ENGAGING WITH FREIGHT – THE TYNE AND WEAR FREIGHT PARTNERSHIP

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1. INTRODUCTION
The Tyne and Wear Freight Partnership seeks to understand the problems and issues in terms of freight movement and sets a coherent strategy and mechanism which they can addressed through. The Partnership brings together transport operators, industry representatives, local authorities, the Highways Agency and key local stakeholder groups to facilitate delivery of an action plan which is targeted at improving the efficiency, safety and sustainability of freight movement.

This paper outlines out the policy context to the work, before setting out the process of establishing and developing the Freight Partnership. The work undertaken on providing routing information is explained, including the production of a freight map for Tyne and Wear and detailed tailored maps for individual destinations. Reviews of signage with respect to freight are then discussed along with the progression/implementation of the recommendations. The paper continues to look at a review of priority lanes in Tyne and Wear, the provision of lorry parking, assessment of rail freight and the communication techniques used by the Partnership.

2. POLICY CONTEXT
‘Sustainable Distribution: A Strategy’ (1999) still provides the overarching Government guidance. The document highlights the importance of efficient freight distribution, but stresses that this should not be at the expense of the wider community and environment. It sets out a framework for working with the industry, local government and others in achieving sustainable distribution. At a local level, the strategy promotes the development of Quality Partnerships between local authorities the freight industry, business communities, residents and environmental groups.

Further to this, the Department for Transport has issued guidance on ‘How to set up and run Freight Quality Partnerships (FQPs)’. This sets out how to initiate FQPs and includes guidance on identifying action plans on the basis of the issues and problems, together with advice on maintaining momentum and monitoring/evaluation.

Local Transport Plans (LTPs) are key documents in setting transport policies at a local level and delivering an effective programme of investment. The ‘Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans’ (2006) stresses that in developing their programmes, authorities are expected to show that they have considered the services and facilities they provide to all users of local transport networks. It is emphasised that LTPs not only provide for those who are traditionally given prominence in transport planning, but other users including freight and
distribution vehicles. In Tyne and Wear, the LTP has provided the platform for the launch and development of the Freight Partnership.

3. **SETTING UP THE PARTNERSHIP**

3.1 *The Nature of Freight*

In 2004, Faber Maunsell undertook a study on behalf of the Tyne and Wear LTP team to investigate the nature of freight in the area. The aim of this project was to provide a solid foundation for the development of a realistic and deliverable freight strategy.

This study provided a snapshot of the nature of freight movements in a selection of locations. Its purpose was to provide a better understanding of how freight transport operates and raise awareness of the problems and issues faced by the industry.

Key findings of the study are summarised below.

- Locations causing concern in terms of congestion were identified. This included the A1, particularly around the MetroCentre and Team Valley Industrial Estate.
- Goods vehicles were generally found to use the most appropriate routes, but there were some instances where this was not the case.
- The No-Car lanes in place were found to be popular with freight operators, but the operational issues and performance were not well understood.
- Signing with respect to freight was good overall, but wayfinding was found to be more difficult in town and city centres and within large industrial estates.
- There was a lack of foreign language information, despite the increase in foreign drivers over recent years.
- There was a shortage of driver rest facilities in the area, with the Newcastle NT Truckstop at Birtley and Washington services being the only formal lorry parks.
- It was considered that a Freight Partnership could provide the mechanism for delivering a range of actions, but careful consideration with respect to the operation of the Partnership was required.

3.2 *Launch of the Partnership*

In April 2005, the Tyne and Wear Freight Partnership was launched at a consultation event held in Newcastle. The event was successful in bringing together transport operators, industry representatives (Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association) along with key delivery agencies, including the five local authorities and the Highways Agency.

