

Background:

The UK Government recently issued a consultation paper in connection with its planned publication next Spring of a white paper on integrated transport. The following is the Society's response.

DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORT POLICY Response by the Transport Planning Society

November 1997

1. INTRODUCTION

The Transport Planning Society was established on 1 October 1997 to fill an acknowledged need for an independent multi-disciplinary forum to address transport planning issues. Members are drawn from diverse backgrounds and are united in their professional commitment to deliver a sustainable and integrated transport framework. Consequently, the Society has no modal, commercial or other interest to promote.

2. THE VISION

At the root of transport policy must be an overall vision at the national, regional and local level encompassing the wider social, economic and environmental aims of the community. Such a vision can only be determined by society's elected representatives reflecting current public opinion. Effective integrated transport provision is vital to the delivery of these goals.

Transport Planners are professionally equipped to design integrated transport solutions and address the trade-offs between transport and other goals, but will be prevented from fulfilling this promise without a workable institutional framework. The absence of suitable means for the delivery is the main obstacle to the implementation of an integrated transport system.

Responses to individual questions posed in the Green Paper have therefore been eschewed in favour of some suggestions for the establishment of the fundamental mechanisms necessary for the planning, implementation and management of an integrated national transport system and local sub-systems.

3. A FRAMEWORK FOR DELIVERY

A suitable framework for policy delivery must involve the following stages:

STAGE ONE

National standards and values must be established and clearly set out in respect of different types of area (e.g. urban, regional, inter-urban, rural) rather than by mode. At a national level the social, economic and environmental context for transport policies should be set, with targets decided on matters such as control of pollution, levels of accessibility and consumer choice, control/encouragement of competition, rights of citizens. These policies should flow from the government's wider policies.

STAGE TWO

Responsibilities delegated to Local Authorities and other agencies for transport policy-making at a local or regional level must be clearly delineated to include:

- a framework for planning transport
- co-ordination of transport with other Local Authority functions,
- local/regional targets within the government's overall policies
- parameters for the successful determination and application of policy locally/regionally

Where functions remain at a national level these should be identified and clearly justified.

STAGE THREE

Responsibilities for all functions involved in the planning and delivery of transport at the national and local levels must be clearly allocated, and the final arbiters of issues of contention identified. Practical responsibility for functions across modes and professional fields is an essential public responsibility to be clearly allocated between central and local government, other public agencies and the commercial sector. Such functions include:

- Development control
- Infrastructure planning and construction decisions
- Service planning
- Safety
- Quality control
- Charges
- Public information
- Systems management

The government's policy statement should clearly assign ultimate accountability for delivery in such areas as well as the range of bodies engaged in decisions.

STAGE FOUR

a) The range of powers required by those accountable for delivery of the integrated solutions should be clearly identified, including :

- Funding
- Enforcement (including those for parking, speeding, bus lanes, red light violations and others)- clearly there is a need to consider transfer of many enforcement powers to local authorities as the police consider such powers to be of low priority.
- Development Control (also there may be a need for more planning powers to influence the nature of existing land uses and not just future uses/developments).
- "Planning gain"
- Land purchase (CPO, etc)
- Traffic Regulation Orders
- Construction of new infrastructure
- New powers to influence use of existing transport infrastructure (this would include road pricing, congestion charging, and perhaps some

powers emerging from "Travelwise" type initiatives and the Traffic Reduction Act).

- Parking: in particular influence on private non-residential parking
- Control of emissions and pollution caused by transport

b) Medium term plans and policies must be supported by appropriate funding mechanisms. These require both secure government financial support, appropriate public/private financial partnership arrangements and an ability to apply nationally and locally raised taxes and charges to implementing policies. Planning cannot be rational if the associated financing is unpredictable or volatile.

An agreed evaluation framework is essential to successful implementation of the proposed solutions, in support of the above and as a guide to the allocation of resources. Such a framework would provide a basis for decisions on spending and should be compatible with assessing and determining both private and public decisions to allow trade-offs on spending between disparate items of capital, investment and revenue support, for example; in both road and Light Rail Transit systems; in Intelligent Transport Systems for road users and public transport information; and in facilities for pedestrians and cyclists as well as highway users.

