travel expert, and the offer of a small incentive such as a test ticket for local bus services, a cycle trip computer or a pedometer. Regular users are offered a reward to reinforce their travel behaviour together with a personalised information pack if required (similar to the interested group).

### Current work

During 2007, Sustrans and *Socialdata* completed delivery of large-scale ITM campaigns in Worcester and Peterborough as part of their Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town programmes, and a further programme targeting 50,000 households in Lancashire. These campaigns are being evaluated during 2008.

In 2008-10 Sustrans and *Socialdata* are working on three large-scale ITM projects targeting a total of 75,000 households in Exeter, Lowestoft and Watford, with funding from the Big Lottery Fund's Wellbeing Programme.

In each case the ITM work has been preceded by a programme of travel behaviour research, to provide a baseline

for subsequent monitoring, and also to provide hard evidence of the potential for changing travel behaviour through Smarter Choices. Sustrans is also contributing to the development of new travel information resources (e.g. neighbourhood sustainable travel maps and stop-specific bus timetables) to support each ITM campaign.

A further TravelSmart programme is being developed with the West of England Partnership with funding from the South West Regional Development Agency.

Co-ordinated from Bristol by Sustrans and *Socialdata* (which also manages postal and telephone contact with the target population), each ITM campaign is implemented on the ground by a team of specially trained household canvassers, delivery staff and travel advisers working from a local Sustrans field office.

### Outcomes of TravelSmart

The outcomes of recent large-scale TravelSmart projects (shown in the table) are derived from detailed travel behaviour surveys conducted before and after each ITM campaign. These take into account 'background' changes and apply to the whole target population approached to

take part in the ITM campaign (not just participating households).

The evaluation of the first stages of the Peterborough and Worcester programmes has shown that the overall changes were achieved at the individual level by switching an average of around 60 car trips per person per year to other forms of transport, or a little more than one car trip per week across the population. In Peterborough, more detailed surveys also showed that:

- The reductions in car use were concentrated during peak times in the morning and afternoon.
- There was a 15 per cent reduction in distances travelled by car for day-to-day trips – a total annual saving of over 9 million km.

In both Worcester and Peterborough, a separate analysis of bus patronage data is being used to corroborate the findings of the evaluation surveys. Similar monitoring was conducted as part of an earlier TravelSmart project in Gloucester, which also provided evidence that behaviour change achieved by ITM was sustained for at least three years.<sup>2</sup>

An independent evaluation published by the Department for Transport in 2005 provided powerful evidence of the cost-effectiveness of TravelSmart in relation to a range of other 'personalised travel planning' measures. This reviewed five TravelSmart projects undertaken during 2003-04 in Bristol, Gloucester, Nottingham, Northumberland and Sheffield.<sup>3</sup>

The efficacy of TravelSmart was further highlighted in the seminal Smarter Choices report in 2004<sup>4</sup>, and more recently in an extensive research report published in 2007, also by the Department for Transport, on personal travel planning (PTP). This study reviewed all evaluation reports published since 2005 on PTP programmes in the UK; of 12 interventions reporting quantified effects on car use, 11 were conducted by Sustrans and *Socialdata* using the TravelSmart approach.<sup>5</sup>

## Promoting active travel

Increasing levels of physical activity is a key strategy for tackling obesity and other life-limiting health conditions. By promoting walking and cycling for day-to-day journeys, TravelSmart enables people to adopt more physically active – and healthy – lifestyles. Building on the evidence of modal shift generated by ITM, Sustrans is now working with *Socialdata* and other partners to demonstrate its wider public health benefits.

A TravelSmart programme in Gloucester, funded through Active England (jointly operated by Sport England and the Big Lottery Fund), was the first in the UK specifically to incorporate the promotion of physical activity alongside sustainable travel. Targeting around 4,000 households in an inner-city neighbourhood, TravelSmart was successful in generating levels of modal shift comparable to those achieved by an earlier TravelSmart programme in the relatively affluent suburb of Quedgeley.

The detailed evaluation showed that the shift from car travel to walking, cycling and public transport resulted in a 15% increase in average daily exposure to physically active forms of travel. By marketing local sports and leisure facilities alongside sustainable travel options, the TravelSmart programme also generated increases in participation in other forms of physical activity, including sport.

Even without an explicit focus on physical activity, TravelSmart brings public health benefits from increased levels of walking and cycling as part of people's daily routines. The evaluation of the first stage of the Peterborough programme (see table) demonstrated that the reported increases in sustainable travel resulted in an 18% increase in daily time spent using physically active forms of travel.



Households select information from a TravelSmart order form.



Personalised packages are assembled in a local office.

## Tackling climate change

Reducing carbon emissions from transport is critical to tackling climate change – widely seen as the greatest threat facing the world today. TravelSmart achieves significant reductions in distances travelled by car, and hence in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from road transport and because the changes achieved by TravelSmart are sustained over time, these benefits accrue on an annual basis.

