

## CONSULTATION PAPER

### DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORT POLICY

#### COMMENTS FROM THE INSTITUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

##### Introduction

1. This note contains the comments of the Institution of Environmental Sciences on the above Consultation Paper issued by the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) in August 1997.
2. We welcome the invitation to contribute on the issues raised by transport and transport related matters. We feel it is important, however, that the various contributions made as part of the Consultation programme for *Transport: The Way Forward* issued by the previous Government, are drawn upon as part of the review of transport policy currently being undertaken. If this is not done there is a danger of overlooking valuable contributions and ideas raised in relation to this general topic only 18 months ago.
3. The structure of our note is as follows. Firstly, a general overview commentary is provided in relation to transport policy. Following on from that the Consultation Paper is dealt with mainly in relation to specific questions or issues raised in the Paper.

##### Overview

4. Movement and mobility are important aspects of modern life. The levels of mobility afforded in Britain create considerable freedom and opportunities for individuals, although not without cost to the environment. An appropriate transport system (and attitude towards transport) should adequately reflect these costs, whilst still enabling people to undertake activities important to them and without prejudicing future generations' needs and desires. In addition, individuals need to be fully aware of the implications of their decisions to travel, as this is an important requirement before attitudes and behaviour can be changed on a substantial and lasting basis.
5. It also has to be recognised, as is the case in the Integrated Transport Policy Consultation Paper, that there are some journeys for which there is no real alternative to the car. Such matters need to be factored into the development of an integrated policy. It will also be necessary to clarify what is meant by an integrated transport policy: is it at the operational level, for example, bus timetabling, or is it at a more strategic level incorporating, for example, land use planning. We believe it is the latter focus that should be at the heart of an integrated transport policy, which is where a National Transport Plan would be of assistance, but in any case this will need to be spelt out in the proposed Transport White Paper.

6. Road capacity in particular cannot be significantly increased without environmental costs, either through land take, pollution, congestion or in quality of life. It is essential, in our view, that it is recognised that for transport to work more effectively and efficiently, as well as for attitudes to transport to be changed, that there will need to be an increased role for demand management and market intervention.

7. In order to satisfy the above points we believe it is necessary to tackle directly some fundamental issues. In this context we consider it important to develop the following:-

- a National Transport Strategy or Plan. This should be an over-arching and policy-driven context for transport in the UK and Europe. The precise details of such a Strategy would obviously need to be carefully worked out, but ought to include targets on topics such as transport related pollution reduction, accidents and safety levels, congestion reduction, and changes in modal split, as well as more controversial issues such as demand constraint. It would also need to ensure compatibility and co-ordination at various levels of activity in the UK, i.e. from local level to regional and national level.
- to seriously examine, develop and implement a combination of traffic restraint measures and fiscal incentives and disincentives, ideally as part of a National Transport Strategy or Plan. It would be necessary to ensure that funds raised through fiscal measures, such as 'road-charging', are safeguarded for public transport, pedestrian and cycling improvements.

### **Developing an Integrated Transport Policy**

8. Paragraphs 4 and 10. *An integrated transport policy and transport policy objectives.* We do not have any major concerns over the objectives laid out in the Consultation Paper with regard to transport policy, but it will be useful to agree the priorities of these objectives. This will be necessary in order to resolve conflicts as they arise concerning various transport related issues.
9. Paragraph 7: *Reducing dependence on the car and lorry through providing genuine alternatives, and promoting greater use of more attractive public transport, and safer walking and cycling, is central to achieving a more sustainable transport system.* We endorse this but it is important to recognise that this will not happen without major intervention, be that fiscal, structural or legal.
10. Paragraph 8: *Plans for future housing and other developments.* It is clearly important to recognise the need to plan now for future housing and other developments. However, there appears to be limited mention of this issue elsewhere in the Consultation Paper in any detail. This will be important to explore fully and to cover in the proposed Transport White Paper. In addition, it is welcome that the relationship between transport and other services and

policies, including health and education, is to be considered at a more strategic level.

