1. **Background**

Park and Ride is one of a range of planning tools that can be used to encourage car users to switch to public transport and help achieve the targets laid out in the Local Transport Plan with respect to public transport usage and reducing congestion.

In the right locations, and in conjunction with suitable demand management measures, a network of Park and Ride facilities across Merseyside can assist in reducing traffic levels into town and city centres. This will provide more sustainable access, improve the attractiveness of a centre and enhance the economic viability of the town/city centre.

**Rail** based Park and Ride is defined as being all formal car parking for rail users across the Merseyrail network. This provision can be further classified as being either strategic or local in nature.

- **Strategic Park and Ride** is defined as the provision of rail Park and Ride facilities where the national road network meets the rail network.

- **Local Park and Ride** is defined as the provision of car parking at rail stations to cater for the demand for parking from the surrounding area. The preferred function of a Local Park and Ride site would be to serve residents who live in the vicinity of the station, but who are beyond the natural walking catchment, and are not served by feeder bus services accessing the station or who are mobility impaired.

**Bus** based P&R services usually run non-stop between a peripheral car park and the urban centre. Such services exist with Merseyside in Southport, but are administered by Sefton Council, and fall outside the scope of this strategy. The potential for future bus based schemes will be assessed according to the framework within this strategy.

The purpose of this strategy is therefore to determine where P&R can make a valuable contribution to Merseyside and ensure that the P&R facilities and services are optimised and make an effective contribution towards the objectives set out in the LTP.

2. **Policy Context**
Within the **Merseyside Rail Strategy**, Merseytravel make a commitment to developing Park & Ride across the region:

Where it can be shown to provide value for money, Merseytravel will expand the provision of park and ride on the Merseyrail network. A number of stations are being investigated for provision of additional park and ride spaces.

Merseytravel will seek to make more efficient use of the space at existing car parks, standardising the use of space to ensure DDA compliance and good interchange with bus and cycle.

Merseytravel will investigate whether introducing charges for using park and ride facilities offers an effective way of supporting the maintenance, enhancement and expansion of park and ride capacity within the context of the overall LTP Objectives.

Whilst Park & Ride is much less prominent within the sister **Bus Strategy**, there is nonetheless a commitment to consider its role in delivering an integrated public transport system:

Merseytravel will consider operator proposals for bus based park and ride that are supported by a strong business case and are consistent with wider Local Transport Plan and land use policies

This is naturally set in the wider context of the **Local Transport Plan**, whereby P&R facilities are considered to be a key element, in terms of how they complement the wider City Centre Parking Strategy. There is recognition, however, that such facilities cannot be appraised piecemeal, but only in terms of how they contribute to the single integrated transport network. Critically, effective P&R can also contribute to the aim of providing a safe and efficient transport network that supports regeneration and seeks to minimise delay and disruption.

At a regional level, the following principles underpin the **Regional Spatial Strategy**. It is expected that other regional, sub-regional and local plans and strategies and all individual proposals (which would include this Park and Ride Strategy), should adhere to these principles:

- to development management in particular circumstances:
- promote sustainable communities;
- promote sustainable economic development;
- make the best use of existing resources and infrastructure;
- manage travel demand, reduce the need to travel, and increase accessibility;
- marry opportunity and need;
- promote environmental quality;
- mainstreaming rural issues;
• reduce emissions and adapt to climate change.

The P&R strategy is in line with the Department for Transport's DaSTS recommendations. This means specifying clearly the challenges to be addressed, looking cross-modally at a range of options, and backing the solution that has the best fit against the five transport goals and delivers the best value for money. This approach is echoed in the guidance for LTP3, which states that in order to develop an effective strategy and decide priorities for implementation, authorities are advised to follow the process:

• clarify goals;
• specify the problems or challenges the authority wants to solve;
• generate options to resolve these challenges;
• appraise the options and predict their effects;
• select preferred options and decide priorities;
• deliver the agreed strategy.

3. Objectives

The primary objective of any P&R facility should be to contribute to the LTP objectives of relieving congestion, promoting sustainable transport, and supporting the continued regeneration of Merseyside and the Liverpool City Region. In fulfilling this objective, P&R must therefore focus on:

• Relieving traffic congestion on the main transport corridors (especially the 11 congestion corridors) particularly during peak periods.
• Promoting the use of public transport and delivering modal shift.
• Providing facilities in a cohesive and integrated manner, targeted primarily at motorists who would otherwise have made the entire journey by car.
4. **The Underlying Principles**

New or improved park and ride proposals, irrespective of their scale, will be expected to support the aims of the Merseyside Park and Ride Strategy insofar as they should;

(a) reduce the overall level of car mileage in Merseyside
(b) reduce the number of trips made by car into urban centres especially into Liverpool city centre
(c) encourage greater use of public transport, walking and cycling;
(d) reduce car journeys and levels of traffic congestion downstream of the facility, usually on key corridors (eg LTP “congestion” corridors);
(e) reduce accidents downstream of the facility;
(f) reduce air and noise pollution downstream of the facility;
(g) reduce demand for urban road construction downstream of the facility;
(h) reduce long stay car parking in relevant centre;
(i) improve the accessibility of town and district centres;
(j) free central area space for other uses;
(h) contribute to the economy of the Liverpool City Region

These principles will form the “acid test” as to the viability of a potential park and ride site, and the means to addressing them will therefore form part of the business case of each scheme.

