



Surrey County Council - Why on earth did we buy Trapeze?

“The short answer is to save us money, but before that could happen, we had to identify the problems and come up with a plan.”

Chris Butler, Transport Coordination Manager
Surrey County Council

Early in 2008 Surrey CC Transport Coordination Centre, TCC, purchased the Trapeze-PASS system to help improve their school transport operations.

Surrey CC - Background:

- 380 Schools requiring transport
- 1,500 children transported to the Surrey SEN Schools with a further 1,200 to 'out of county' schools
- Mix of disabilities, including ASD, epilepsy, behavioural issues, etc

One of the main problems Surrey wanted to address was their traditional method of issuing 28 day contracts to transport operators. The short-contract system had originally been adopted to cope with the high levels of client changes being made, such as addresses, frequency of travel, etc. However, the system had become chaotic, labour intensive and expensive, as Chris points out: “As well as the growing costs, the constant changes meant that there was no stability of transport provision for the children, parents or the contractors,”

The nature of the short term contracts also made it difficult for operators to commit vehicles solely to the journeys required and the logistics of clearing drivers also meant increased headaches for Chris's hard-working team. “Taxis would frequently be out of

position due to delays at airports and there was a constant need for the TCC staff to check on CRB and taxi licenses. And don't get me started on the paperwork!”

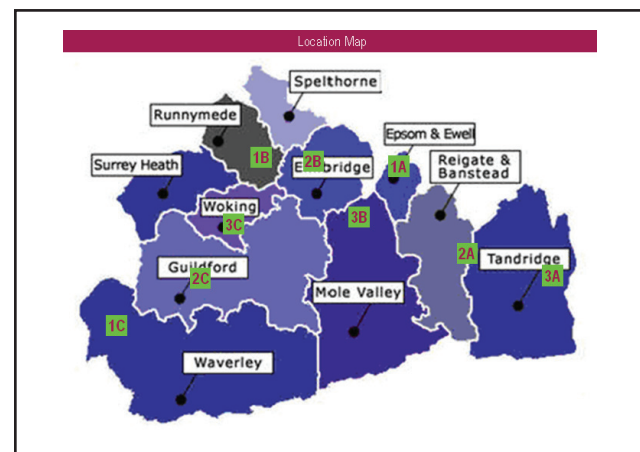
Chris's team aimed to make some considered changes in order to bring costs under control and improve service to the travellers. They identified the key solutions to the issues as:

- Contracting a single operator per school in order to cut down on transport provider management
- Offering long term contracts for transport companies to improve financial stability
- Ensuring best value through the European Journal tender process

Key benefits - hard facts:

- Proven cost savings - 9-16% in the first 9 months
- Reduced number of vehicles required to perform the statutory duty
- Complaints reduced to almost zero
- Reduced congestion, emissions, etc

The tendered routes were created using PASS, and whilst TCC were open to suggestions from the operators for further efficiencies, the routes were



deemed “sacrosanct” and bids had to be made for providing transport on that basis. Previously, scheduling management had been knowledge

Key benefits - soft rewards:

- Delivers meaningful management information
- Releases transport team to deal with additional transport requirements
- Eases the pressures of new academic year planning
- Data is centralised, up to date and manageable
- Gives the team the opportunity to consider various ‘what-if’ scenarios (school bell and journey times)
- More operators exposed to the bidding process
- Performance monitoring is simpler and consistent

based and with over 1200 daily transport routes to be planned, the results were overly complex. The main thrust of the "Trapeze" routes focussed on the need to embrace multi-occupancy wherever possible and appropriate, for a group of children to travel together.

Key benefits - third party gains:

- Contractors given stable, 5-year contracts
- Offers opportunity for contractors to borrow money against long term contracts to improve vehicles and service
- Parents know precisely what's happening
- Children have stable, consistent transport
- Schools can quickly find contractors
- School parking issues reduced as less vehicles
- Closer and more positive liaison between schools and operators

In February 2008, TCC benchmarked 24 SEN schools identifying the costs, the number of operators, number of vehicles and number of children. The costs ranged from £200k to £1.1M per annum per school to provide the transport needs. In all, the total transport cost for these 24 schools was over £8.5M.

In May 2008, the routes were replicated in the PASS system and the services for the eight principal schools re-calculated using the automated scheduling tools. These routes were then issued as a tender via the European Journal tendering process.

Many of the bids were unsuitable and were filtered out from over 300 to just two, leaving just three schools out of the eight covered by two contractors. Chris and his team learned at this stage that they'd need to "liven up the market" in the future to attract more appropriate bids for other schools.

Chris added, "Sole Provider Contracts were at last a reality using notional routes created in PASS. The scheduling exercise would not have been possible without the tools in the system. Offers for variations to the contracts were acceptable but the core tender prices remain firmly associated with the new routes. The savings were significant with over £300,000 saved in the first year over just the first three schools."

Buy-in by the Contractors was very important and needed to be done at an early stage in the change process. They had some initial concerns there might be issues with the new routes created by PASS. However to date, there have only been two complaints; one for an unknown bollard and the other a mapping error.

Surrey CC - More Facts:

- All contractor-based - NO 'In-House' fleet
- Volatile mix of procured taxis, MPV's and minibuses
- 1,000 ± contracted routes daily
- 20% of all contracts change every month

"The TCC staff now have powerful tools to keep data up to date and manage it quickly, particularly at start of year. The ease of adding new children to the system is jaw-dropping. Press a button to get your three options!" Chris remarks.

Benefits of the changes to the operations were not just experienced by TCC. The operators also gained from stable contracts allowing them to improve service quality and negotiate loans for better vehicles.

Surrey CC - Even more facts!:

- 200 children transported in wheelchairs
- 500 escorts
- 16 medically trained (paramedic) nurse/escorts

So what of the future? Surrey CC TCC believe they have only just scratched the surface. The ultimate aim being to complete the same exercise for all 24 SEN schools for the 09/10 academic year and as many of the remaining 350 SEN/Mainstream schools as possible. The new routes created are seen as the benchmark for future judgements on efficient operations.

Chris Butler comments, "We know that there are opportunities for improvements in the system by refining the parameters we use. We are also eager to start using 'what-if' scenarios for calculating costs should we move to changes in bell times and promoting family-aware transport. We look forward to making even more efficiencies as we engage with the rest of the County's schools."



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Savings at a Glance

The table shows the figures benchmarked before and after using Trapeze for scheduling.

SEN School	# Operators		# Routes		Annual Cost		Saving
	Bench	09/10	Bench	09/10	Bench	09/10	
A	15	1	30	18	£549k	£461k	£88k
B	21	1	21*	20	Saving of £50k		
C	13	1	20	13	£485k	£323k	£162k

*School B does not include all the benchmarked routes but overall saved more than £50k

The ROI was easily achieved in the first year!