

# **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Report of  
“Transport”**

**Select Committee 3  
Cllr M. Whiteside  
(Chair)**

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## 1. Executive Summary

Wigan Metropolitan Borough is located in the north-west of England between Liverpool and Manchester and is the second largest of the 10 boroughs within Greater Manchester. The borough covers an area of 77 square miles, including many urban districts with a coal mining heritage as well as rural areas and is home to a population of 307,941 (2006 population estimate). It is made up of 14 towns and villages of which Wigan and Leigh are the largest. Land used for industrial purposes has now been replaced by country parks and public open spaces (75% of the borough is open land or countryside). External road and rail links are generally good, however, travel on the road network within the borough, for all modes is less easy and there is significant congestion on certain routes during specific periods of the day. As some families have more than one car this compounds some of the problems we have on our roads. However traffic demand is growing rapidly due to economic success and is densely concentrated on the fringes of the borough.

Historically Wigan was a mining town and has narrow roads aligned with property making it unsuitable to widen our roads to deal with the large number of vehicles passing through our towns.

Residents depend greatly on cars and like it or not persuading the majority of people to consider or experience alternative methods of transport are very difficult. Within greater Manchester Wigan has one of the lowest public transport usages along with low use of walking and cycling. In reality congestion is in defined locations of the borough e.g.:

- Wigan Town Centre – Pottery Road / Riverway
- Leigh Town Centre – King Street / Twist Lane
- A58 Hindley / Platt Bridge / Ashton
- A577 Ince to Hindley
- A573 Platt Bridge to Wigan

In addition, congestion is increasing on exits from the borough during rush hour periods and particularly when schools are open, for example along Chaddock Lane / A580, Lane Head in Lowton and the M6.

### Key Findings:

- More investment is needed in sustainable public transport
- Increase Walking and Cycling
- Upgrade use of public footpaths
- Encourage Local Employment
- If 15 percent of the working population did not use their motor vehicles to travel to work road congestion would be as light as when schools are on holiday. *Source: Wigan Environmental Services*

Key recommendations:

- Develop an integrated Transport Strategy for Wigan Borough
- Improve public transport
- Gain greater control over bus companies, via new legislation currently being taken through parliament
- Develop park and ride facilities particularly in and around the hotspot areas of the borough
- Introduce time limited parking at car parks to deter people leaving their vehicles on car parks for a full day
- Increase parking permits
- Increase car parking facilities at train stations
- For the council to consider flexible working arrangements for staff, including the introduction of buses to transport employees to work places
- Conduct a review of school bus provision
- Speed up the process for the regeneration of local footpaths

## 2. Introduction

2.1 In order to get a clearer picture of transport issues in the borough the Select Committee established a set of terms of reference for a review of transport provision within the borough.

Congestion can put off shoppers coming into Wigan even though shopping is not time critical. Lack of parking can also be a deterrent. This review considered the prospects for car ownership and travel in Wigan, taking into account economic and social factors and the capacity problems of roads.

In the future, car ownership will rise, and older people will drive until a later age. **Most people will always choose the car above any other method of transport.**

Wigan faces a number of dilemmas for example:

- most railway stations are on the periphery;
- there is a need to improve bus travel;
- greater control is needed over bus routes;
- there is a need to develop the road system; and
- more internal employment opportunities are required.

Taking into account these issues, the Select Committee agreed the following terms of reference:

a) To understand the implications of accessing Transport Innovation Fund and its possible contribution to reducing congestion in the Borough.

To understand the implications of:

- Traffic congestion in the borough, with particular regard to any adverse impact on attracting new investment and employment
- Traffic associated with regeneration initiatives and how this should be accommodated
- Road pricing in Greater Manchester and the proposed creation of a public transport interchange in Wigan, with particular reference to car parking required in association with park and ride facilities

b) To identify effective methods of encouraging people to use public transport:

- What are the benefits and costs to individuals in using public transport
- What improvements, in quality, frequency, pricing would be effective

- How could such improvements be brought about
- What innovative approaches have been developed by other Local Authorities

A wide range of documents, research and data were used as the basis of the analysis of issues about transport. This included the following:

- Council reports
- Consultation with Council departments, i.e.: Environmental Services
- Semi- structured interviews with children and young people, Residents groups / forums
- Newspaper articles inviting comments from members of the public
- Literature Reviews
- RAC Foundation
- The Eddington Transport Study
- [www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk)

### 3. Methodology

3.1 In preparation for the review of transport and, in particular, to establish the difficulties Wigan experience, the Select Committee collated evidence from various sources with the aim of identifying practical solutions towards addressing the issues. Collation of data seeks to give a detailed analysis of potential approaches that could help towards addressing some of the emerging issues. The review was to address the following issues:

- Where are the major hotspots in the borough?
- What are the benefits of the Transport Innovation Fund for Wigan?
- How do we attract major investment?
- How do we encourage members of the public to use public transport?

As part of the review we have undertaken extensive consultation. For example we have visited schools to find out what children and young people experience when using public transport and what it is like for people visiting Wigan, in particular the new shopping centre “The Grand Arcade”. In addition we have liaised with one of the largest legal service providers to find out why they have decided to relocate from Leigh Town Centre.

Some of the issues we looked at included:

- Impact of car parking facilities whilst shopping and parking vehicles when using the rail network;
- Percentage of the workplace population who walk / cycle to work;
- Percentage of the workplace population who work mainly from home;
- Percentage of the workplace population who travel to work by motor vehicle and
- The distance the workplace population travel to work.

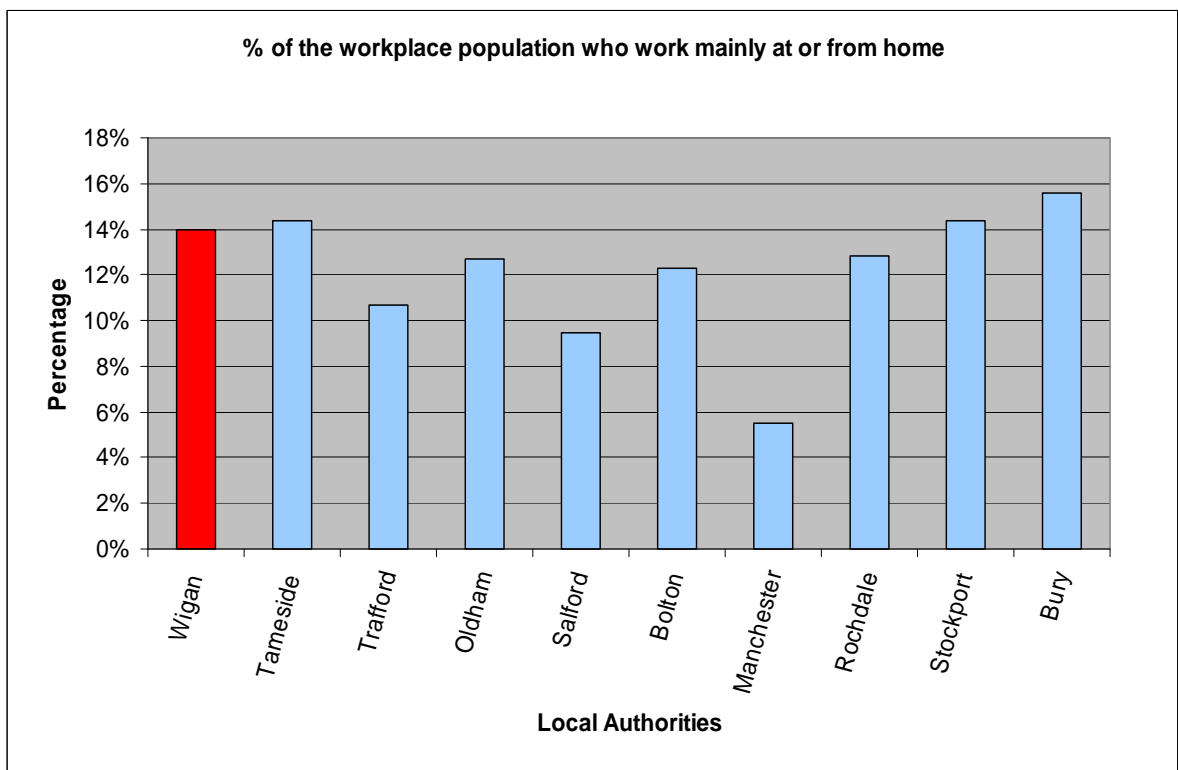
This information has been compared with neighbouring local authorities.