11. Paragraph 12: *Constrained Resources*. It is clear that resources are constrained and need to be spread across a number of areas. Nevertheless, it is essential that resource is committed to this area if the objectives set out in the Consultation Paper are to be achieved. In this respect, the contribution that various fiscal measures related to transport can make will be important. Such measures are, in our view, the most likely way of securing the necessary finance for improving the transport system and for instigating changes in attitude and behaviour.
12. Paragraph 19: *Buses, Trams and Taxis*. Bus use is unlikely to increase to any significant degree if cars remain easier to use, less expensive, and have better levels of access to most destinations of interest. This suggests a need to give greater priority to bus services, tied in with various forms of restraint on the access to cars to key areas.

### **Issues to Consider**

#### **Views on the issues raised in paragraph 34.**

1. **Are the aims in paragraph 10 the right ones? Do they miss anything important?**

The aims set in paragraph 10 of the consultation paper are so broad that they could be construed as all encompassing. After 40 years of transport debate it does not seem unreasonable to expect a clearer set of aims, in particular:

**Promoting environmental objectives** – what are these objectives? Do they include the land take of roads, the sourcing of aggregate for road building, vehicle emissions at the local/global/regional scale, impacts of vehicle construction/maintenance/disposal, impacts of fuel extraction & processing etc?

**Promoting greater efficiency of the use of scarce resources including road and rail capacity** – does this support a policy of traffic saturation on some or all available road and rail space, and if so which road and rail spaces? At what point will the effect on the environment render such saturation inefficient, considering that the externalities of traffic can already be considered unacceptable in many urban areas and on many arterial routes?

**meeting the needs of rural areas** – are these environmental needs or transport needs, given that the environmental character of rural areas is already degraded by road transport? If transport needs are intended, then does the desire of urban expatriates (those working, shopping and taking leisure in urban areas but living in rural areas to escape the externalities of their own activities) constitute need?

Most importantly of all, which aims have the higher priorities?

2. **What balance should there be between "sticks" and "carrots" to achieve our aims? Can we conclude that neither works without the other?**

The inexorable rise in the number and length of journeys taken by car are a testimony to the convenience of this mode, the willingness of the public to pay for this convenience and the total inability of other modes (e.g. public transport) to compete. Consequently, improvements in public transport alone will never reduce dependence on the motor car: the motor car will only stay at home if it is penalised to the extent that it is less convenient than the alternatives. Walking, cycling and public transport alternatives do not function as carrots but as Hobson's choice, a safety net of transport provision once the option of the private car has been eliminated. We believe that it is inevitable that there will need to be both constraints and incentives (physical and financial) to encourage changes in attitude and behaviour in relation to transport and travel.

In the field of commercial transport the options are even more straightforward. Commercial traffic will switch to more environmentally friendly modes as soon as those modes become cheaper (in unit distance, transshipment and time costs). If subsidy of environmentally preferred modes is not financially possible, this can only be achieved by financial penalties on the undesired modes. Laws to prevent the use of less desired modes (e.g. diesel HGVs in urban areas) are also an option.

3. **Recognising that funding from the public purse is strictly limited, how best do you think our transport systems could be improved?**

The most pressing need is to promote walking and cycling which depend on the public facility of a good local environment. This can best be achieved by measures to reduce the number and speed of vehicles on shared routeways (which includes all routeways in built areas, including villages) e.g. by traffic management.

4. **To what extent should we be looking at restraining the car, van or lorry?...**

The element of traffic growth most responsible for environmental and economic externalities is the use of the private car (by a minority of the population) for leisure. Restraint on this sector by pricing and, in some circumstances, legal exclusion is the only way to ensure the adequate mobility of the whole population and for transport for international economic competitiveness. Transfer of HGV business to rail or waterway by competitive options is a strong desirability.

5. **What roles should be played by pricing, fiscal policies and regulation to achieve our aims?**

In order to fully introduce the externalities of transport so as to create a genuine transport market, the use of private cars needs to be rendered far more expensive. This could most easily be achieved by a dramatic rise in fuel duty, though road pricing on restricted entry roads to urban areas also has some merit. Restrictions on available road surface area (e.g. by reserving space for bus and cycle lanes) and on

parking can be very effective in reducing car travel to specific locations by reducing the convenience of the car to below the level of alternatives.