It was agreed that the aim of the Freight Strategy should be *to improve the efficiency, safety and sustainability of freight movement in the region*. Importantly, there was a consensus that the Partnership should work to a clearly defined action plan, focussing on the delivery of tangible outputs. This was considered important to achieving continued support from a cross section of organisations and fundamental in ensuring that the Partnership would not merely become a discussion forum.
The consultation event included discussion on potential ‘Do Now’ and ‘Do Soon’ tasks to be included in the action plan. It was agreed that the following tasks would be undertaken in the first year:

- Establishing the Freight Partnership/set up communication links, including quarterly meetings and newsletter.
- Agreeing a lorry routing strategy across Tyne and Wear.
- Producing and marketing a freight map.
- Reviewing signage with respect to freight across Tyne and Wear.
- Assess the case for provision of freight driver information boards at key points in the area.

Other tasks identified under the ‘Do Soon’ category included:

- Assessment of Priority Lanes (including No-Car lanes) in Tyne and Wear.
- Review the provision of lorry parking facilities.
- Assess the case for the development of a Consolidation Centre.
- Promotion of driver training programmes.
- Review delivery arrangements to town and city centres.

3.3 Operation of the Partnership

The Partnership is currently overseeing the delivery of the Year 3 (2007/08) Action Plan. Its role is to review progress towards delivering identified tasks and to inform the direction and scope of the work carried out. The range of organisations it encompasses enables it to provide a strategic steer, as well as providing valuable detailed information required for undertaking components of the action plan. Minutes of each meeting, including agreed actions are recorded and a newsletter is produced which is circulated to a wider distribution list of over 40 operators.

Progress in the delivery of actions has been borne out by the attendance at the Partnership meetings, which has grown from an average of 14 attendees in 2005 to 18 attendees in 2007. Organisations who regularly attend the Partnership meetings include:

- AG Barr
- Co-op
- Elddis Transport
- Freight Transport Association
- Highways Agency
- Gateshead Council
- Government Office North East
- Newcastle City Council
- Newcastle Chronicle
- North East Transport Activists Roundtable
- North Tyneside Council
- Road Haulage Association
- South Tyneside Council
- Sunderland City Council
- PD Ports
- Port of Tyne Logistics
4. ROUTING

4.1 Introduction
As discussed, the development of a lorry routing strategy and the production of a freight map were identified as ‘Do Now’ actions at the launch of the Partnership. This was progressed and completed in the first year of the Partnership and provided a foundation for further developments to be made with respect to freight mapping. This has included the development of more detailed tailored freight destination maps in Year 2 and standardised maps for abnormal loads and highway restrictions across Tyne and Wear, which are to be completed during Year 3.

4.2 Tyne and Wear Freight Map
The map was developed in close consultation with the Partnership and in particular with the five local authorities and the Highways Agency. The map identifies a suggested road freight network for the conurbation and shows the key destinations for freight traffic. Thirteen detailed inset maps are included, which depict preferred routes to the destinations along with height and weight restrictions. The map also includes contacts for local authority Traffic Managers, guidance on abnormal loads, and information on Freight Best Practice, the Department for Transport’s programme targeted at improving operational efficiency in the industry.

The map was launched at a Freight Best Practice event in Sunderland in March 2006. 2,000 copies of the map were produced and distributed to local authorities, Newcastle Airport, ports, transport operators, and truck stops. The map has also been made available electronically through a website developed for the Freight Partnership [www.tyneandwearfreight.info](http://www.tyneandwearfreight.info) (see section 9.1).

**Figure 1 Tyne and Wear Freight Map**
An important task to be carried out during Year 3 is to undertake a thorough review, update and re-print of the map. As part of the review, meetings will be held with the Local Transport Plan contacts and Traffic Managers at each of the five local authorities. This will involve discussion of the key freight destinations depicted on the map and identification of any additional destinations. The preferred routes to each of the destinations would also be reviewed, along with the identified freight network, height and weight restrictions. Contact details will also be reviewed and updated.