## 4. Key Findings

4.1 The Greater Manchester Transportation Unit Wigan Congestion Study (September 2006) found that there does not appear to be a lot of congestion on the roads of Wigan, but there is some localised congestion at specific times of day in some parts of the borough. This is particularly prevalent in the areas Hindley, Ince in Makefield, Ashton in Makefield and Wigan town centre, along main roads such as the A49, A577 and A58. This is compounded by the very low level of public transport use in the borough. Wigan has the lowest percentage (7.8%) of the daytime population who travel to work by public transport (the highest is 25.9%) across AGMA<sup>1</sup> authorities. Wigan also has the highest percentage of the resident population **73%** who travel to work by private motor vehicle (car, taxi or motorbike) compared to the lowest borough at **53.7%**.

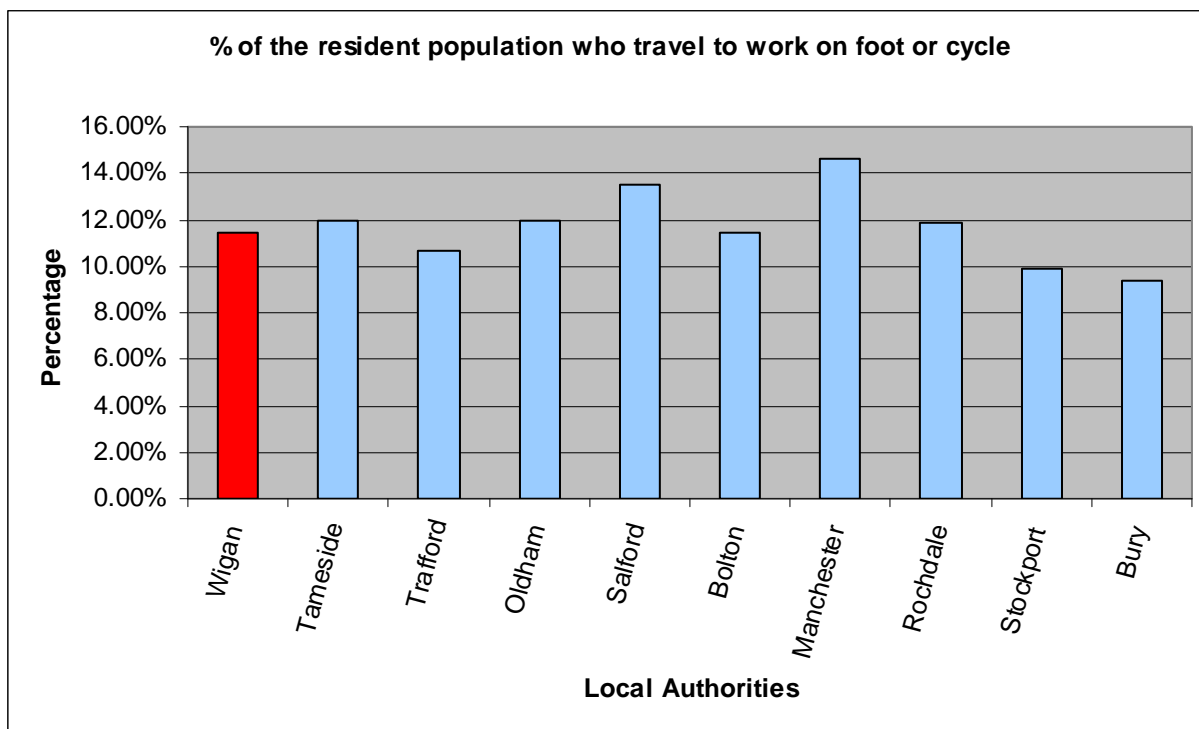
Comparative data was collated for all ten Greater Manchester authorities and the data is shown in tables 1 – 4 below:

**Table 1 – Percentage of the workplace population who work mainly from home**

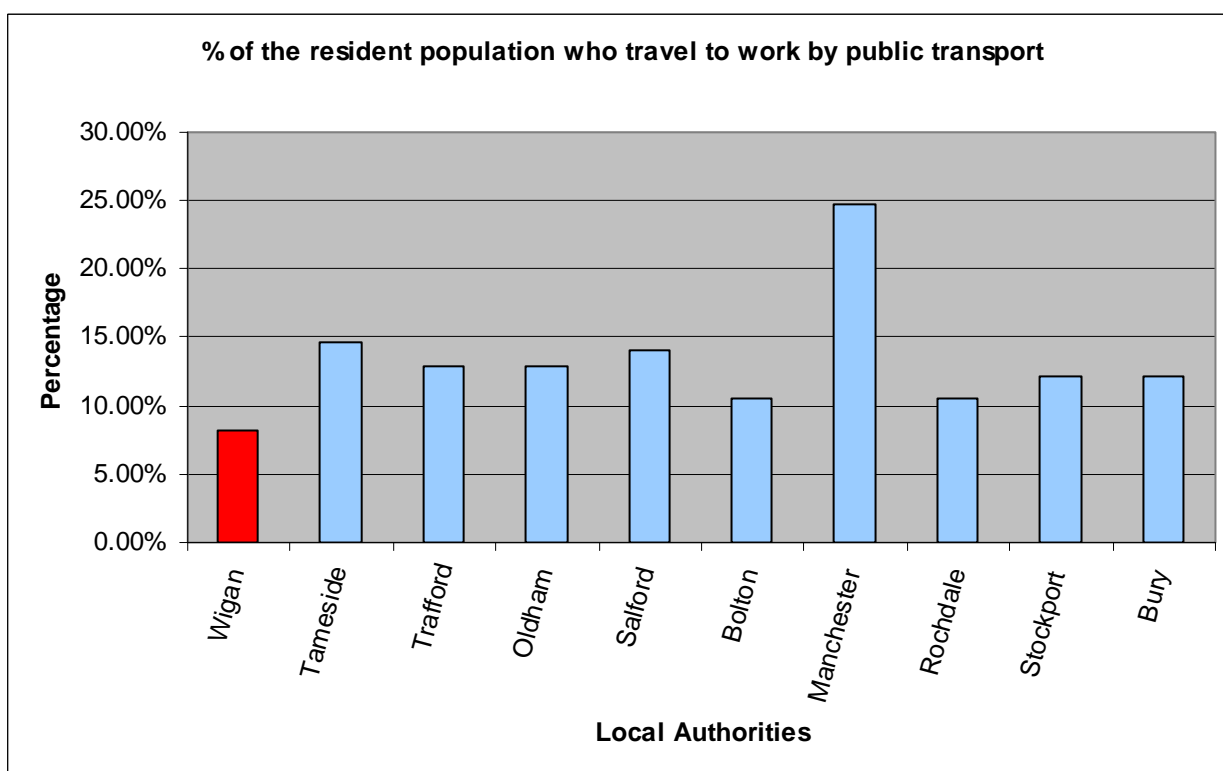


<sup>1</sup> Association of Greater Manchester Authorities

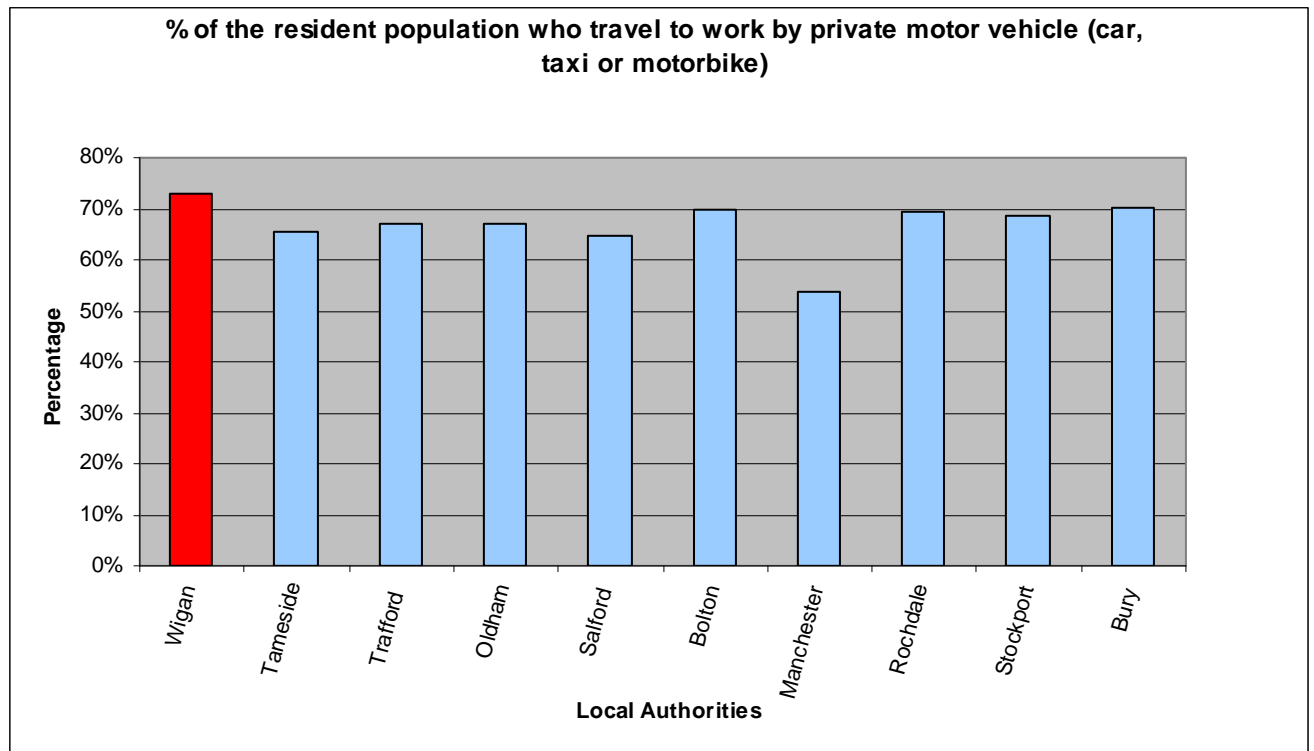
**Table 2 – Percentage of the resident population who travel to work on foot or cycle**



**Table 3 - Percentage of the resident population who travel to work by public transport**



**Table 4 - Percentage of the resident population who travel to work by private motor vehicle (car, taxi or motorbike)**



Source: Audit-commission – 2006

#### 4.1.1 Alternative modes of transport

In February 2008 Cycling England invited bids from Local Authorities for Cycle Demonstration Town Status. Wigan responded to the invitation by preparing and submitting a bid for Leigh Area and Greenheart Regional Park Area in the South of the Borough.

It is proposed to include two key routes through the Greenheart Regional Park that connects Leigh with National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 55 and Regional Route 82 via large areas of traffic free open space.

It is anticipated that cycling to be a sustained high profile mode of transport, as well as a preferred Leisure Pursuit. This would give benefits in terms of relieving congestions and to encourage the use of alternative means of transport other than the car

## **4.2 Consultation Findings**

### **4.2.1 Response to Newspaper Article**

The Select Committee publicised an article in the local newspaper to allow members of the public to express their comments and views about transport across the borough. This is what they had to say:

- Need to improve the traffic flow in Hindley area;
- Provide public transport from Wigan town centre to Wigan infirmary;
- Difficulties with the re-alignment of pavement at Liverpool road which has reduced lane width and increased congestion of traffic;
- Improve cycle routes particularly in the Leigh area<sup>2</sup>; and
- Volume of HGV vehicles passing through the Lowton area adds to congestion.

### **4.2.2 Consultation with Local forum**

The consultation process was extended by attending focus groups across the borough. A number of areas were chosen to ensure that we had coverage from both the north and south of the borough. Particular areas have established forums for consultation about a number of issues that affect their communities and welcomed the Select Committee to attend their forums.

## **4.3 Standish Forum (Interview with Chair of forum. Standish is located in the North of the Borough)**

### **4.3.1 Traffic Congestion**

Standish experiences traffic congestion throughout the day, with a slight reduction between 11am-2pm. This congestion is predominantly caused by cars travelling through the area.

There are two key points in relation to transport issues within Standish:

1. Traffic/transport will not get better, as car usage increases.
2. Standish will never get a bypass, as the Highways Agency will not sanction it due to the number of junctions already located within the area.

The key issue is therefore how to cope with traffic levels and the continuing increase?

Possible solutions:

- Routing match day JJB traffic from the M6 off at a junction further south, rather than at Junction 27, as presently happens.

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<sup>2</sup> A proposal is currently being made to Cycle England for Leigh to become a Cycle Demonstration Town.

- A road exists near Heinz at Martland Park, which could be opened up to reduce match day traffic, although it is unclear if this is adopted.
- Converting Charnock Richard Service Station into a motorway exit.
- Redesign the Orrell M6 junction, so that better use is made of it.

