Greening your fleet

A quick guide

University of
BRISTOL

Introduction

This note is aimed at schools or departments which use fleet transport for day-to-day operations or domestic business travel.

It provides some quick pointers on improving the environmental performance of all types of road transport undertaken for University purposes, i.e. including:

- Operation of University-owned or leased fleet vehicles, e.g. maintenance or delivery vans, pool cars;

- Use of all vehicles hired on behalf of the University (cars, vans, minibuses, coaches etc); and

- Use of staff-owned vehicles for business travel or other University purposes (grey fleet).

This note does not consider road transport for commuting purposes.

NOTE: Much of this guidance is adapted from the online Fleet Management Toolkit published by the Energy Saving Trust. Further information on use of vehicles for business travel in particular is also available in the University's business travel toolkit.

The information in this note was up to date at the time of publication (November 2019) but is subject to change as University policy and procedure develops. Please check the business travel pages of our website for any updates.

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The sustainable travel hierarchy provides a useful framework for improving the environmental performance of University road transport. This suggests a step-by-step approach as follows:

(i) Reduce mileage

The most effective starting point for greening your fleet transport operations is to look at ways of reducing overall mileage by all types of road vehicles. As well as reducing your department's carbon footprint, cutting road mileage will save transport-related costs and free up staff time otherwise spent driving.

Undertaking a mileage audit will help identify high-mileage departments and drivers, under-utilised vehicles and the most frequent business trips. It will also establish a baseline for monitoring progress over time. Mileage data may be collected as part of a wider analysis of departmental business travel and should be available from the following sources:

- vehicle log books;
- invoices from vehicle rental companies; and
- staff mileage expenses.

Once you have a better picture of fleet transport activity and business travel, you should be able to identify opportunities for reducing road mileage for example by:

- Optimising travel, i.e. routing, scheduling and combining trips to avoid repeat journeys and other unnecessary mileage;

- Substituting face-to-face meetings with remote forms of communication, e.g. phone, email or video-conference (Skype etc);

- Consolidating your owned or leased fleet: disposing of under-utilised vehicles, making better use of those remaining and using hire vehicles to fill any gaps in capacity;

- Setting a departmental ambition or target to reduce overall fleet mileage or mileage per member of staff or unit of output, with annual progress reporting.

(ii) Shift to greener transport

If day-to-day operations or business travel still require some form of road transport, there are several ways the carbon impact of this activity can be reduced.

For operational fleet transport, departments should review the opportunities to reduce emissions per mile by switching to low or zero emission vehicles and downsizing vans or other vehicles wherever possible.

Using a whole-life approach to assessing the options for vehicle replacement might lead to different procurement decisions, especially if costs such as clean air zone charges are taken into account alongside depreciation, fuel, maintenance, tax and insurance.

In some instances, long-term hire of a newer, more efficient vehicle may prove more cost-effective and environmentally-friendly than retaining an older, more polluting one which is only used from time to time.

For individual or group travel to meetings, conferences etc, staff should be encouraged to follow the guidance in the **University's Business Travel Toolkit**. This involves:

- walking or cycling wherever possible for shorter local trips around / close to campus;

- taking the bus or local rail for longer trips within the Bristol area;

- going by train for longer UK journeys, combined with car hire if necessary to reach places without a rail station; or

- using a University pool car or rental / car club vehicle ahead of a staff-owned vehicle, if car travel is unavoidable.

- booking air travel through the University's travel management company on the most fuel efficient airline / route, if flying is unavoidable

(iii) Improve efficiency of road transport

Regardless of the type of road vehicle being used, changing driver behaviour can reduce emissions, save on fuel costs and improve road safety.

For staff who need to drive regularly as part of their job, **training in eco-driving techniques** could be worthwhile. For other more occasional drivers, a reminder of the following simple rules is likely to help cut fuel costs and emissions:

- Check your tyre pressure as incorrectly inflated tyres affect fuel economy

- Avoid excessive speed, remaining within the speed limit at all times

- Drive smoothly by avoiding sudden acceleration or braking, or excessive revs

- Switch off the engine when idling

- Lighten your load by cutting unnecessary weight in the vehicle

- Combine journeys to take advantage of a more efficient warm engine

Keeping up to date with the maintenance of your vehicle(s) will also help maintain fuel efficiency as well as general roadworthiness.

Finally, installing vehicle telematics can help reduce emissions and improve road safety by changing driver behaviour, as well as providing valuable data to further improve fleet efficiency.

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This guidance should be read in association
with other University policy and guidance
relating to road transport:

- **Business travel toolkit**

- **Business travel procurement guidance**

- **Travel and expenses policy**

- **Driving at work policy**

- **Motor insurance**

- **Campus departmental parking policy**

Further advice on sustainable fleet
management is available from
the Energy Saving Trust website.