

JOHN McGRILLEN
Clerk of the Council and Chief Executive



5 September 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**

Further to my letter of 6 July 2006, I am pleased to enclose the final submission by Down District Council in relation to Downpatrick and the Draft Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2015.

I would apologise for the delay in sending this to you and trust that you will be able to accept it to finalise the submission from our Council. The Council has already submitted its response in relation to Ballynahinch and Newcastle.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours faithfully,

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

Sharon O'Connor
Director Cultural & Economic Development

Enc



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. In this respect we would encourage development of a pedestrian link from the main car park in Market Street to the ASDA Shopping Complex, together with further pedestrian linkages within the walking blueprint.

We also feel that there is a requirement for a footpath from Bridge Street, via Breen's Lane, to Meadowlands steps and onto Saul Street which would increase accessibility to this part of the town.

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 St Patrick's Avenue.

With regards to the proposed link road between the Police Station on Irish Street and St Patrick's Avenue in the vicinity of Lynn Doyle Place, the Council would encourage this link, however, it should be borne in mind that:-

- 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 St Patrick's Avenue

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 is concerned about the traffic congestion where the A7 approaches Downpatrick and feel that the development of a slip road to facilitate traffic proceeding to Strangford would be beneficial. The creation of a large car park north of the Maxol Garage in this area would also offer "out of town" parking and provide a stop for school buses thus preventing the congestion created at school start and end times. It would therefore be possible for school children attending schools in the vicinity of that car park to complete their journey on foot.

The Council is 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. It should be noted that the 1992 Downpatrick Town Centre Plan proposed a new road to link St Patrick's Drive and Market Street to permit the introduction of a one-way traffic system along parts of Market Street, St Patrick's Ave and St Patrick's Drive, thus easing the traffic at the junction of Market Street and St Patrick's Ave. The Council feels that further traffic alleviation could be achieved by the creation of a road at the side of Lidl in Market Street through the old Market Yard, to St Patrick's Drive.

The Council would support the concept of having an Eastern link road around Downpatrick, although we 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 showing in the vicinity of the Saul Road and we would draw attention to the difficult topography where Rathkeltair Road meets Strangford Road. The Council would also have concerns about the implementation of the road as there seems to be 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 wishes to see the Western link road actively promoted to alleviate the serious congestion in Downpatrick and to provide essential economic, commercial, social and recreational benefits to the town. The immediate implementation of the Western by-pass and the Eastern link road are required in order to make a major economic contribution to the future of Downpatrick. Without the implementation of these link roads, development will be stifled in Downpatrick.

In considering traffic within the town centre, the Council would ask Roads Service to consider the potential to provide a new link road between St Patrick's Avenue to Ballydugan Road. This new link road could relieve traffic congestion on St Patrick's Avenue by taking cars away from the town centre. There are also a number of other opportunities for new/improved linkages which would create alternative routes, avoiding Market Street.

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 St 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.