#### **4.3.2 Bus Services**

The Arriva bus service is normally very efficient, but anecdotal evidence in late 2007 suggests that the service has not been as good. Buses are getting too full and therefore missing out stops.

East-west bus services are available, but they only run every hour and are barely used.

There are only two buses running from Standish to ASDA in Wigan and only one bus an hour to Robin Park.

Yellow school buses adopted by Standish High School have had limited impact upon congestion in the afternoon, but have helped in the morning.

#### **4.3.3 Train Services**

A proposal exists to open Standish station, but this is very unlikely to happen.

#### **4.3.4 Investment**

Standish Township Forum firmly believes that congestion is affecting investment. This is compounded by a restricted number of car parking spaces and limited opportunities to expand parking options. Businesses located within Standish (particularly on the High Street) do not last long.

Standish is advertised by the Council as a tourist destination, but there is no where to park, therefore tourists do not stop.

One solution would be to limit the amount of time people can park within the designated parking areas, as at present none are chargeable.

#### **4.3.5 Footpaths**

The old railway line could be used by school children to walk / cycle to school. If it was revamped (at present the surface is poor following rain) it would be a safe route to and from school.

## **4.4 South of the Borough (Plank forum)**

### **4.4.1 Plank Lane Resident Group**

Public transport options from Plank Lane are poor. For example, to access the ASDA supermarket, residents need to take a bus from Plank Lane into Leigh town centre and take another bus to West Leigh. The group noted that they tended to walk rather than use bus services, as the cost is prohibitive. Residents stated that the key issues are cost and access.

### **4.4.2 School Transport**

Residents with children felt that transport to school should be free and should at the least be means tested. The typical bus fare to school is 70p each way. Students attending Westleigh High School need to take two buses from Plank Lane, which escalates costs further. Several of the residents admitted that they have kept their children off school on occasions, as they were unable to afford the bus fare. To attend Lowton High School, pupils from Plank Lane are required to take 3 or 4 buses. In addition, buses are colour coded, with pupils assigned to a particular bus. If this bus is missed, pupils cannot catch an alternative bus. In addition, this system prevents pupils taking part in after school clubs. The residents stated that Lowton High School has implemented the colour coding to eliminate anti-social behaviour, but have threatened to stop the bus provision if there is any further trouble. The group suggested that school buses should employ 'guardian angels' to monitor children's behaviour. The group also stated that bus drivers stigmatise young people in school uniform.

### **4.4.3 Bus Service Providers**

Overall users were very complementary about the service that they receive when travelling on Jim Stone buses. Buses are clean and the drivers are courteous and helpful. In contrast, the service provided by Arriva was heavily criticised. The residents noted that the drivers were rude and the buses were unclean. In addition, Arriva has no disabled access and buses set off before older people have been able to sit down safely. Both services were criticised, as a lot of drivers will not provide change. It was felt that the answer to the problems they face would be an increase in bus service provision and free fares.

## **4.5 Hawkley Hall**

### **4.5.1 Local Secondary School (Interview with the school council)**

Children and young people had various experiences of using public transport. In particular they had difficulties with school buses, either not arriving on time

or not allowing some children and young people to board the buses if they didn't have the correct bus fare. These problems were not isolated as some young people had had the same problem out of school hours with one young person being left stranded because the driver wouldn't accept note currency. The group were asked a series of questions – here is what they told us:

**Who travels to school by bus?**

- All the pupils attending the consultation travel to school by bus.

**Do you use public transport outside of school hours?**

- Yes, the majority of pupils use public transport outside of school hours.

**Do you get held up in the morning getting to school because of the traffic?**

- Traffic problems at Marus Bridge can result in the pupils being late for school. If this happens it can lead to detention.

**Do buses arrive on time?**

- Two double deckers are provided by Finches specifically for transporting pupils to school. There is often only a 5/10 minute gap between the buses and they sometimes arrive together, which is a waste as the bus will end up empty. The pupils noted that if there were longer gaps between the buses they would be able to get to school more easily.

**Do you feel safe on the bus?**

- The pupils noted that there are no problems on the school buses and they feel safe. However, there are sometimes issues with new Year 7 pupils standing up.
- Senior teachers ensure pupils behave and are sat down when they get on the bus and occasionally ride with them.
- There are bus prefects on the buses.
- The pupils noted that they also feel safe catching public buses.

**What can we do to make/encourage people to use public transport?**

- Lower prices would encourage more people to use public transport.
- The pupils felt that the Oyster card system <sup>3</sup>used in London was a good idea.

**What improvements can be made?**

- School bus routes have recently changed, with some Year 11 pupils having to walk long distances to bus stops. These changes were implemented with no consultation with the school. The buses now finish where the route ends (as noted in the contract).

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<sup>3</sup> An Oyster card can store a cash value which can be used as a “pay as you go” on public transport.

- When catching the bus into Wigan, drivers are sometimes rude and won't give change.
- If pupils (particularly those in uniform) miss the school bus, other buses sometimes drive past. This was particularly prevalent at the bottom of Carr Lane, although has not been as problematic recently.
- The bus route from Wigan to Leigh Sports Village (and across the Borough) is problematic, due to difficulties with connections.

#### **4.5.2 Additional Points**

- The buses are old fashioned, but clean.
- The girls noted that if they lost their money, or ran out, they would feel confident asking a member of staff for support.
- Two years ago, Hawkley Hall pupils were rewarded with a plush coach, due to them being recommended as well behaved pupils.

#### **4.6 Secondary Schools in attendance (17 pupils in total):**

Fred Longworth  
West Leigh  
Standish  
Shevington  
Golborne  
Park Centre PRU

#### **Who travels to school by bus?**

- Seven pupils travelled to school by bus. The rest either walked, or received lifts from their parents.

#### **Do you use public transport outside of school hours?**

- All pupils used public transport outside of school hours.

#### **Do you get held up in the morning getting to school because of the traffic?**

- The majority of pupils noted that they get held up in the morning because of the traffic.
- The pupils stated that if they are late for school more than 3 times it will lead to detention (even though they are late due to the school bus). In addition they pointed out that if you are late for school due to the bus it is still classed as truanting, which can lead to parents being charged.

#### **Do buses arrive on time?**

- All pupils stated that the buses do not arrive on time. They also pointed out that some buses do not turn up at night, which can lead to young people being late home.

#### **Do you feel safe on school buses?**

- The pupils noted that they feel safe on school buses.
- They felt that cameras help to deter smoking, although they also pointed out that cameras on yellow buses are frequently not on, which they felt leads to ineffective policing.
- They noted that there have been incidences when double decker buses that are used for school routes have broken down and have been replaced with single decker buses, which they felt were not safe due to over-crowding.

#### **Do you feel safe on public buses?**

- A few pupils reported that they have been on buses when people have been assaulted, but that the drivers do not take the incidences seriously.

#### **What can we do to make/encourage people to use public transport?**

- The pupils felt that cheap bus passes would encourage more people to take the bus to school, rather than receiving lifts from parents. This is currently hindered, as bus prices keep increasing.
- The pupils suggested that the daily, weekly and monthly bus passes that can be obtained need to be advertised better.

