

climate **change**

**setting
the transport
agenda**

Action briefing

The great climate change debate
5 October 2007



What's it all about?

On Tuesday 2nd October 2007, over 100 transport professionals from across the UK took part in 'The Great Climate Change Debate: Setting the Transport Agenda' at The British Museum in London. The debate, organised by transport consultancy Steer Davies Gleave and the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), discussed how transport could be part of the solution to climate change, rather than simply the problem.

As professionals working in the fields of transport planning, management and operations, the view of the conference was that it is vital that CO₂ emissions from transport are stabilised and reduced. It was agreed that both technology and 'Smarter Choice'¹ solutions have a role to play and should be complemented by a package of more traditional approaches to transport planning that are currently available from across the transport industry and local government. These should be applied in an integrated way, with equal status but different roles for each. However, the pace of action and implementation has to change, and clear leadership from the Government is required. It is vital that action is taken now to reduce CO₂ emissions quickly, and particular actions should include:

- Making tough choices. Recognising that these are difficult, the conference expressed impatience that targets and action plans are not being developed and implemented quickly enough.
- Setting targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions specifically from surface transport, based on the latest science.
- More investment in rail travel to encourage mode shift had overwhelming support.


The 10 action points

In order to secure carbon stabilisation and reduction in the transport sector, the conference concluded that the following actions are needed to improve transport planning in the UK and take better account of carbon issues in policy development:


1. Targets should be set for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from surface transport based on the latest science, and achieved through both improvements in technology and reductions in road traffic.²

¹ 'Smarter Choices' are measures aimed at changing behaviour and choices. They include workplace and school travel plans; personalised travel planning; information and marketing; travel awareness campaigns; teleworking; teleconferencing and home shopping.

² Powers for this already are available under the Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997

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2. To identify the benefits that can be achieved through decisive actions, transport plans should set an annual cap on CO₂ and other air pollutant emissions from transport (e.g. oxides of nitrogen and particulate matter) and trajectories for the period of the plan, practically focused and indicating how the targets for pollution reduction are to be met.³
 3. The Government must provide significant resources and backing for the widespread development and delivery of ‘Smarter Choices’ by adopting a flexible and responsive fiscal approach to eliminate barriers to the uptake of solutions. This also requires transport planning policies to be developed on the basis of getting priorities right, i.e.:
 - encouraging mode shift to more sustainable modes wherever possible and reducing the need to travel overall, although in all cases taking account of the legitimate travel needs of people, particularly in rural communities;
 - encouraging greater use of more sustainable, high-occupancy motorised modes for longer trips (e.g. by bus, rail, tram, and through car clubs or ride-sharing);
 - encouraging walking and cycling for local trips (i.e. less than 2km for walk trips and 5km for cycle trips); and
 - recognising that reductions in car traffic are already occurring in urban centres where a re-prioritisation towards pedestrian space is happening. This trend requires prioritisation. The benefits to local economies (rather than the costs) of reduced traffic, need to be made an explicit element in transport appraisals.
 4. Aviation must be included in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and consideration given to supplementary measures such as an aviation fuel duty escalator, managed by a sub-committee of the UN Climate Change Panel to further reduce emissions in this sector.
 5. The Government should organise itself to better align policies across departments to reduce the need to travel and promote travel by more sustainable modes (as in 3 above). For example, the travel implications of decisions in the health and education sectors should be examined. These sectors should have explicit targets to reduce CO₂ emissions as part of a wider carbon-reduction framework covering all their activities. There is a pressing need to understand how the health and education sectors may be undermining transport objectives by pursuing policies favouring peripheral hospital sites and parental choice of schools.
 6. The Government must strengthen the basis of sequential tests applied to new development in national land use planning policies, with stricter controls on development of ‘Greenfield’ sites for developments that are major trip generators (e.g. out-of-town superstores, favouring warehouse and delivery systems). There should also be a presumption in favour of mixed-use developments in urban areas to encourage walking and cycling as realistic modes of choice.

³ This may be done by extending the requirements for carbon caps and trajectories relating to housing and industrial development in the proposed changes to Policy Planning Statement No.1 also to cover transport. Incorporating actions from Air Quality Management Plans to reduce local air pollution from transport into Transport Plans is already required under environmental legislation.

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7. Strict energy-efficiency requirements must be imposed on all major transport infrastructure and facilities (e.g. termini, depots etc).⁴
 8. In line with the Prime Minister's speech to the 2007 Labour Party Conference calling on Britain to lead the way in development of carbon-free vehicles, the Government should set a mandatory target for new car sales of 100 g CO₂/km to be met by 2020, to allow cost-effective responses by the industry, combined with other measures to stimulate demand for lower-emission vehicles. Similar measures are also required to ensure the improvement of carbon performance of public transport and van and lorry fleets, and an entrepreneurial approach should be fostered for development of innovative technological solutions (e.g. to encourage small-scale recycling of vegetable oil that can be used in diesel engines without modification).
 9. A greater capacity to provide cleaner energy for powering public transport and private vehicles must be developed from renewable sources, so that this can be delivered without compromising the needs of other sectors of the economy. Transport operators should use their considerable buying power to lobby for this investment, although care needs to be taken to ensure that other potential adverse environmental effects (e.g. through the production of biofuels) are fully taken into account.
 10. To reduce the need for domestic and short-haul international air travel, as well as longer-distance car travel, investment in the trunk rail network should be made to better connect and increase capacity between the major cities of the UK, and to the major airports. The potential improved role of buses and coaches for inter-urban travel also should be examined to complement improvements to the rail network.

⁴ Measures for this will need to be developed and monitored under the requirements of the Government's proposed Carbon Reduction Commitment, and savings will be able to be traded.



Chris Ferrary
Associate

Chris is available to be speak in more depth about this event and the outcomes of the debate.

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Note:

Chris Ferrary is a transport planner, Chartered Town Planner and Chartered Environmentalist, who has worked to understand and overcome the environmental effects of transport for more than 30 years. He is presently working on responses to the climate change effects of transport on projects relating the Greater Manchester Transport Innovation Fund bid and on the evaluation of transport investments by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. He was also the principal author of the Transport 2000 report 'Driving Up Carbon Emissions from Road Transport', which was submitted as evidence to the Environmental Audit Committee's inquiry on reducing CO₂ emissions from transport.