

## THE INSTITUTION OF HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION NORTHER IRELAND BRANCH

### RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT SUB-REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2015

The Institution endorses the proposal to provide connecting sections of footpath to an appropriate standard in urban areas to provide a continuous pedestrian network (5.4.1 & 6.2.3). We would encourage the Department to implement a programme of works to complete the network and to give priority to the provision of new links to bus and rail stations or which provide safety improvements at key locations such as schools or hospitals or which facilitate the release of new commercial, industrial or residential development.

The provision of additional parking convenient to bus and rail stations (5.5.1 and Table 5.2) is only proposed at 7 towns with bus stations and 4 with train stations. Greater integration of the transport links requires the provision of significant parking close to all main public transport services. This is important in order to maximise the use of existing transport services for park and ride (5.8.1) and for park and share.

The parking strategy set out in paragraph 5.5.2 is undermined by the reasons for divergence permitted in paragraph 5.5.3 and the Institution would wish to see the charging principles used to support a coordinated transport policy. The maintenance of free on street parking for local residents may require the introduction of residents parking schemes.

The Institution would support the provision of new highway routes and road links (5.5.4) especially to facilitate new development and to further wealth creation opportunities. Even where these are partly or fully funded by the private sector the department may need to assist in the bringing forward of such schemes through the Area Plan process using its statutory powers. This is particularly important for links which connect existing towns to the RSTN (5.5.6 and 6.3.3). The Department should also bring forward targeted improvements at key bottleneck junctions in major towns (5.5.5) to reduce levels of traffic congestion.

The Institution would endorse the provision of frequent user friendly "clock face" services (5.7.3) and would encourage further measures to link public transport services through coordinated timetables and ticketing. We would also support the bus replacement programme (7.5.9) and the improvement to access arrangements at bus stations (5.7.10) and train stations (5.8.2).

Traffic safety and in particular the high level of fatal traffic accidents is now a worldwide concern and the Institution would support the provision of traffic calming measures (6.2.7) such as gateway features with 30 mph signing on the main routes through settlements.

Public transport services need to achieve a sufficient frequency in order to maintain an attractive and sustainable service and the proposed level of service to small villages and hamlets (Table 6.2) may fall short of achieving this requirement.

The Transport Plan acknowledges the significant length of the local road network and it is vital that adequate maintenance of the road surface and road structure is carried out (7.6.2) to keep the network “fit for purpose”. The failure to carry out timely repairs can lead to greatly increased costs for emergency repairs and is also essential if the Department is to meet its accident reduction targets. Roads in poor repair are likely to lead to an increased number of accidents. Specific accident remedial schemes (7.6.5) at key locations are also important to help meet accident reduction targets.

Reference is made to the significant use of taxis and to the proposed provision of taxi ranks (5.6.2) in each town but it is not clear to what extent taxis could provide a public transport service for the rural areas where more regular bus services can not be justified. The difference between public hire and private hire taxis is also something which most members of the public would not understand.

There is a direct link between the amount of travel and the economic output of the region and the Transport Plan should therefore be seen as an opportunity to encourage travel and hence economic activity in accordance with the Regional Development Strategy which set out its proposals for the main towns and cities in Northern Ireland to act as centres for employment and the provision of services. The transport proposals should therefore be targeted to encourage economic activity and growth.