

# Report

Report to:	<b>Roads Safety Forum</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>25 February 2016</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Assessment of Walking Routes to Schools</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ inform the Forum of the current guidance and practices relating to the assessment of routes used by children walking to school

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted.

## 3. Background

- 3.1. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and Scottish Government's School Transport Guidance Circular requires local education authorities to make transport arrangements as they consider necessary and any such transport is provided free of charge. Walking distance is defined as up to 2 miles in the case of children under 8 and 3 miles for any older children. The walking distance is to be measured by the shortest available route.
- 3.2. In 2004, The Council's Roads Safety Forum supported the adoption of the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum's (now known as Road Safety West of Scotland (RSWoS)) procedure for the assessment of walking routes to schools.
- 3.3. The RSWoS guidelines are based on assessments being undertaken to reflect the road safety on those routes whose lengths fall below those defined as walking distances and to assist educational authorities in these assessments.
- 3.4. The principles behind the assessments are as follows: -
- a) It is essential that each route be considered objectively.
  - b) In assessing the safety of a particular route, consideration is given only to traffic/road conditions.
  - c) It is assumed that the child is accompanied as necessary by a parent or other responsible person.

- d) Where a footway or roadside strip of reasonable width and condition, public footpath or bridle way exists, this will normally be assumed to provide a safe route for that part of the journey.
- e) Where, on a lightly trafficked or narrow road, a verge exists, which is not easy to walk on, but which can be stood on by the child and accompanying person when vehicles are passing, it can normally be assumed to provide a safe route for that part of the journey.
- f) Many routes may lie along roads having neither footway or verge. On such roads, consideration should be given to the width of carriageway, traffic speed and composition (such as frequent heavy goods vehicles) and to visibility (eg sharp bends with high hedgerows or banks).
- g) Consideration should be given to the accident record of the route, with particular regard to the effect on pedestrian movements.
- h) Where crossing the road is necessary, the availability of facilities to assist, such as pedestrian crossings, should be taken into consideration.
- i) Parents or guardians need to assess if their child is competent to undertake the journey safely. If they do not feel this is the case, then alternative arrangements require to be made.

3.5. The current RSWoS guidelines are shown in Appendix A. These have been in place since 2004 and have been applied to numerous routes.

#### **4. Assessment Process**

- 4.1. All applications for free mainstream school transport are considered in the first instance by Education Resources. They measure the distance from home to school using a Geographical Information System (GIS), which is used for all measurements to ensure the consistent application of Council Policy across the authority area. The system utilises all available roads and paths and finds the shortest available route.
- 4.2. Where the system identifies the shortest route is “blocked” by an identified road safety issue, then the system will re-route to find the next shortest route which is safe. A database of suitable routes and road safety issues is, therefore, established. Depending on assessment history, requests may relate to full routes, specific sections or in response to parental concerns regarding particular locations.
- 4.3. The shortest walking routes to school as generated by GIS is supplied to Roads and Transportation Services who assess the walking route to school in accordance with the RSWoS guidance.
- 4.4. The assessment is then conducted, where necessary, during pupil journey times, either in the morning or afternoon, with the route being assessed in both directions of travel.
- 4.5. Factors considered include footway or footpath provision, step off facilities from the carriageway and road crossing points. Crossing time calculations and visible gap time measures are undertaken when the assessor deems necessary. It should be noted that assessments are undertaken by an experienced road safety practitioner and a standard approach is taken across the Council area.

- 4.6. The use of crossing facilities such as traffic light controlled crossings and underpasses will be considered as part of the assessment process where these are on the shortest routes.
- 4.7. Where an unmanageable road safety risk is identified during the assessment process, a suitable alternative route will be sought, where possible.
- 4.8. On completion of the assessment, this is passed to Education Resources. Parents are advised of the outcome of their request for free school transport on the grounds of road safety.

## **5. Recent Enquiries/Concerns**

- 5.1. The Council has received correspondence which has generally focused on the use of remote paths which are unlit and distanced from overlooking properties. The approved guidance states that the provision of street lighting is not considered a factor.
- 5.2. In addition, enquiries are now being received relating to school crossing patroller locations and the extension of times to coincide with the removal of school transport. Requests for any new school crossing patrollers will be considered in accordance with current guidance once travel patterns have been established. The extension of operation times of existing patrolled locations are being considered and, where appropriate, alterations will be made.