4.3 Tailored Freight Destination Maps
A significant development during Year 2 was the production of detailed tailored maps for key freight destinations. With the Tyne and Wear Freight Map as a starting point, the maps show a more detailed road network around the destinations, highlight preferred routes, include directions from the strategic road network and depict individual buildings. The maps were developed in conjunction with the local authorities and key contact points at the individual destinations. 11 tailored maps were produced during Year 2 for the following destinations:

- Asda (Washington)
- The Bridges Shopping Centre (Sunderland)
- Eldon Square Shopping Centre (Newcastle)
- Gateshead East
- Kingston Park
- MetroCentre
- North Tyne Industrial Estate
- Port of Sunderland
- Port of Tyne
- Salters Lane and Balliol Industrial Estate.

Figure 2 shows the map produced for Eldon Square Shopping Centre.
The maps have been very well received by companies and local authorities alike and the majority have been approved by both parties. Each map is available on the website and organisations have been encouraged to email the maps out to their customers.

During Year 3 additional maps are to be produced for the following destinations:

- Porobello Industrial Estate
- Tyne Tunnel Trading Estate
- Rainton Bridge Industrial Estate
- Silverlink/Atmel/Cobalt/Middle Engine Lane Industrial Estates
- Team Valley
- Washington Industrial Estates.

4.4 Abnormal Loads Route Map

The case and feasibility for the production of an Abnormal Loads Route map for Tyne and Wear was been assessed as part of the Action Plan for Year 2. A standardised and up-to-date abnormal loads map for Tyne and Wear is therefore to be produced during Year 3, showing preferred routes by load category (wide, heavy and high) across the conurbation. It is envisaged that the map would be available for operators to view on the website, although local authorities will still be required to authorise any given route, based on the type of vehicle and the highway restrictions in place.
4.5 Highway Restrictions Map
A direct development from the abnormal loads map is the production of a standard map showing highway restrictions across Tyne and Wear. At present, each local authority uses different methods of storing data to depict height, weight and width restrictions. It is proposed that both the abnormal loads route map and the highway restrictions map should be updated on an annual basis.

5. SIGNAGE

5.1 Importance of Signage
An effective vehicular signing system is one of the most important tools in effectively communicating correct and appropriate routes to key destinations. Signage that is appropriate to freight is clearly important to facilitating the efficient movement of goods traffic in the conurbation, particularly in Tyne and Wear, where port related traffic brings a significant number of drivers who are unfamiliar with the area. Freight specific signage, which continuously signs preferred freight routes can play a valuable role, but has the potential to increase signage overload. The introduction of new signage therefore needs to be sufficiently well justified.

5.2 Signage Review
A review of signage with respect to freight was identified as a ‘Do Now’ action at the launch of the Partnership and was therefore carried out during Year 1. The review focused on signage to key destinations for freight traffic from the Primary Route Network (PRN). Whilst this focussed on the provision of standard road signs as the predominant tool, the review also included the provision of information boards, which can provide more detailed information on town centres, or the layout of industrial estates. Examples of destinations identified by the study team are as follows:

- Port of Tyne
- Port of Sunderland
- Newcastle Airport
- Newcastle NT Truckstop
- Key industrial estates and business parks (e.g. Team Valley, Silverlink, Cobalt and MetroCentre).

The review found that signage provision was very good in most instances, but a series of recommendations were made, some of which are being taken forward through the Partnership. With respect to the Port of Tyne, the review found that whilst the section of the port on the north side of the River Tyne was well signed from all directions, the section on the south side of the river, which is a key destination for freight traffic was not signed at all. Improvements in signage to the Port of Sunderland from the A690 were also recommended. Another recommendation included using freight specific signage to encourage HGVs to use the A191 junction with the A19 to access Silverlink Retail Park, Middle Engine Lane Industrial Estate and Cobalt Office Park in order to relieve the congested A1058 junction.
5.3 Implementation of Signage to the Port of Tyne

The recommendation from the signage review to provide signage to the Port of Tyne was progressed during Year 2 in close consultation with the Highways Agency, the Port of Tyne and South Tyneside Council. An important issue to resolve before drawing up the detailed design specification was whether to sign the port via the A185 or A194 from the A19. Although the A194 provides the most direct link from the south, the route passes through a residential area and has been classified as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) by South Tyneside Council. This led to the A185 being designated as the preferred route from both the north and south.

