

JOHN McGRILLEN
Clerk of the Council and Chief Executive



6 July 2006

Sub Regional Transport Plan (SRTP) Team
Transportation Unit
3rd Floor
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
BELFAST BT2 8GB

Dear Sir/Madam,

Down District Council Submission on Draft Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2015

In order to meet the June deadline for responses to the above Plan, I submitted our corporate response on behalf of Council. Since that time, two Councillors, who were unable to attend the meeting where the content of the response regarding Downpatrick was agreed, have raised a number of issues which will be addressed at a meeting on 7 August 2006.

The only other amendment to our response was a request to consider car parking in the Windmill Street area of Ballynahinch to facilitate deliveries to the shops in the main shopping area and emphasised reference to making the town pedestrian friendly.

I will forward the final version of the document as soon as possible after the meeting on 7 August 2006 and thank you for your assistance and understanding in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sharon O'Connor'.

Sharon O'Connor
Director, Cultural & Economic Development



DRAFT SUB-REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2015
A SUBMISSION MADE BY DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

This submission is made by Down District and focuses on the transport proposals laid out within the Draft Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2015 for the three principle towns within the Down District: Ballynahinch, Downpatrick and Newcastle. This submission deals only with the urban areas of the District, and does not deal with the transport issues in the rural areas. The Council would wish to discuss these other issues with the Department separately.

The problems with transport in all three towns within the District are quite general, and include:

- Traffic Congestion in the town centres
- Illegal parking
- Lack of loading / unloading bays
- Lack of linkages between car parks and town centres.

Although the solutions to these problems vary from town to town, there are some common strands, such as the provision of linkages and loading / unloading bays. The Council believes that the forthcoming decriminalisation of on-street parking offences will help deal with many of the traffic issues facing these rural towns. It is hoped that this measure will lead to less congestion, traffic moving more freely and improved road safety. As well as this, the Council feel that paid restricted parking in the town centres, linked to free peripheral parking will offer the best solution to the congestion experienced in the town centres.

The Councils response to the transport proposals for each of the three towns is set out on the forthcoming pages.

BALLYNAHINCH

Further to the publication of the Draft Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2015, we have set out our comments in relation to proposals put forward for Ballynahinch:

Current Principal Problems

The Council would agree with the 'Current Principal Problems' as set out for Ballynahinch in the Technical Supplement, although we would suggest that the serious traffic congestion in the town centre has led to the over-use of peripheral country roads, and impacted on some rural settlements such as Loughinisland.

Walking Blueprint

The Council would agree with the principle of making the Town Centre more accessible for pedestrians, however we note that the proposed walking routes, both primary and secondary, already are equipped with pavements. We would therefore ask the Department to clarify exactly what their proposals entail, and would request that the proposed primary walking route include Harmony Road and all of Windmill Street. We would also point out the benefits of developing linkages in the town centre, and the potential that alleyways offer in terms of connecting car parks to the town centre. We would wish to see these alleyways included in the final Transport Plan.

Highway Blueprint

The Council has long recognised the need for a bypass around the town, and would stress the urgency of this road proposal. We would like to see how the proposed

road might link to the Lisburn Road, and we would point out the importance of incorporating a junction on the new bypass at the Crossgar Road.

The Council would also ask the Department to take into consideration the consequences that this new bypass will have on the health of the town centre. We would stress that after the bypass has been created, there will be a need to revisit the town centre and look at the opportunities for improvement of the public realm. Due to the substantial through traffic in the town, the town centre is currently not a user-friendly place. After the bypass has been built, cars will be re-routed from the town centre creating opportunities which could make the town centre more user-friendly, accessible, vibrant and interesting. Opportunities would become available to create new and improve existing space, thus increasing ease of movement. The Council offer to work with the Department to help breathe life back into Ballynahinch once the bypass is operational.

The Council would ask the Department to review the efficiency and operational quality of the existing one-way system in the town once the bypass is operational. There may be benefits of reverting back to the original two-way system.

The Council welcomes the proposed Park and Share site on the Belfast Road, however we would ask the Department to consider the benefits of a Park and Share site located on the Newcastle Road.

The Council also welcome the proposed junction improvement on the Dromore Street / High Street / Church Street junction, and we would be interested in being involved as that concept develops.

DOWNPATRICK

Further to the publication of the Draft Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2015, we have set out our comments in relation to proposals put forward for Downpatrick:

Current Principal Problems

Whilst we generally agree with the 'Current Principal Problems' as set out by Roads Service in the Technical Supplement, we would add that the congestion problems in Downpatrick last throughout the duration of the day, and not just at peak hours. There is also an issue with the control of delivery vehicles which stop for long periods outside shops in the retail core, further exasperating the congestion problem in the town.