#### **What improvements can be made?**

- The pupils stated that Arriva buses were filthy and that this needs to be tackled.
- The pupils felt that the introduction of a version of the Oyster card was a good idea.
- It was suggested that annual school bus passes should be introduced, particularly if bus charges could be claimed back at the end of the school year.

#### **Do you have any additional points?**

- The pupils reported a number of one-off incidents that have taken place whilst they have been on school buses, including the following:
  - Drivers selling cigarettes to children.
  - A driver stopping off for a cup of tea and a cigarette on the way to school, resulting in the pupils being late.
  - A driver stopping off to get tickets for a Wigan Athletic football match, leaving the pupils with the bus running.

## **4.7 Wigan Town Centre**

#### **4.7.1 Shoppers**

Shopping in Wigan Town Centre – Anecdotal evidence suggests that traffic congestion is affecting the town Centre. Since the opening of the Grand Arcade in April 2007 the town centre has seen a 30% increase in car park usage. However businesses are saying that they have received a number of complaints from customers about the problems they have faced getting into the town centre.

Comments received state that there are no problems whilst driving on the motorway that significant congestion access as soon as the fringes of the town centre are reached.

A survey was carried out in February 08 with a questionnaire being distributed to all businesses in the Galleries and the Grand Arcade shopping centres. This is what they had to say:

- there is adequate car parking facilities;
- inadequate sign posting to car parks;
- the one way system to car parks are confusing and
- provide free car parking like the Trafford Centre

#### **4.8 Bridgers a local residents group**

**4.8.1** Members of the select committee held a focus group with local residents from the east of the borough in Howe Bridge Atherton. A number of issues were raised as follows:

- concerns were raised about timings of road works
- there were a perception that most people travelled in peak times
- new build houses had no infrastructure
- identified a need for shuttle buses and
- issues about anti-social behaviour on buses

#### **4.9 Leigh Town Centre**

##### **4.9.1 Local Businesses**

A solicitors based in Leigh currently employ approximately 400 staff, 200 staff.

The company are currently exploring an office move outside of Leigh Town Centre.

The main reasons are:

- Office space

- Convenience of location for both staff and clients in Leigh Town Centre
- Parking within the area is almost non-existent and will be compounded by new restrictions on street parking and
- Public transport is not reliable

#### 4.10 Car parking in the Borough

4.10.1 Wigan Council provides free parking for a percentage of council employees. There are a number of car parks available across the borough. Wigan Town Centre include's the Grand Arcade MSCP, Mesnes Terrace MSCP, Mona Street, Harrogate Street, Chapel Lane, Sovereign Road Civic Centre, Gateway House, Progress House and the Weind. All staff in Leigh use either Bengal Street MSCP or if they work past 6pm on the Library car park situated next to the Town Hall.

In total there are 1001 permits available at an annual cost of £275,270 per annum.

The Council allocate 425 permits to the NHS and PCT for car parking which they pay for on Water Street MSCP at a reduced rate.

A summary of the ten Greater Manchester authorities car parking charges for council employees are list below:

#### Greater Manchester Local Authorities – Employee Car Parking

Authority	Employee Car Parking Arrangements
Bury	Limited free car parking spaces made available. Majority of staff pay for car parking except out of town centre premises where there is no charge levied.
Bolton	Car parking arrangements are varied and alter across departments. Some offices provide car parking, but others, such as those in the town centre have no parking, therefore employees have to make their own arrangements. Some job descriptions incorporate a parking allowance, or subsidised car parking.
Manchester	Car parking arrangements are varied and depend upon location. There is a limited amount of car parking available in the city centre, therefore the majority of staff have to make their own arrangements or use public transport. Outside of the city centre free parking is available, therefore essential car users tend to be located in these venues.

Oldham	Car parking passes are provided for the majority of staff, which have to be paid for. There has recently been a shortage of passes, but improvements have been made. Staff without a pass have to make their own arrangements.
Rochdale	Employees are charge of £32 a month for car parking.
Salford	Employees are not charged for parking.
Stockport	Posts with a 'casual car user' allowance attached to it pay £16.80 per month and get free parking Monday-Friday in designated car parks.  The Council has not given out essential car user allowances for a number of years.  There are a small number of spaces near Council offices, which are allocated on a 'needs' basis to staff who go out constantly during the day. They still pay the £16.80.
Tameside	Limited car parking spaces made available. Each council department pay for car parking spaces for their staff which is reviewed on a six monthly basis.
Trafford	Employees are not charged for parking. However, permits are only provided for essential car users. Parking spaces are at a premium, therefore members of staff who are not essential car users have to make their own arrangements.
Wigan	Employees are not charged for parking.

Of the ten Greater Manchester authorities employee car parking arrangements vary. The authorities that charge employees are Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale and Stockport. For employees working for Bolton Council the majority of staff have to make their own arrangements.

Salford, Wigan, Trafford and for those staff working in the outskirts of Manchester there is no charge levied for car parking.

Staff who work in Rochdale did state that due to the charges for car parking this has been a deterrent not to use their own vehicles and some have chosen to use public transport.

#### **4.11 Greater Manchester Transportation Unit**

#### **4.11.1 Wigan Congestion Study**

In September 2006 a congestion study was undertaken by Greater Manchester Transport Unit. This concluded that there does not appear to be a lot of congestion on the roads of Wigan. There is some localised congestion at specific times of day in some parts of the borough especially:

- Hindley

Hindley experiences slow speeds (less than 10 mph) in the morning and evening along the A577 and A58. Delays of longer than 2 minutes are experienced at the junction of these roads during the morning period and along the A58 at the junction between A58 Bridge Street / Ladies Lane.

- Ince in Makerfield

Slow speeds are experienced within the Ince area during the evening peak period (A573 and A577), along with delays of longer than 2 minutes at the junction between Manchester Road and Ince Green Lane (A577).

- Ashton in Makerfield

Ashton in Makerfield centre experiences low average speeds (less than 10 mph) during the evening peak period.

- Wigan Town Centre

Wigan experiences slow speeds (less than 10 mph) during the morning period along the A49 approaching Saddle Junction and along Queen Street approaching Chapel Street.

During the evening period, slow speeds are encountered along the A49 and B5238 from the junction with Milk Street, to the junction with Westwood Lane.

Average link speeds on Wigan roads are similar across all three time periods ranging between 20.2 and 21.9 mph. They are slightly faster than for Greater Manchester as a whole. Only a handful of roads in Wigan show average speeds less than 10 mph during the morning peak.

Nearly 90% of Wigan residents travel to work by car, either as a driver (77.9%) or passenger (11.6%).

The average trips lengths on the A577 toward Ince in Makerfield are particularly short and it may be possible to attract some of these journeys onto buses given the appropriate infrastructure. A closer examination of origins and destinations by journey purpose at this site may be beneficial.

There was very little change in journey to work trips between 1991 and 2001.