**6. What can we do to reduce people's need to travel?**

It is not the need but the desire for travel that is the problem. Currently people desire to live in the country and travel to towns for work and leisure. Little can be done to reduce the desire, but its realisation can be curtailed by reducing new house building in villages (this may require the establishment of new towns, town extensions and even new conurbation's if urban environments are not to suffer from town cramming). Increasing the cost of travel so as to enforce people to live nearer where they work will reduce travel further if those locations also provide a full range of services. As people often change job location, it will be necessary to make the process of moving house easier. Fiscal measures making it easier to rent domestic property (in cooperation with the mortgage lenders) could enable migrant workers to achieve their house owning aspirations whilst also increasing the stock of rented property.

**7. Would transport policy be enhanced by adopting a range of "targets" ...**

We support the idea of transport 'targets' but they should form part of the National Transport Strategy or Plan. This would also indicate the level of coverage of such targets, but we would consider it necessary to have targets that are set at local, regional and national levels in order to ensure that the overall targets can be monitored effectively and adjustments made to assist in achieving targets.

**8. Should government develop new funding mechanisms or income streams for transport? ...**

Once use of the private car (and selective use of trucks and vans) has been restricted, private and commercial spending will automatically be diverted towards supporting the alternatives e.g. public transport.

**9. Which aspects of public transport do you think it is most important to improve in order to persuade more people to leave their cars at home and use public transport instead?**

Practical measures to persuade people to change mode from car travel to public transport travel would include improving the reliability, frequency, information, safety and comfort of such service. However, perhaps more fundamentally, it is necessary to create a more level playing field between private motoring costs and public transport costs, as well as providing greater levels of accessibility to key destinations for public transport than for cars. This requires both fiscal measures being applied to road based transport, as well as physical measures – such as traffic calming, limited access to certain areas, etc. – being implemented.

**10. What practical measure would bring about more use of less environmentally damaging forms of freight transport ...**

See 2.

**11. How can the contribution of ports and airports to regional and national competitiveness be enhanced without detriment to environmental objectives?**

If existing facilities can not be expanded without significant environmental harm, then alternative sites for new facilities should be considered. Carefully sited, modern facilities could avoid some of the problems of older sites. This policy could be particularly useful in improving the competitiveness of regions of the UK currently disadvantaged by a lack of such facilities. However, ultimately a balance will have to be struck between environmental quality and international/regional accessibility.

**12. How can we actively encourage more environmentally friendly vehicles and fuels, the development of less environmentally damaging technologies and innovations to reduce the need to travel?**

By creating a market for them. Less polluting vehicles could be encouraged by reducing the duty on clean fuels and creating zones where only clean fuel vehicles could go. Commitments to such policies at some time in the future is a proven means of stimulating the automotive industry to innovate, but a cross-party consensus or regulation at the European level would be required to provide the necessary certainty. Innovations to reduce the need to travel will be encouraged by generally increasing the cost of transport and reducing the ease of accessibility.

**13. How can we integrate land use planning more effectively, with a more strategic approach, so as to cut unnecessary journeys?**

An effective regional policy, discouraging economic growth in overloaded cores (e.g. around Heathrow) and promoting it elsewhere (particularly in medium sized towns circa. 100 000 population in the regions) is the key strategic level approach required. To be effective, this requires democratic regional government. On a more local level, more people need to be encouraged to live in towns where alternatives to the car (e.g. local services within walking distance, regular public transport) are viable.

**14. How can we ensure ... that the price faced by transport users more accurately reflect the cost?**

See 5.

**15. What is the appropriate role at national, regional and local levels for the provision and regulation of transport? ...**

Central government has to take the lead in implementing fiscal measures to reduce car and undesirable lorry use. It is also central government's responsibility to issue strong planning guidance to enable planning authorities to impose restrictions on motor vehicle accessibility without reducing the local competitiveness or their areas. The migration of planning powers, both down from central government and up from local government into democratic regional government will be necessary to account for the different competitiveness of regions and consequent differences in priority whilst enabling coordination at regional level to prevent local disadvantage and thus speed up implementation.