4. CUSTODIANS OF THE VISION AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION

NATIONAL LEVEL

Once an overall statement of vision for integrated transport has been debated and agreed by government and parliament, a stable long-term approach is required to deliver the package of proposed measures, only reopening it to political review on strategic issues. Single independent modal agencies like the Highways Agency would be inappropriate to supervise service delivery, although there might be mode-specific task groups. The Society therefore sees a role for a National Transport Agency, reporting to the Secretary of State, which, in consultation with appropriate bodies, would deliver on the following:

- determine the national interest relating to the provision of inter-urban road and rail networks for both passengers and freight.
- devise a management strategy for those networks to meet agreed objectives
- promote and facilitate a freight transport switch onto more environmentally-friendly modes (rail/water)
- allocate resources where necessary to fulfil a strategic need (including the making of Freight Facility and Track Access Grants) to meet needs not met by the normal market mechanism

In addition, a separate, national-level, independent monitoring and review body c.f. SACTRA should review all transport investment and funding and issue guidance on the following:

1. Principles for economic evaluation of schemes and spending of public funds
2. Principles for public involvement in decision making and monitoring of policies
3. Checklist of responsibilities for different policy areas and advice to the public regarding the appropriate body for directing complaints.
4. Safety, incorporating the current transport-related roles of the Health and Safety Executive and Traffic Commissioners.
5. Network management and priority measures for particular traffics.

6. Quality control, including monitoring responsibilities of the agencies.
7. Advising the government on taxing and charging of transport.
8. Advising the government on competition rules and where the market forces should be controlled.

For inter-urban and national level matters the national transport agency would direct overall responsibility for supervising operation of the market and determining the case for public intervention, subject to the overview of the Secretary of State and the monitoring body.

APPLICATION AT THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL

To implement practical strategies at the local level, appropriate combinations of local authorities and agencies should be encouraged to formally pool their responsibilities to create regional or sub-regional transport authorities. These new transport authorities (akin to Passenger Transport Authorities but with a fully multi-modal remit) are seen as particularly relevant to urban areas and should reflect transport realities.

The geographical basis for deciding the boundaries and extent of such groupings could be, for example, common journey patterns such as travel to work, education, health, retail, leisure and freight movements. The use of journey patterns would ensure that factors such as the location of major centres of industry and transport magnets like large ports and airports were considered. However, boundaries should coincide with those of Local Authorities and where a majority wish to establish such a body, dissenting authorities should be obliged to participate.

The Secretary of State would be ultimately responsible for authorising the creation of these bodies with advice from the National Transport Agency. Transport Plans would be drawn up and approved by the appropriate combination of Local Authorities and transport agencies working as an entity through balanced representation of the authorities and other appropriate interests (e.g. consumer and business representatives). In this way the social and economic priorities for the area would be an integral aspect of the transport plan. Existing local plans for specific areas could form the basis for local sub-plans for the new authority, it having reviewed previous policies as appropriate.

As an incentive for their creation and to allow them to operate effectively they would be entitled to claim new powers in support of their strategies e.g.:

- bus regulation/franchising for their area
- rail support
- private non-residential parking controls
- road pricing/congestion charging
- transport impact payments for development
- statutory input to development control and land-use planning. The government may wish to consider whether the transport authority should also be the planning authority as these two activities cannot be separated

The power to apply the revenues obtained from the above aspects to transport tasks within the area would be vital. The above powers would only be made available by the Secretary of State when the authority had clearly established a plan in keeping

with the overall national vision. The existence of such authorities would enable the government and the national transport authority from time to time to issue advice on transport priorities in keeping with contributing to the national economic and social vision and the national monitoring body to monitor and audit their efficient and fair execution.

Free-standing towns and rural areas experience a different magnitude of transport problem and different institutional solutions could be applied. In some cases e.g. extensive rural areas with scattered settlement, groupings of authorities might be appropriate, whereas in the case of free-standing towns single authorities might operate most successfully. In the initial stages of the implementation of the integrated transport policy, demonstration authorities could be identified/set up as a model of good practice.

5. DELIVERING THE PLANS

The local bodies would agree clear performance indicators (targets) for the operational delivery mechanism reflecting the national guidance. Private transport operators would require long-term concessions. Private agencies/advisors could have a major role in running the transport provision (as distinct from policy-making and control) and would build on the approach of enabler and provider. The resource of a new generation of transport planners would thus be made available to the authorities in the delivery of their policies. The Agencies would have a remit to operate on a lean and slim basis, regularly reviewing the efficiencies of contracting out to specialist professionals.

6. CONCLUSION

The strength of these proposals lies in the fact that the creation of a vision with targets for delivery will enable long term decision making at the appropriate level. They also seek to relate the funding requirements to appropriate sources of revenue. Mechanisms for funding streams would be likely to enhance the opportunities for private finance reducing the burdens on the treasury.

Transport Planning has been the subject of prevarication for too long. There has been continued debate, but no real direction. What is now needed from government is clear leadership which can flow into Local Authorities and other agencies responsible for the delivery of an integrated approach.

The Transport Planning Society believes that the only way of dealing with this is to get the powers and funding for different levels of transport provision (national, regional, local) in place as soon as possible.