A specification for the implementation of 15 new freight specific signs was drawn up and agreed by all parties following minor amendments (see Figure 3). The signs on the A185 were installed by South Tyneside Council in April and May 2007 (see Figure 4) – signs on the A19 at the junction with the A185 are to be installed by the Highways Agency in August 2007.

Figure 3 Example Design Specification for Signage to the Port of Tyne
5.4 Freight Signage in North Tyneside
One of the recommendations of the signage review was to provide freight specific signage to Cobalt Office Park, Middle Engine Lane and Sliverlink Retail Park (North Tyneside) from the A19 at the junction with the A191 (Holystone). These are key destinations for freight traffic which can be accessed easily from the A19, but there is no signage in place at present. Encouraging traffic to use the A191 junction for these destinations has the potential to contribute towards reducing traffic levels at the congested A1058 junction. This recommendation has been endorsed by the Highways Agency and North Tyneside Council and a detailed design sign specification was drawn up late in Year 2.

5.5 Bridges Shopping Centre Signing
The production of a tailored freight destination map for the Bridges Shopping Centre in Sunderland highlighted the lack of signing for the centre from the Inner Ring Road. Given the multiplicity of loading bays, this presents navigational issues for drivers, particularly those delivering to the centre for the first time. The Action Plan for Year 3 includes the production of a signing strategy design specification for the centre from the Inner Ring Road. The specification will be equivalent to that produced for the Port of Tyne, but will also consider changing or rationalising existing signage. The work is being undertaken in close consultation with Sunderland City Council and the Bridges Shopping Centre.
6. PRIORITY LANES ASSESSMENT

In addition to bus lanes, there are a number of No-Car lanes in place across Tyne and Wear. Bus lanes assist the movement of buses around congested city centres by reducing journey time and improving reliability. No-Car lanes are a relatively new concept and are based on use of the lane by buses and goods vehicles. Newcastle City Council has led the way in the implementation of such lanes and the approach has recently been rolled out in Sunderland following the re-designation of the bus lanes on the A690 (Durham Road) to No-Car lanes.

In order to inform policy across the conurbation, the Tyne and Wear Local Transport Team commissioned consultants JMP to assess and quantify the benefits of priority lanes in Tyne and Wear. The study concluded that No-Car lanes were found to deliver faster journey times for all users relative to bus lanes, but instances of lane contravention were higher. Importantly, the consultation with stakeholders demonstrated strong support for greater standardisation of the priority lanes both in terms of the type of lane and hours of operation.

The next stage of work is to draw up guidance identifying when it is appropriate to introduce different types of priority lane.

7. LORRY PARKING

7.1 Requirement for Lorry Parking

The shortage of lorry parking and the issues associated with it are of national significance. Areas for goods vehicles to stop and park up when away from base are essential in contributing to freight operations as well being places for drivers to refresh themselves and maintain their vehicles. Driver rest facilities and lorry parking provide an important support service to road freight, particularly for freight companies based outside the region. Lorry drivers are required to take both daily driving breaks and overnight rest by the European Union Driver Hours Directive 3820/85. In addition to the health, safety and welfare of drivers, inadequate lorry parking provision can have an adverse impact upon other road users, and poor security can put cargo at risk. Over recent years lorry park sites have been under pressure from urban development and often become isolated from food and other facilities needed by visiting drivers. The Department for Transport (DfT) Local Authority Freight Management Guide encourages local authorities to address the issues and progress actions targeted at improving provision.