#### **4.11.2 GMPTE Interview**

In October 2007, the Select Committee interviewed representatives from GMPTE to find out the benefits for Wigan should the TIF<sup>4</sup> bid be successful. The key findings were:

### **TIF Bid**

- An integrated transport system is required across Greater Manchester, but this requires all operators to talk to each other and work in partnership, when at present they are in competition. TIF should provide leverage for this.
- The congestion charging linked to the TIF bid will not be popular, but improved public transport should mitigate any lost voters. In addition, it is important to note that the government is unlikely to provide the same amount of funding for transport in the future.
- This is particularly pertinent since the number of vehicles on our roads is expected to increase by 25% in the next 10 years.

### **Trains**

- Greater Manchester has a good rail network, but we have old fashioned trains and more capacity is required.
- The train network has suffered from under-investment over the last 30-40 years.
- TIF will provide funding for more carriages and new rolling stock, along with extensions to Metrolink.
- GMPTE are working with operators to restore the Sunday service to Wigan via Atherton. It is anticipated that this will take place from December 2008, although GMPTE are trying to bring implementation further forward.
- There has been much lobbying to re-open old train stations / lines, which has not received any success. The cost of building new or refurbishing old stations is not an issue. Barriers stem from limited train stock and the fact that each train journey needs to be subsidised. Potential funders (Government, GMPTE, Wigan Council, etc) are unlikely to be in a position to meet these costs.
- GMPTE are supporting local authorities to work with developers and encourage them to contribute to station improvements (for example, Walkden train station is going to benefit from investment via a new housing development).
- A resolution was passed at a GMPTE meeting in October 2007, to extend free off peak travel to those aged 60+ on all trams and trains. GMPTE are currently asking government to introduce a concessionary scheme for children and young people in education (travel within London for this group is already free).

### **Buses**

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<sup>4</sup> Transport Innovation Fund

- 8 out of 10 public transport users take buses.
- Bus services within Wigan are not performing well despite having a good network, although some areas do have poor access.
- The key role for GMPTE is to encourage the public to stop using their cars and use buses instead. The TIF bid will provide funding to deliver a much better bus service. This will be complemented by a Bill currently going through parliament, which should ensure that Passenger Transport Executives (PTE's) will have greater control over bus services. Private sector bus companies will consequently have to fill gaps in areas that are currently underserved, as PTE's will decide the bus network. At present GMPTE subsidise bus journeys in areas where bus companies do not want to travel (due to low profitability).
- Connectional facilities are a big issue across Greater Manchester (including Wigan). In preparing the TIF bid GMPTE examined every bus routes performance and met every bus company. There is a proposal to develop a Leigh guided busway into Manchester.
- If successful the TIF bid will incorporate a SMART<sup>5</sup> card system, which along with making travel across the region easier, will identify movements of people, so that the network can be adjusted accordingly. SMART cards will be implemented for the over 60's and disabled people from March 2008.
- Real time passenger information will be rolled out over the next 2 years. At present this is problematic due to the large number of providers, particularly the independent sector.
- If the TIF bid is successful the bus system will be invested in first and improvements will only take 2 or 3 years to be completed.

## Trams

- Some areas within Greater Manchester feel disadvantaged by the TIF bid, as they do not currently have a tram service and are not expected to for many years. However, only 2 out of 10 public transport users use trains or the tram, therefore it is important that a key focus of the TIF bid is based upon improving the bus network.
- 20 million passengers use the tram network, but at peak periods the system is unable to meet demand. An additional 8 trams are being built, which will come on-stream in 2009 and will increase capacity, along with improving the robustness of timetables.
- Metrolink fares are higher than bus and rail fares. Metrolink runs without any form of subsidy (unlike the rail network, which receives £3.50 for every passenger journey). In addition cost of single/return tickets are high, so that regular users are encouraged to buy season tickets and fraud is consequently reduced.

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<sup>5</sup> Smart card can store a cash value to be used on public transport and records number of uses.

## 5. Evaluation

5.1 Although Wigan is heavily congested the Council have taken major steps to address some of the issues. Wigan Borough has implemented a number of measures that are now in place. For example:

- Traffic calming, cycling and walking strategy;
- Local Travel Plan and
- School Transport – yellow buses are available at the following schools
  - Standish High
  - Orrell St Peters
  - Astley St Marys
  - St Edmund Arrowsmith
  - Byrchall High School

The borough also has the benefits of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT). This is called 'Local Link' in Greater Manchester. It is a way of providing public transport in areas where, even with subsidy, it is not cost effective to run buses. A scheme will usually comprise one or two small buses or minibuses that can be booked over the phone. You can call as much as a week in advance or as little as one hour before you want to travel but, the later you book, the less chance there is of getting the time slot you want. The operator uses software to plan and optimise journeys so that the bus may have several people on board, each going to different destinations around the area. The journey is always 'door to door' and can be used by anybody, as long as their journey starts and ends within the defined area. Fares are a little bit more than buses but cheaper than taxis. The vehicle was funded by Wigan Council and it has been the fastest growing service of its kind in Greater Manchester. Further details can be found at:

[http://www.gmppte.com/upload/library/Hindley\\_Local\\_Link.pdf](http://www.gmppte.com/upload/library/Hindley_Local_Link.pdf)

## 5.2 Transport Innovation Fund

AGMA / GMPTA intend to bid for substantial additional national resources from the Transport Innovation Fund. If successful, this could result in almost £3billion worth of transport related infrastructure schemes being rolled out across Greater Manchester over the next 10 to 15 years.

The expectation is that public transport schemes will be implemented and this will then create the opportunity to introduce a road-user charging scheme for peak time journeys into and out of the Regional Centre, as part of an integrated transport strategy. The scheme currently proposed differs from the simple London Congestion Charge in a number of ways in order to produce a smarter system that is more suitable for Greater Manchester.

Before any scheme is introduced AGMA has set four tests that need to be met:

- There must be significant investment in transport improvements; primarily public transport including Metrolink and enhanced capacity must be in place where congestion charging is proposed prior to the introduction of the charging scheme
- Measures must complement the competitiveness and inclusion priorities of the sub-region and not undermine the competitiveness of the Regional Centre or the town centres in the area.
- Measures must be acceptable, not only to the public but also to the business community.
- Measures must be relevant to where congestion exists or where it may emerge in the future notwithstanding the advent of public transport improvements.

### 5.2.1 Proposals

The package which AGMA is proposing to take forward to local consultation is summarised below:

A bid with the potential to secure both significant reductions in congestion and the largest ever local transport investment programme outside London, with a total capital investment cost of up to £2.95bn, of which £2.55bn would be bid for as part of Phase 1.

If secured in full, the proposed phase 1 programme would deliver:

- i) Reductions in CO2 emissions, improvements in air quality and reduced accidents.
- ii) Reduced traffic congestion on routes to the Regional Centre
- iii) More than 30km of new Metrolink track, extending the system to Ashton, East Didsbury, Wythenshawe and Manchester Airport, Oldham and Rochdale Town Centres, and the Trafford Centre.