**16. What changes might be needed to the ways local authorities receive capital funding for transport, to encourage the development of integrated transport policies at the local level?**

Local initiatives will only be effective within the structure of national action. This is particularly true of the less competitive areas of the country. Once national action has created a viable market for alternative forms of transport, then private sector funds can be levered in by public spending on infrastructure.

**17. Is there ... a role for greater use of economic instruments to influence how people choose to travel? ... How should the receipts from such sources be used.**

Yes (see 5), but charging levels will have to be very high and in some instances regulation will still be required to disadvantage the convenience of the private motor car and to maintain acceptable environmental standards. Hypothecation may have a role to play making such charges politically acceptable to the general public.

**18. What should be the role of urban traffic management measures?**

Traffic management has a significant role to play in creating multi-user shared surfaces (see 3). However, the aim should be to reduce car use by restricting users to less desirable routes, not to cram more vehicles into cities which would only further erode environmental quality.

**19. How can we achieve economic growth which is less road traffic intensive ...**

Certain trends in recent economic development operate by appropriating the public goods of a quality environment e.g. out of town shopping and leisure centres, rural commuter settlements. This sort of economic growth does not benefit the nation and should be restrained in favour of more localised, small scale/high quality/niche market developments.

Reducing leisure car use will create adequate space on the strategic highway network for the goods traffic required for a healthy economy. Transshipment of goods to railheads and ports for long distance transport and onto smaller vehicles for urban distribution could be considered. In many cases the extra costs of these methods would not reduce national competitiveness because there is little inter-national competition in consumer markets (e.g. the distribution of food to supermarkets) or in many bulk materials (e.g. the distribution of aggregate to building sites, waste to disposal sites). Regional competitiveness can be managed by regional government (see 13).

**20. In circumstances where demand exceeds road capacity at certain times, what priority might be given to scarce road space and how might that be delivered? ...**

Road space should be made scarce in order to limit traffic. Once it is scarce, great attention needs to be paid to the pedestrian and cycling environment as well as emergency vehicles, disabled access, public transport and servicing vehicles.

**21. How can we best take account of the differing accessibility needs of urban and rural communities?**

Rural dwellers can not expect to have the same access to goods and services as urban dwellers. It is the desire of individuals to have their cake and eat it that is causing the severe environmental costs we are experiencing. Rural communities have to be based around viable rural settlements with adequate employment opportunities and service access. Special transport concessions for rural dwellers who want to live an urban lifestyle is not democratically or environmentally viable.

**22. How can we increase the awareness of transport users about the consequences of their choices?**

General awareness needs to be raised in order to make car reduction a democratically viable option. The best route for this, long term, is through education (secondary level) and an emphasis on personal health is likely to have an impact. However, regulations and cost penalties will also be required to bring about a change in behaviour.

**23. How can we best ensure a high standard of safety across all modes?**

Reducing traffic volumes and speed is essential to improve road safety and permit the growth of cycling and walking. The recent campaign against speeding is to be commended, but it should be remembered that the two most dramatic recent changes in public attitude (to drink driving and smoking) both came about through personal health concerns, not public responsibility.

**24. How can we ensure that the policies designed to establish environmentally sustainable transport systems are compatible with the governments' aims for social inclusion?**

No comment.

**25. How can we promote the transport needs of disabled people?**

Special concessions will have to be made for those less able to use the democratic forms of transport (walking and cycling). However, it should be borne in mind that many disabled and aged persons can not drive and special concessions for them will involve access to appropriate public transport (e.g. taxis).

**26. How can we best take account of the transport needs of all sectors of society ...**

See 24 and 25

**27. What should the role of transport be in delivering the national air quality strategy, reductions in acidifying pollutants and our climate change commitments?**



Transport often makes only a minority contribution to these problems. Concentration on the transport sector as a source for these national improvements could be costly given the outcomes and could encourage transport policies that undermine the essential aim of reducing traffic (e.g. more less polluting cars could meet air quality targets without improving urban environments). However, air quality as a public health issue could be used as a politically viable justification for traffic reduction.