Walking Blueprint

The Council would agree with the principle of making the town centre more accessible for pedestrians, however we would recognise the need for developing linkages in the town centre, and the potential that alleyways offer in terms of connecting car parks and the bus station to the town centre. We would therefore ask for due consideration to be given to the provision of pedestrian linkages within the walking blueprint.

Cycling Blueprint

The Council agrees in principle with the proposals indicated in the cycling blueprint, although the routes proposed are largely peripheral, and whilst these are to be

welcomed further consideration should be given to cycling networks to and from the town centre on both adopted roads and through open space.

Highway Blueprint

In the short-term, the Council would urge the Department to give consideration to the efficiency and operational quality of all junctions within and around the town centre, and to carry out upgrading works at these junctions as necessary, such as Collins Corner, and where Market Street meets Saint Patrick's Avenue.

With regards to the proposed link road between the Police Station on Irish Street and Saint Patrick's Avenue in the vicinity of Lynne Doyle Place, the Council would have concerns about this route for the following reasons:

- the Police Station is a listed building;
- the topography of the proposed route is very steep; and
- the proposed link road would have a significant impact on retail premises on Saint Patrick's Avenue.

However, if this link road was to proceed, it would create new development opportunities and the chance to create a new street frontage should not be missed. This proposed new road link should be viewed both in terms of traffic alleviation and in economic regeneration terms - effectively it should become a new 'street'.

The Council are interested in the concept of a one way system around the town centre, although they would have concerns about the detail in particular how certain junctions such as Market street / Irish Street would operate.

The Council would support the concept of having an eastern link road around Downpatrick, although we would have a number of concerns regarding this proposal. We would wish to see how the proposed road could eventually link to the Belfast Road and to the Ballydugan / Newcastle Road. A more continuous alignment would

be preferential rather than the staggered alignment shown in the vicinity of the Saul Road, and we would wish to point out the difficult topography where the Rathkeltair Road meets the Strangford Road. The Council would also have concerns about the implementation of the road as there seems to be a heavy reliance on the private sector, and we would therefore wish to see a commitment from the Department to intervene if necessary, and within a given timescale.

The Council wish that Roads Service keep the option of a western link under review.

In considering traffic within the town centre, the Council would ask Roads Service to consider the potential to provide a new link road between Saint Patrick's Avenue to the Ballydugan Road through playing fields at Dunleath Park. This new link road could relieve traffic congestion on Saint Patrick's Avenue by taking cars away from the Town Centre.

The Council would also ask the Department to pay particular attention to the significance of the built environment, especially when considering junction improvements at the corner of Market Street and Saint Patrick's Avenue. The architectural quality of Downpatrick is significant, and all attempts should be made to preserve it, and if necessary infill vacant space.

NEWCASTLE

Further to the publication of the Draft Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2015, we have set out our comments in relation to proposals put forward for Newcastle:

Current Principal Problems

The Council would agree with the 'Current Principal Problems' as set out by Roads Service in the Technical Supplement, however we would wish to add that there is also

an issue with the control of delivery vehicles which stop for long periods outside shops in the retail core, and the lack of enforcement for traffic violations, further exasperating the congestion problem in the town.

All day car parkers who are using public transport, particularly on Railway Street, also add to the build-up of congestion in the town.

Walking Blueprint

The Council would agree with the principle of making the town centre more accessible for pedestrians, however we would recognise the need for developing linkages in the town centre, and the potential that alleyways and other routes offer in terms of connecting car parks to the town centre. We would therefore ask for due consideration to be given to the provision of pedestrian linkages within the walking blueprint.

The Council note that the proposed walking routes, both primary and secondary, already have pavements to facilitate use by pedestrians, therefore we would therefore ask the Department to clarify exactly what their proposals entail.

Cycling Blueprint

The Council agree in principle with the proposals indicated in the cycling blueprint, although the routes proposed could be linked together, and tie-in with the existing cycle network. Whilst these proposals are to be welcomed, further consideration should be given to cycling networks to and from the town centre along other main arterial routes into the towns, and on both adopted roads and through open space.

Highway Blueprint

The Council acknowledge that the current proposals for the Newcastle Streetscape scheme will help with traffic management issues within the town centre, in particular the provision of unloading bays for service vehicles, and changes to traffic movement at Donard Street. However, the Council feel that this alone will not address the serious congestion in Newcastle. The Council are of the opinion that the proposal to make Shimna Road two-way offers a significant opportunity both to alleviate traffic congestion and also supporting the economic regeneration of the town. The Council would therefore wish to see this proposal included in the final Transport Plan.

The Council would urge the Department to keep the efficiency and operational quality of all junctions within and around the town centre under review.

There is also a need to provide more car parking, particularly towards the north and west of the town.