- iv) Three Bus Rapid Transit schemes for Leigh, Salford, Manchester, Route 8 and Oxford Road, Manchester.
  - v) New heavy rail rolling stock for all major routes into the Regional Centre.
  - vi) A further 25 enhanced Bus Priority Corridors will be introduced along all major routes . These will offer time savings of up to 15%.
  - vii) Bus frequencies will be increased and new services will be introduced.
  - viii) New transport interchanges will be built within the Regional Centre, Bolton, Rochdale, Stockport, Altrincham and Wigan.
  - ix) Double the number of park and ride spaces including new strategic sites located at the M60, providing commuters with an opportunity to connect with high quality public transport and avoid the charge.
  - x) A step change in travel information, integrated and smart ticketing, and a significant behavioural change programme working directly with employers and with the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce.
- xi) Increased public transport capacity in the morning peak by some 40% along the corridors affected by the phase 1 charge.
- xii) A bespoke programme of transport related works to meet the economic and social needs of Greater Manchester residents.

The proposed phase 1 charging scheme would involve:

Two charging points on corridors to the Regional Centre, with the outer charge points at or close to the M60, and the inner charge points at an Intermediate Ring.

Charges will be levied only when a vehicle crosses either of these charging points

Charge points will be established on all routes on the charged corridors (eg at all crossing points on the M60) to avoid rat-running between corridors.

Charges will only be applied during the working week, Monday to Friday, and will be applied only during the morning and evening peaks and in the peak direction (i.e. only inbound from 7.00am to 9.30am and outbound between 4.00pm and 6.30pm).

### **5.2.2 Implications for the borough of Wigan**

All of the proposals will affect Wigan residents to some degree. The three largest investments in infrastructure with the most direct impact are the Leigh, Salford, Manchester Bus Rapid Transit scheme (also known as the Leigh Guided Busway), the Wigan Transport Hub and the Wigan Inner Relief Road (WIRR).

The Leigh, Salford, Manchester Bus Rapid Transit scheme comprises 21 km of almost continuous, segregated busway between Leigh, Salford and Manchester. Some 7km of the busway, between Leigh and Ellenbrook, will be kerb guided, with the remainder on-highway.

The Wigan Transport Hub comprises the integration of Wigan North Western and Wigan Wallgate rail stations. It will create one single interchange facility for local, regional and national rail services. The site will also incorporate retail, leisure and housing development.

The WIRR involves the construction of about one kilometre of new single carriageway route between the A49 'Saddle' junction and Frog Lane on the western side of Wigan Town Centre and it will complete the Inner Relief Road. The Leigh, Salford, Manchester Bus Rapid Transit scheme and the Wigan Transport Hub are intended to be Phase 1 proposals, the Wigan Inner Relief Road is in Phase 2.

The Hub and Leigh Guided Busway could be significant catalysts for economic development. They will help to promote the more sustainable pattern of development and travel across the region.

The AGMA tests preclude the prospect of congestion charging without these significant levels of investment both in Wigan and across the region.

### **5.2.3 Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option**

The Council could decide not to endorse the AGMA bid. This would undermine the possibility of investment in transport initiatives across the region that would not be attainable in any other way.

The opportunity for Greater Manchester Authorities to secure significant additional national funding for transport schemes is unlikely to re-occur in the foreseeable future and Wigan is set to receive major improvements to its transport infrastructure. The downside to obtaining these resources is to accept a road-user charging scheme around the Regional Centre and whilst some Wigan borough residents will be faced with the choice of paying these charges, there will be better alternative public transport options in place before they are introduced. The scheme that we are being asked to endorse does not include any charging points within Wigan Borough.

### **5.2.4 Benefits and costs of public transport**

Ways of encouraging people to use public transport

Benefits of the TIF on public transport – Leigh Guided Bus Way, Station improvements, rolling stock, car parking at stations, extension of carriages, and introduction of the 'Smart Card'<sup>6</sup>.

Future proposals for Greater Manchester on Metrolink

Council staff car parking charges

School buses

Customer satisfaction surveys / comments

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<sup>6</sup> Smart Cards are similar to the Oyster Card that has been adopted within London. It enables public transport users to make a journey using trains and buses with a single fare.

Congestion charges – impact upon Wigan

### **5.2.5 What are the benefits for Wigan?**

The benefits of the TIF will enable the council to improve public transport. If the TIF was successful the benefits would allow Wigan to:

- Improve the rail network;
- Improve public transport;
- Purchase new / additional carriage stock;
- Examine bus routes to improve services and
- Introduce SMARTCARD system which will identify passenger movement to allow adjustments to the network movement.

## 6. Comparative Data

**6.1** Comparative data was collated amongst all ten Greater Manchester authorities to find out the percentage of Wigan residents that travelled to work either by motor vehicle ( car, taxi or motorbike) used public transport or walked along with the percentage of the workforce population travelling between 2 and 5km to work.

The findings showed that Wigan has the lowest percentage of the daytime population at **7.8%** who travel to work by public transport compared to Manchester who has the highest percentage at **25.9%**.

Wigan also has the lowest percentage of the resident population who travel to work by public transport at **8.2%** compared to Manchester at **24.8%** together with the highest percentage of resident population who travel to work by private motor vehicle (car, taxi or motorbike) at **73%** compared to Trafford with the lowest at **67.2%**.

The percentage of the workforce population travelling less than 2 and 5km to work for Wigan was second to the highest of the ten local authorities at **24.8%** with Rochdale being the highest at **25.8%** and Manchester being the lowest at **10.4%**.

Further details of the data can be found in Appendix A of this report.

In 2006 the Department of Transport undertook a National Travel Survey to examine how residents of Great Britain travelled including information about how far people travelled and how many trips were made.

The key findings show that:

- Car travel accounted for four-fifths of the total distance travelled: this remained fairly stable since 1995/1997;
- Distance travelled by local bus in Great Britain outside London increased by 3 per cent between 1995/1007 and 2006;
- Distance travelled overland train increased steadily between 1995/1997 and 2006, rising 45 per cent over this period and
- The distance travelled by bicycle fell by 9 per cent between 1005/1997 and 2006 although most of the decline took place in the 1990s.

*Source: Department of Transport / National Statistics 2006*

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 This review has looked at parts of the borough that are heavily congested, examined what key stakeholders experiences are about travelling within the borough and what the benefits will be if the TIF bid is successful and what this means for Wigan.
- 7.2 The Select Committee have found that there is no easy solution to Wigan's traffic congestion. This is mainly due to the borough having narrow roads which are aligned with property making it unsuitable to widen our roads to deal with the large number of vehicles passing through our towns. However in order to reduce the burden on our overused roads the Council must consider attracting funding to build new roads. In particular the A5225 Wigan and Hindley Bypass which would remove some congestion on the existing road network.
- 7.3 The Select Committee have a limited amount of control over bus companies operating within the borough, which prevents the delivery of an integrated transport system. This review highlighted issues about school bus provision that was raised by children and young people outlined in section 4 of this report which needs to be reviewed by GMPTE in conjunction with the council.
- 7.4 This is compounded with Wigan having the lowest public transport usages along with low use of walking and cycling. *Source: Audit - Commission – 2006.* Wigan borough has a poor infrastructure, with ribbon developments and routes into the area are poor. However, the Select Committee have sought alternative solutions to alleviate some of the issues highlighted within this report which are outlined in section 8 overleaf.

## 8. Recommendations

8.1 Travel demand is growing rapidly due to economic success and is densely concentrated on certain parts of the networks and at certain times of the day.