The business case should therefore provide the background of the project, the expected business benefits, the options considered (with reasons for rejecting or carrying forward each option), the expected costs of the project, and include the Operational Risk Register to assist the delivery of the project. Consideration should also be given to the option of doing nothing. From this information, the justification for the project can be derived.

5. **The Policies**

The Strategy is based upon 5 key policies that together contribute to effective P&R development.

**Policy 1 - Understanding the role of a park and ride scheme**

New or improved park and ride proposals, irrespective of their scale, will be expected to support the objectives of the Merseyside Park and Ride Strategy. It will be essential to develop a full understanding of the transport problems that exist at proposed sites, as part of the development of a rationale, and to justify any interventions.

The proposal should include a Transport Impact Assessment. All proposals will be assessed for their contribution to traffic generation and their impact on congestion, particularly on bus routes and on the primary road network, and against the present and potential availability of public transport, and its capacity to meet increased demand.
All proposals must be accompanied by a monitoring and evaluation regime (see chapter 6), to allow the effectiveness of schemes to be critically assessed.

Policy 2 – Consider all the Options

Full consideration must be given to a range of measures to facilitate transfer from one mode of transport to another, in contributing to the development of a single integrated transport network.

There will be a presumption against the provision of new or additional car parking capacity without any other supporting measures.

Likely measures that may need to be assessed include, but not be limited to:-

- New, dedicated bus-rail services (eg branded in the same livery as the relevant Train Operating Company)
- Re-routeing of existing supported bus services, so as to improve penetration from rail stations into main residential catchment areas.
- Through ticketing from local buses onto local rail services or discounted ticketing for targeted users.
- Demand management (see Policy 3)

For rail-based P&R, a station Travel Plan can prove an effective vehicle for setting mode share targets for access to rail stations. This would be linked to improved walking and cycling routes and improved safe cycle parking facilities. Marketing and publicity measures will encourage the use of sustainable modes, where alternatives exist. This will ensure the facility does not contribute to social exclusion, particularly with respect to non car users.

Policy 3 – Demand management considerations

Proposals for new or improved park and ride facilities must give consideration to charging regimes, in order to support the strategic objectives of the Park and Ride Strategy.

Any car parking charges must be hypothecated and reinvested in measures that improve or enhance the on-site facilities provided (eg security, staffing, maintenance of facility, provision of access controls, or the provision of improved connecting bus services).

Exemptions or discounts may be provided for Blue Badge and/or Merseytravel disabled concessionary pass holders.
Charging may also be considered for introduction at existing park and ride sites, for example where:

- Demand is outstripping the supply of car parking spaces and detrimentally affecting local highway safety or residential amenity; or
- The Underlying Principles of the Strategy are not being satisfied.

Policy 4 – Private sector proposals

Bus-based Park and Ride facilities should ideally be provided by private sector partners with a presumption against the provision of such facilities by Merseytravel.

In line with the Merseyside Bus Strategy, encouragement will be given to private-sector led bus park and ride facilities, where these are supported by a strong business case. Proposals must still accord with the Underlying Principles of the Strategy.

Merseytravel would need to carefully consider support for proposals that exert a demand for ongoing revenue support from Merseytravel’s resources, e.g. for supported bus services or for the management of car parking facilities.

Policy 5 – Land use planning considerations

Proposals for large scale park and ride facilities will be expected to fit with land use allocations set out within district Local Development Framework or Unitary Development Plans.

Park and Ride proposals must not detract from the amenity of adjoining residents through glare, noise, overlooking, disturbance, road safety, congestion or indiscriminate parking on the public highway.

Off-site measures must be provided, where appropriate, to safeguard the amenity of adjoining residents, eg through the creation of a controlled parking zone or other parking restrictions, the imposition of time limits upon the facility’s hours of operation or landscaping or screening measures.

Where off-site park and ride improvements are proposed as a means of managing trips to or from a new development, Merseytravel will seek to secure section 106 obligations through the planning process to provide appropriate funding support from developers for such measures.

6. Evaluation and Monitoring
It is imperative that the effectiveness of any P&R facility is measured not just in terms of the level of usage; simply having a full car park does not automatically constitute success.

For rail-based facilities, Mode to Station surveys will provide information on users' home postcodes and their mode of travel to the station, to monitor modal share and measure how far people are travelling to access the facilities. Surveys are undertaken annually allowing a meaningful picture of travel patterns to be built up, and monitor changes over time.