

Planes, trains and automobiles.....

You may ask why has an airport operator set up and developed over 30 new bus and coach services in the last ten years, the answer is one of commercial reality. In order to grow and be successful, we must mitigate our impacts and provide good quality public transport access.

Stansted Airport is a lean and efficient airport, which means additional challenges when planning the surface access needs for 22 million passengers a year and 11,500 employees. Over 150 of the 198 companies on-airport employ less than 50 people. Therefore, we plan for both small and large businesses.

Any changes to the transport network means an immediate and costly impact.

At the heart of the approach is the Airports Surface Access Strategy, and its daughter documents: The Airport Travel Plan, The Airports Bus and Coach Strategy along with the Cycling Strategy. The basis of all of these documents is about the whole journey and its experience. These documents also intrinsically support the Airports ISO14001 accreditation.

Our performance to date has resulted in the Airport receiving both International, European and National recognition for the work and results we have achieved. For air passengers Stansted has the highest public transport mode share of any major UK airport at 48% and is ranked in the top quartile in Europe.

For airport employees since the Airport Travel Plans's inception in 1997, when the airport had 6,500 employees to today when there are about 11,500, our single occupancy car driver mode share has fallen from 97% to 71%. This is a 48% reduction per hundred employees by car.

How have we done this:

- Partnership - public transport operators, housing and other developers, airport companies, local authorities

At the heart of this approach is the Airport's Transport Forum, this is one of the largest public private partnerships in the UK with over 70 members from Local Authorities, Transport Operators and Airport Companies. The members work together through a series of topic based working groups such as Rail, Bus and Coach. Travel Plan, Highways and Local Access.

- Choosing our strategy carefully and taking calculated risks

In choosing our Strategy, we rely heavily on data to direct our activities and with the addition of carbon footprinting this is an added consideration; however once we had completed our footprint for surface access, it really only confirmed our approach rather than changing it.

Our key approach for air passengers is to target the 'Kiss and Fly' journey, this is when air passengers get families or friends to drop them off or pick them up from the Airport. Whilst this may seem a little 'Kill Joy', 'kiss and fly' journeys account for over 20% of air passenger journeys but (dis-proportionately) account for over 40% of traffic and the surface access carbon footprint.

We therefore use both a 'stick and carrot' approach with appropriate mechanisms for pricing, developing, providing and marketing of the alternatives. We also have to consider the directions given to us by our Regulator in our approach.

For employees our focus revolves around the Airport Commuter Centre. This is a dedicated on airport facility for all employees to access travel to work information. We also have an Airport Travel card for public transport users which gives them upto 80% off a standard fare. As you would expect we also have a car share scheme along with a clear car parking policy.

The partnerships and Strategy come together through the Transport Forum Working Groups and examples of this are where we have set up and developed new bus and coach services along with looking at the quality, frequency, routing and timing of existing services. However, any partnership we enter into has to be commercially viable within at least 2-3 years.

- A commercial approach

We are a commercial business and we deal with other commercial businesses; in order to grow we must and do mitigate our impacts; in this sense our team must be totally conversant with the wider transportation world, its policies and latest approaches.

However, the team must also and are totally conversant with where travel planning sits within our business and how it can reduce costs and contribute to our competitiveness. The team readily thinks in both ways and articulate this.

Looking to the wider role of Travel Planners in the UK, I think we have all seen the good, the bad and those who have been dispatched elsewhere. If the wider travel plan approach is going to work with business, I believe it is key that every travel planner understands business and understands costs and the 'bottom line' and we finally get rid of the impression 'its just something you have to do for your planning permission'.

This approach will be especially important not only at the moment but in future years as new taxation is introduced.