Our key recommendations are:

- Develop an integrated Transport Strategy for Wigan Borough
- Improve public transport
- Gain greater control over bus companies, via new legislation currently being taken through parliament
- Develop park and ride facilities particularly in and around the hotspot areas of the borough
- Introduce time limited parking at car parks to deter people leaving their vehicles on car parks for a full day (where appropriate)
- Increase residential parking permits
- Increase car parking facilities at train stations
- For the Council as an employer to consider flexible working arrangements for staff, including the introduction of buses to transport employees to work places, car share and working from home and to provide incentives for other employers to adopt similar measures
- Conduct a review of school bus provision
- Speed up the process for the regeneration of local footpaths and cycleways (for example through the Leigh Cycle Demonstration Town initiative).

8.2 Although the above recommendations will not resolve traffic congestion they will alleviate some of the issues. There are also the added benefits should the TIF bid be successful which will improve public transport both by bus and train.

8.3 It must be noted that if 15% of car users who travel within the borough used alternative methods of transport, every weekday would see a reduction in congestion as though schools were closed.

## Appendix A

## Benchmarking Data

	<b>Local Authorities</b>									
	Wigan	Tameside	Trafford	Oldham	Salford	Bolton	Manchester	Rochdale	Stockport	Bury
% of the workplace population who work mainly at or from home	14%	14.4%	10.7%	12.7%	9.5%	12.3%	5.5%	12.8%	14.4%	15.6%
% of the workplace population travelling less than 2km to work	24.8%	26.2%	15.6%	24.9%	16.8%	20.7%	10.4%	25.8%	19.5%	23.1%
% of the workplace population travelling between 2 and 5km to work	25.5%	27.6%	20.8%	30.7%	18.3%	28%	18.9%	26.4%	24.5%	25.2%
% of the workplace population travelling between 5 and 10km to work	18.5%	17.6%	20.4%	17.8%	22.5%	21.5%	27.3%	18.5%	20%	18.6%
% of the workplace population travelling over 60km to work	1.3%	0.8%	2.1%	1%	2.2%	1.2%	2.5%	1.2%	1.7%	1.3%

% of the daytime population who travel to work on foot or cycle	14.1%	14.6%	9.8%	13.7%	10.9%	12%	8.3%	13.1%	11.2%	12.3%
% of the daytime population who travel to work by public transport	7.8%	10%	10.5%	11.2%	11.4%	9.6%	25.9%	8.4%	10.3%	8.9%
% of the daytime population who travel to work by private motor vehicle (car, taxi or motorbike)	68.8%	65.2%	71.8%	66.2%	71%	69.7%	62.1%	69.4%	68.2%	67.8%
% of the resident population who travel to work on foot or cycle	11.4%	12%	10.7%	12%	13.5%	11.4%	14.6%	11.9%	9.9%	9.4%
% of the resident population who travel to work by public transport	8.2%	14.6%	12.9%	12.9%	14%	10.5%	24.8%	10.6%	12.1%	12.1%
% of the resident population who travel to work by private motor vehicle (car, taxi or motorbike)	73%	65.3%	67.2%	67%	64.8%	69.9%	53.7%	69.3%	68.8%	70.1%

Appendix B

Action Plan

Tasks	Start Date	End Date	Success Measure	Comments

Appendix C

**Consultation Matrix**

<b>Stakeholders</b> List the key stakeholders for the service to ensure all viewpoints are covered (e.g. users, non-users, partners, parents, staff, etc)	<b>Reason</b> What information are you trying to get? (e.g. satisfaction levels, user priorities, areas for improvement, etc)	<b>Method(s)</b> What method is likely to give us the best response? (e.g. surveys, focus group, interviews, etc)	<b>What they said</b> Summarise key messages (including bad news)	<b>Action to be taken</b> Summarise what is to be done to address the points raised. If no action is going to be taken, you need to say why	<b>Comments</b>
Representatives from Environmental Services	To find out what improvements are available and what is planned for the future.	Semi – structured interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wigan residents have a strong dependency upon private cars, with residents travelling a long distance to work.</li> <li>• Anecdotal evidence suggests congestion limits investment in the borough.</li> <li>• If successful the TIF bid will provide key benefits to Wigan.</li> <li>• Transport options for the future are being developed via the Transport Strategy for Wigan.</li> </ul>	Transport Strategy will include transport options for the future.  Await outcome of TIF bid.	
Chair of Standish Forum	To ask what are the issues are ( if any) with traffic congestion / parking etc in the Standish area.	Semi – structured interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standish experiences congestions all day.</li> <li>• Congestion will not decrease, as car usage increases.</li> <li>• Standish will never get a bypass.</li> </ul>		

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The key issue is how to cope with current traffic levels and the likely increase.</li> <li>Congestion is affecting investment and this is compounded by a restricted number of car parking spaces.</li> </ul>		
Children and Young People from Hawkey Hall High School	To find out how many young people travel on public transport and how we could encourage people to use public transport	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problems with timings of school buses i.e.: 2 can arrive at the same time.</li> <li>Drivers won't accept note currency and can be very rude.</li> <li>Pupils feel safe catching the bus.</li> <li>Lower prices would encourage people to use public transport.</li> <li>Pupils experience difficulties travelling across the borough due to poor bus connections.</li> </ul>	Future proposals to have a set price for public transport for children and young people.	
Residents from Plank Lane area, Leigh	Customer satisfaction levels with public transport	Focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public transport options from Plank Lane are poor.</li> <li>Key issues are cost and access.</li> <li>School bus fares are prohibitive.</li> <li>The bus service provided by Arriva was heavily criticised.</li> </ul>	Future proposals to have a set price for public transport for children and young people.	
GMPTE	What are the benefits for Wigan if the TIF bid is successful.	Semi – structured interview	<p>Key benefits of the TIF bid for Wigan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leigh Guided Bus Way</li> </ul>	<p>If the TIF was successful the benefits would allow Wigan to:</p> <p>Improve the rail network;</p>	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wigan Transport Hub</li> <li>Wigan Inner Relief Road</li> </ul> <p>The bid represents a significant investment in transport by the Government that is unlikely to re-occur.</p>	<p>Improve public transport; Purchase new / additional carriage stock; Examine bus routes to improve services and Introduce SMARTCARD system which will identify passenger movement to allow adjustments to the network movement.</p>	
General public	Satisfaction levels with public transport and what ( if any) issues there are with traffic congestion and use of roads across the borough.	Newspaper article with a website address for members of the public to express their comments / views.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to improve the traffic flow in Hindley area;</li> <li>Provide public transport from Wigan town centre to Wigan infirmary;</li> <li>Difficulties with the re-alignment of pavement at Liverpool road which has reduced lane width and increased congestion of traffic;</li> <li>Improve cycle routes particularly in the Leigh area and</li> <li>Volume of HGV vehicles passing through Lowton area add to congestion.</li> </ul>	<p>Improve the rail network; Improve public transport; Purchase new / additional carriage stock; Examine bus routes to improve services and Introduce SMARTCARD system which will identify passenger movement to allow adjustments to the network movement.</p>	