## **6. Road Safety West of Scotland Guidance**

- 6.1. A sub-group of representatives from the RSWoS Officers Group was established to review the 2004 guidance as well as the procedures and protocols used by each of the member authorities. The sub-group, which included a representative from South Lanarkshire Council's Traffic and Transportation team, met on several occasions during 2014 and 2015 and a draft document has been produced. The draft document does not change the fundamental principles of the assessment being based on road safety and consideration will be made to include wording for standard responses to be made to education authorities.
- 6.2. At the RSWoS Forum meeting in January 2016, it was agreed that the sub-group would reconvene to discuss how responses are made with respect to non-road safety matters and whether these should be included in the guidance. At this time, the Council is waiting to be notified of when the sub-group will meet.

## **7. Employee Implications**

- 7.1. Assessments are undertaken by existing members of staff, therefore, there are no employee implications.

## **8. Financial Implications**

- 8.1. Where routes are determined unsafe, school transport is provided by Education Resources, with funding being used from existing budgets.

## **9. Other implications**

- 9.1. There are no significant risks associated with this report, or any environmental implications.

## **10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 10.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 10.2. There is no requirement to undertake consultation in terms of the information contained within this report.

**Michael McGlynn**

**Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)**

16 February 2016

### **Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values**

- Improve community safety
- People focused
- Increase involvement in lifelong learning

### **Previous References**

- Report to the Roads Safety Forum 7<sup>th</sup> June 2004 on Assessment of Walking Routes to School

### **List of Background Papers**

- Road Safety West of Scotland – Guidelines on Assessing Walking routes to School

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like inspect any of the background papers or want any further information, please contact: - Stuart Laird, Roads and Transportation Services

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## **WEST OF SCOTLAND ROAD SAFETY FORUM**

This document produced by the West of Scotland Road Safety Forum gives guidance on the identification and assessment of road safety hazards to pedestrians on route to school.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Each Education Authority has a policy on the provision of free school transport within council areas. Where provision is denied under this policy, parents may appeal on the grounds of road safety if they consider the route to school unsafe to walk.
- 1.2 In considering any appeal the Education Authority arrange for a road safety assessment to be carried out by the council service responsible for road safety. The Education Authority must specify the route to be assessed. This assessment considers the road safety risks resulting from pedestrian and vehicle conflict or safety hazards resulting from defects within the road such as tripping points. Personal security issues are not addressed by this assessment.

### **2. THE ROUTE ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE**

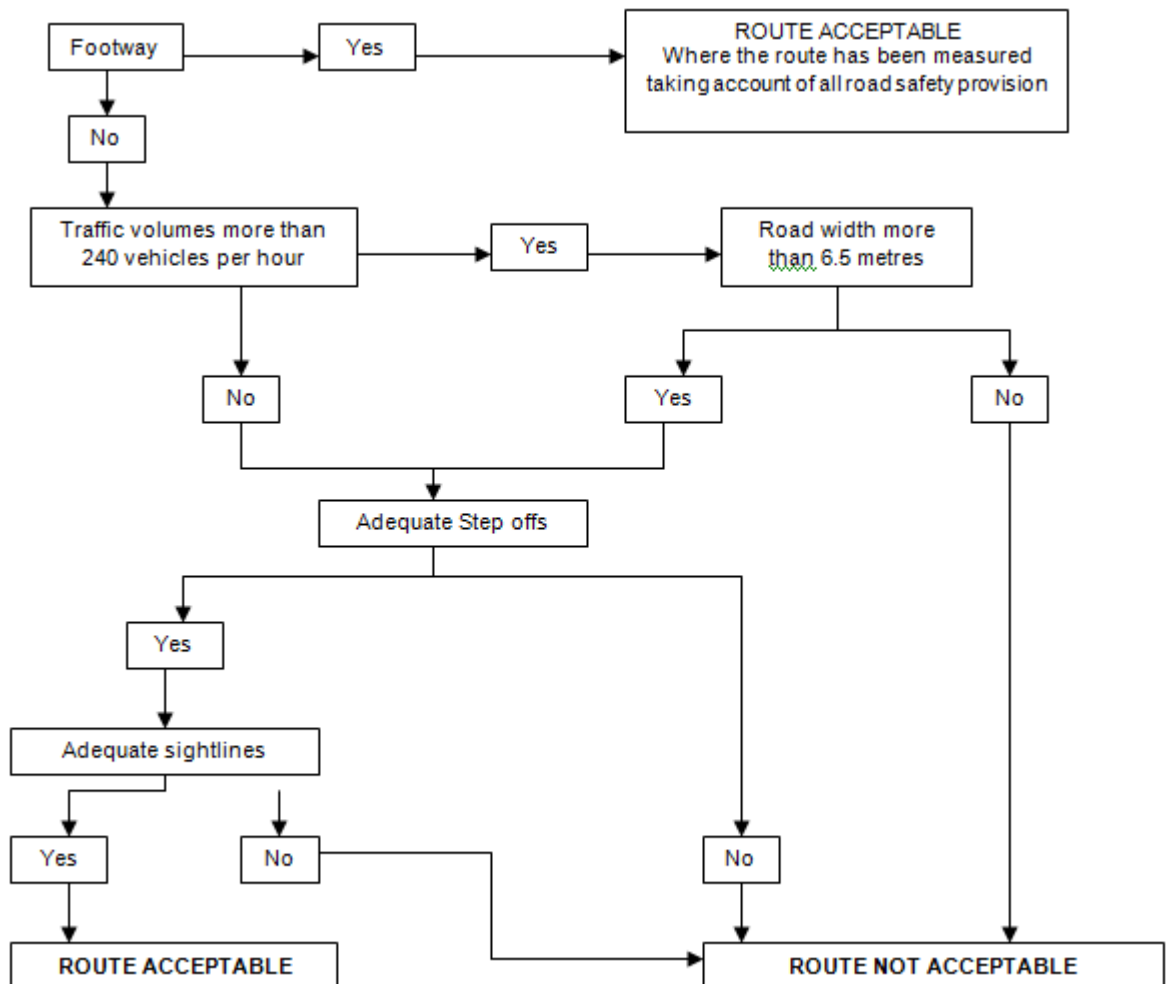
In carrying out the assessment, it is assumed that the parent or carer has arranged for the child to be accompanied as necessary by a responsible person.