7.2 Audit of Current Facilities

An audit of lorry parking facilities in Tyne and Wear was carried out as part of the Action Plan for Year 2. The purpose of the audit was to provide an up-to-date baseline position in relation to the adequacy of lorry parking provision in order to inform future policy. Importantly, the audit took account of the impact of the closure of the NT Newcastle Truckstop, Birtley in January 2007 and providing a ‘before’ and ‘after’ position.
The audit considered the following three types of facility:

- Motorway Service Areas (MSA)
- Independent lorry park
- Areas designated by the local authority.

The survey also looked into off-site parking at locations such as lay-bys and industrial estates, which can be inappropriate.

An important aspect of the audit was to interview drivers to ascertain their views on the current facilities and how improvements could be most effectively targeted. The audit included an assessment of the facilities available, as well as potential capacity and current utilisation.

Following the closure of the NT Newcastle Truckstop in late January 2007, it is clear from this audit that there is a severe shortage of lorry parking facilities in Tyne and Wear. The facility was an important and popular truckstop, providing good facilities for lorry drivers entering the area. Moto Washington services on the A1 (between Junctions 64 and 65) is now the only formal lorry parking facility in the conurbation. Prior to the closure of the NT Newcastle site, the average nighttime utilisation of the Moto site was 61% during the week, which increased to 90% following the closure.

7.3 Promotion of Lorry Parking
Given the shortage of facilities, work is to be carried out during Year 3 to assist in the process of securing new facilities in the area. To this end, meetings have been held with Durham County Council to discuss the potential for providing lorry parking facilities close to the Tyne and Wear boundary. Further discussions and meetings are to be held with the respective local authorities and potential service providers to facilitate progression of new facilities.

7.4 Private Sector Lorry Parking Reciprocation Pilot
A further initiative to be developed during Year 3 is a private sector lorry parking reciprocation pilot. The scheme would allow companies to buy secure parking spaces at the depots of other operators, or sell space at their own sites. The pilot will include research into companies willing to enter reciprocal arrangements, including contact with operators connected with Tyne and Wear Partnership, the Freight Transport Association (FTA) and Road Haulage Association (RHA). In order to ensure a critical mass for the pilot, a substantial amount of effort would have to be expended in communicating with and selling the benefits of such a scheme. The website would be amended to act as a platform for companies to buy and sell spaces. Its success can be judged on the number of spaces being made available for trading and on the take up.
8. RAIL FREIGHT

8.1 The Current Position
The majority of work undertaken by the Partnership has focussed on road freight transport, as local authorities have greater scope to affect change in this area. However, given the importance of promoting sustainable distribution, a review of rail freight across Tyne and Wear was completed during Year 2. The purpose of the review was to outline the current position in order to provide a context for assessing the potential for increasing the volume of rail freight moved in the conurbation.

In terms of current movements, coal comprises the highest number at 54 per week, which equates to 52% of the total. Increased movement of imported coal through the Port of Tyne has been key to the increased number of coal trains. The first imports of coal began in 2004 when 115,500 tonnes of coal was handled. Information from the Port shows that this increased to 1.6 million tonnes in 2006 and is anticipated to grow to 2.5 million tonnes in 2007.

Petrochemical bogie tanks to Jarrow yard are the next highest (12 movements per week). The tanks carry a number of products including Petroleum, Ammonia and water. There are 9 movements relating to the Steel and Automotive industries respectively and 8 Enterprise trains. Enterprise trains are generally a wagon load or mixed service train. Other movements include Lime/Mineral and Aluminium.

8.2 Outlook
The review considered that the scope for increasing the volume of rail freight moved in Tyne and Wear was constrained by the shortage of available paths on the East Coast Main Line (ECML). There is some spare capacity, but this is protected to provide additional slots during periods of disruption. These issues are addressed by the Network Rail Freight Route Utilisation Study (RUS), 2007. With respect to capacity issues, Tyne Yard – Tursdale junction is identified as a significant constraint in the RUS with respect to rail freight. Re-activation of the Boldon East Curve is recommended as the best option for addressing this. The scheme will generate a small number of additional paths to and from the Port of Tyne, providing an alternative route to/from the Aire/Trent Valley via the Durham Coast. It also offers an alternative route from the Port of Tyne to the constrained part of the ECML between King Edward Bridge and Ferryhill.

