




GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL TRAVEL PLANNING IN ABU DHABI





These guidelines outline the benefits and requirements of developing and implementing a School Travel Plan. The guide is applicable to existing schools, and for those seeking to build or set up new schools.

Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines are applicable to existing and new schools operating in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

This document provides an overview of the purpose of a School Travel Plan, the benefits of having one and what it should contain, as well as how to implement the Travel Plan and get further advice and support.

What is a “School Travel Plan”?

A Travel Plan is a package of actions designed by a workplace, school or other organisation to encourage safe, healthy and sustainable travel options.

What are the benefits of a School Travel Plan?


A School Travel Plan will help ensure that issues associated with transport (such as parking and high car dependency) are addressed and managed to minimise the impacts these can have on your school, its staff and students, as well as the local area. Promoting sustainable travel could help:

- **Reduce** congestion around the school at pick up and drop off time;
- **Reduce** parking demand and issues associated with excessive demand;
- **Reduce** air pollution in the area due to fewer vehicles;
- **Improve** student independence and road safety awareness;
- **Promote** friendship and communication through facilitating travelling together;
- **Improve** students health and wellbeing;
- **Demonstrate** the importance of sustainability and travel choice to students, educating them about the benefits of sustainable travel.

Why does your School need a Travel Plan?

By their very nature, schools attract **two daily peaks of travel**. For students making the journey by car that is essentially **4 trips every day**, as parents make a journey to and





from the school to drop-off in the morning and then pick up in the afternoon. This can have a concentrated impact upon the local road network such as congestion, parking and road safety issues.

Analysis of education statistics show that for the Abu Dhabi Emirate, there has been a continued increase in the number of students, with a 4.9% increase documented from 2011/12 to 2012/13. There are around 310,000 school children in Abu Dhabi, with an estimated 60% of these attending private schools.

The figures show that the number of students in Abu Dhabi is increasing, and this is likely to mean that the issues surrounding school transport will only get worse if left unmanaged. In order to tackle this, access to schools needs to be considered and alternative transport options for staff and students will need to be promoted and encouraged. This will help reduce the reliance on car travel and ease school transport issues.

It is important to ensure that the next generation are educated about the benefits of sustainable travel to ensure that in the future, its importance continues to be recognised and promoted.

What is the Department of Transport (DOT) doing to help schools?

The DOT has a dedicated TMM Team that has been set up to promote and raise awareness of sustainable transport initiatives across the Emirate.

Transport Mobility Management (TMM) is the application of policies and strategies to reduce travel demand and encourage mode shift to more sustainable forms of transport.


The TMM Team produces supporting guidance and advice notes, such as this document, but also provide advice to existing schools, developers and planners on sustainable access, developing and implementing a Travel Plan, how to monitor and review the plan, as well as the techniques used to help manage the impact of the transport at their site.

The TMM Team is also seeking to work with schools on developing campus wide approaches to sustainable travel (for example, student bus services, cycle-schemes and car-pooling schemes). Improving students' transport service in Abu Dhabi is currently one of the main priorities of Abu Dhabi DOT. More information on what the DOT has already delivered and what is planned for the future can be downloaded from the following link:

www.sustainabletravel.ae

The TMM Team has several key goals to help address transport issues at schools across the Emirate:


- **Encourage** the shift away from car dependency towards more sustainable travel modes for children travelling to school;
- **Reduce** the need to travel alone where appropriate by encouraging trips to be shared;
- **Improve** economic efficiency by reducing congestion and delays across Abu Dhabi;
- **Improve** access to public transport for students and parents;

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- **Raise** awareness of the sustainability issues inherent in transport, to encourage long-term sustainable patterns; and
 - **To improve** the health and wellbeing of students.

What options can be included in a School Travel Plan?

A range of sustainable travel options could be provided by schools to alleviate congestion pressures and included in the School Travel Plan. These include:

- **Dedicated School Bus services** – All public (state) schools must provide each child with a space on a school bus. Dedicated school shuttle bus services can collect children from their homes. For private schools, there is an obligation for bus services to be provided by the schools if there is sufficient demand for them. See the School Transport Guidance on the DOT website for further information: www.sustainabletravel.ae
- **Dedicated drop-off points** – Parents drive to a convenient designated waiting point and children then board a shuttle bus to travel onwards to the school, linking several pick up points along the route. It is possible to use the DOT's new Park and Ride site at Zayed Sports City for use by school buses if required.
- **Car-pooling** – encouraging groups of parents from the same neighbourhood to share the school run duties between themselves to free up time, reduce traffic congestion and save money. The DoT Car-pooling web site can be used by schools to privately link parents together so they can arrange sharing travel; this could be achieved by creating a special car-pooling group for each school and area.
- **Public transport** – There is a growing bus network in Abu Dhabi with frequent and convenient services serving most of the city, making bus travel easier than ever. The DOT can provide information on public bus services which could serve the school.
- **Park and stride** – Students and staff are dropped off at designated safe drop off areas and walk the remainder of the journey to the school. A tool which will reduce the number of vehicles in the vicinity of the school. This is particularly applicable during the winter months of the year, when the weather is cooler.
- **Walking and cycling** – depending on the distance from school location, the older students could be encouraged to walk or cycle to school where appropriate. Improvements to walking and cycling facilities are constantly being made by the DOT and Municipalities.
- **New family information pack** – An information pack can be produced for new families looking to send their children to the school in the future. This would be distributed during the decision making process and can demonstrate the school is actively thinking of the well-being of its students. This will help address the issue of school travel at the earliest



opportunity, and takes advantage of the fact that people are more likely to change behaviour when making a big decision like moving house, changing job or starting a new school.

School Travel Plans for new schools

Developers of new schools have the ideal opportunity to review accessibility early in the design and development stage as part of the Transportation impact Study (TIS) to make sure that there is good access to the school site.

Measures to be considered include:

- Appropriate level of parking facilities for staff which do not promote excessive car use;
- Designation of priority parking spaces for staff who car-share/car-pool or use Low Emission Vehicles;
- Safe bus drop off points that don't cause congestion;
- Desirable and safe pedestrian links to surrounding neighbourhoods;
- Cycling facilities; and
- Car drop off areas that prioritise safe access to school.

Addressing these points ensures that sustainable travel options are incorporated into the design of the school, meaning reliance upon the car is not necessary, shaping travel behaviour from the first day of the school opening.

Getting the message out

Promotion is the vital component to ensuring that parents, students and staff are aware of the various travel options available to them so they are able to access the information they need to make the right sustainable choice on how to travel to school. Promotion on travel options could be undertaken by:

- Sending out travel options leaflets to parents and children at the start of a new school year and to new starters to provide early information about travel options available to get to school;
- Having a dedicated page on the school website which outlines how parents and students can get there using a range of modes; and
- Offering incentives for choosing to travel sustainably, such as reserved parking spaces for those who are car-pooling, free shuttle bus and discounts on public transport tickets used to travel to the school.

Each school is required to have a designated person to coordinate school transport, who should help to facilitate promotion of the travel options to staff, students and parents, as well as review the effectiveness of these options in the future.

Help and advice:

A framework for completing your own travel plan can be downloaded from the DOT website – see School Travel Plan Structure Appendix.

If you would like further assistance in developing a School Travel Plan, the DoT provide free of charge support, advice and information.

Please contact the TMM Team directly via the following contact details:

Email: tmm.info@dot.abudhabi.ae

Further information about TMM and related topics to sustainable travel can be found at: www.sustainabletravel.ae