Recent large-scale TravelSmart projects have resulted in annual savings in car travel ranging from 740 to 1,700 km per household. Based on the lower figure in this range, and the average CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per km of new cars sold in 2005, it is estimated that a national TravelSmart programme targeting all 25 million households in the UK would save around 0.9 MtC a year. This compares, for example, to the projected annual saving of 1MtC from converting 5% of fuel for UK road transport to biofuels in line with the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation.<sup>6</sup>

With climate change climbing the political agenda – and the pressing need for solutions to tackle spiralling carbon emissions from transport – it is hoped that the UK will soon follow the example of Australia, where the national Greenhouse Office has been the driving force behind the growth of some of the world's largest TravelSmart ITM programmes.

## Costs and benefits

Beyond the value of carbon savings, Sustrans is working with *Socialdata* and other partners to provide evidence of the wider cost-effectiveness of TravelSmart (see box). However the case for further investment is already compelling. For example, with a delivery cost of around £20 per household, ITM could be extended to a city the size of Birmingham (with 400,000 households) for around £8 million – the cost of a little over a quarter a mile of motorway.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the

## An economic appraisal of TravelSmart

Sustrans' Research and Monitoring Unit (RMU) has conducted a pilot economic appraisal of TravelSmart using data from the first three stages of the *MyTravelChoice* ITM programme in Peterborough. The appraisal valued the benefits of ITM based on the findings of two interim evaluation surveys, including decongestion, environment, physical activity, absenteeism and accidents. Against these were weighed the full costs of developing and implementing the three ITM campaigns (which together targeted a total of more than 18,000 households during 2005-06) including local authority staff time and information materials, and the loss of tax revenues due to reduced car mileage. The resulting benefit:cost ratio of 7.6 to 1 compares very favourably to most large infrastructure schemes and would be considerably higher without the loss of tax revenues which accounted for 95% of the scheme's costs. Based on this and other experience, Sustrans is working with the DfT in the context of the 'refresh' of the New Approach to Appraisal on a developmental approach to the appraisal of ITM.

environmental and health benefits, the resulting shift from car travel to walking, cycling and public transport would significantly reduce the need for more spending on new roads.

## TravelSmart and Residential Travel Planning

TravelSmart has a key role to play alongside other elements of a successful Residential Travel Plan, in reducing the transport impacts of new housing developments. This is being demonstrated by a unique TravelSmart



Information packs are delivered by bike and on foot.



A household in Worcester receives their travel information.

pilot project under way in Doncaster. In this case, the target population includes more than 200 households on a new residential development, alongside 2,300 existing households, in the Bessacarr area of the town. This is the first TravelSmart programme to be funded through developer contributions, following an agreement with house-builders Miller Homes and Ben Bailey Homes brokered by planning officers at Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.

## Locking in the benefits

There is growing evidence that TravelSmart can significantly increase the impact of new or improved public transport services, helping to maximise the return on public investment in large capital infrastructure projects.

Bristol's first TravelSmart project, funded through the city's EU CIVITAS VIVALDI programme, was designed to test the effectiveness of combining TravelSmart with the development of a new Quality Bus Corridor (QBC). The results corroborated evidence from elsewhere - that well-targeted marketing of an improved bus service can dramatically increase its positive impact on patronage, in this case more than doubling the increase in bus use achieved by the QBC alone.<sup>8</sup>

The reverse also holds true: there is a broad consensus that the effects of Smarter Choices programmes are reinforced by 'hard' traffic restraint measures such as re-allocation of road space, road-user charging, parking controls.<sup>9</sup> Without this, there is a risk that local traffic reductions will be lost in the long term as a result of wider trends towards increased car use.

## Bringing TravelSmart to your area

Sustrans and Socialdata have an unparalleled track record in delivering high-quality TravelSmart ITM programmes. Our service extends from initial project design through implementation and project management to evaluation and reporting. Some detailed inputs are required from the local authority, including:

- Identification of suitable target area and provision of available address databases;
- Building support across transport planning departments and among political representatives;
- Provision of high-quality information materials on local public transport, cycling and walking.
- Liaison with local bus operator(s) to provide in-kind support for ITM programme.



Personal home advice sessions offer additional support on walking, cycling and public transport.

## References

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- 2 Presented at the Funding Transport Infrastructure: Understanding the New Approach Conference, London, 22 June 2006.
- 3 Department for Transport, Personalised travel planning: evaluation of 14 pilots part funded by the DfT, 2005.
- 4 Department for Transport, Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel, October 2004.
- 5 Full report and summary available on the Department for Transport website: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/travelplans/ptp/>
- 6 Department for Transport, Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation feasibility report, November 2005.
- 7 The average cost of constructing a mile of motorway is £29.9 million. Local Transport Today, 2 November 2006, p24.
- 8 Socialdata/Sustrans, TravelSmart Bristol (Bishopsworth and Hartcliffe) A report on Bristol's first VIVALDI Individualised Travel Marketing project, September 2005.
- 9 Department for Transport, Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel, October 2004.