In terms of additional rail freight traffic, the review concluded that it is likely that this would consist of more coal, intermodal boxes and aggregates. These are the types of commodity that are growing in volumes across the national rail network. Certain retailers are experimenting with running intermodal freight trains as part of their supply chains, and if reliability remains high, then this type of traffic could be expanded. It was also considered that there is potential for additional port related traffic both from Tyneside and Teesport to run through the area as both ports look to expand volumes.
9. COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

9.1 Website
The development of a website for the Partnership was an important development during Year 2 (www.tyneandwearfreight.info). The website aims to capture all the work of the Partnership and act as a ‘one-stop shop’ for information and advice for freight operators. It includes detailed up-to-date information on freight routes and destinations through a web-based version of the Tyne and Wear Freight Map. The detailed tailored maps for key freight destinations in the area are also included, along with links to traffic information, information on lorry parking, contacts for local authority traffic officers and information on Freight Best Practice. Example screenshots from the website are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Tyne and Wear Freight Partnership Website
The website was launched in December 2006 and by June 2007 32,500 hits had been made from 5,600 individual users. It has been well received by a range of organisations – the quote below is from Al Wheatley and Sid McAuley at the Transport Training Centre, Ministry of Defence (MoD).

‘As a transport manager for the MoD(North), I found the site very informative and easy to follow, just what a haulage driver needs when delivering to new areas. I particularly liked the mapping to major sites in & around the area, also the truck stops. Perhaps other large cities should follow example and produce something similar. Well done’.

9.2 Electronic Information Points
In Year 1, the Partnership started to consider the provision of a trial Electronic Information Point (EIP). The EIP could provide a range of information for drivers, including live traffic and roadworks information, advice on lorry parking, guidance on lorry routes to key freight destinations, best practice information (safe and fuel efficient driving etc) and also be a valuable means of communication between the Partnership and the operators and drivers.

A feasibility study for the provision of a trial EIP was carried out during Year 2 and assessed the technicalities and costs of setting up and installing the facility. It was envisaged that the website would provide an ideal basis and platform in terms of the content for the EIP, although it would need to be adapted to operate on a touch screen basis.
The NT Newcastle truckstop at Birtley, which is located off the A1(M) in the south of Tyne and Wear was thought to be an ideal location to install a trial EIP. Following the announcement that the truckstop has closed, the Moto services at Washington, also off the A1(M) is currently the preferred site. Implementation and monitoring of a trial EIP is identified as an task within the Action Plan for Year 3.

9.3 Consultation with Operators
A significant amount of work has been undertaken since the launch of the Partnership in April 2005. During Year 3, a review of the work will be carried out in order to assess the work completed to date and inform future direction and activity. The review will focus on operators, as the main target audience, and include a series of interviews through site visits and telephone calls.

10. CONCLUSION
The Tyne and Wear Freight Partnership has been successful in bringing together a range of organisations, including transport operators, industry representatives, local authorities, the Highways Agency and key local stakeholder groups to facilitate the delivery of a range of actions targeted at improving the efficiency, safety and sustainability of freight movement.

The main challenge for the future is maintain momentum and build interest from operators by ensuring that the actions are targeted at pertinent issues.

Experience from Tyne and Wear suggests that the following are of key importance to a successful Freight Partnership.

- Undertake initial research with operators, both inside and outside the area to understand freight movement in an area and associated problems and issues.
- Engage with transport operators, industry representatives, local authorities, the Highways Agency and key local stakeholder groups.
- Identify a clearly defined action plan, focussing on the delivery of tangible outputs to address the identified problems and issues.
- Secure sufficient resources and necessary expertise to deliver the action plan.
- Maintain good communication links with the Partnership and a wider audience through newsletters, press releases and a website.
- Review progress with the Partnership and consult with operators on the work undertaken to inform future direction.
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