### **3. WALKING ALONG A FOOTWAY**

- 3.1 The assessment will require the route to be walked in both directions on a school day and where practicable at a time when the child or children would be expected to walk.
- 3.2 During the assessment, any hazards that present unmanageable road safety difficulties be noted.
- 3.3 Where a footway is provided it should be continuous – excluding gaps of up to 20m – or be an acceptable local equivalent e.g. dedicated part of road

sectioned by white lining.

- 3.4 Areas where children are expected to congregate such as bus pick up points should be of adequate size to safely accommodate the required number of pedestrians.
- 3.5 Some routes may lie along roads that have neither footway nor verge. On such roads, consideration must be given to the width of the carriageway, traffic speed and composition (such as frequent long / heavy goods vehicles) and to both pedestrian and driver visibility. (i.e. sharp bends with high hedgerows or other obstructions to visibility). Refer to the flow chart over for guidance.



#### **4. ROAD CROSSING ASSESSMENT**

4.1 Where pedestrians are required to cross a road the availability of any facility (e.g. central refuges, pedestrian crossing, traffic signals etc) to assist such crossing should be taken into consideration. Where no crossing facility exists, a suitable location should be identified and an assessment of the risk generated by crossing the road should be made.

4.2 If a crossing manoeuvre is required, the gap time in traffic should be measured to ensure child pedestrians have frequent and sufficient time gaps to cross the carriageway. The assessment procedure is detailed below.

##### **4.3 Crossing Time and Visible Gap Time**

The crossing time required for a child pedestrian to safely cross a carriageway should be calculated as;

Crossing time (seconds) = Thinking time + Carriageway width / Walking Speed

This is based on 1 second thinking time and a walking speed of 0.9metres per second

e.g.  $1 + 7.3 / 0.9 = 9.11$  seconds

The visible gap time in traffic is the time between approaching vehicles in either direction to reach the crossing point. At sites where visibility is limited a measure of time should be taken from when a vehicle comes into view until it reaches the crossing point and that should exceed the time required for pedestrians to cross the road.

For a crossing to be considered acceptable, 4 visible gap times each greater than the crossing time is required in each 5 minute period.

#### 4.4 Site Survey.

The heaviest vehicle flows usually occur during the morning journey period. Therefore, the site surveys should generally be conducted during this period, unless it is proven that the afternoon period is the busier. The crossing should be walked in both directions to ensure adequate visibility from both sides of the road.

#### 4.5 Traffic Counts

There is no need to classify vehicles as pedestrians do not consider vehicle classification when determining whether to cross or not

### **5. REPORTING ASSESSMENT**

5.1. A completed road safety assessment should be reported to the Education Authority stating whether the route is considered acceptable to be walked or not.

5.2. If hazards are identified that are unreasonable for supervised, child pedestrians to cope with these should be listed along with any recommended measures required to mitigate them.