

Respondent's Details

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(IPH)

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I am responding: as an individual on behalf of an organisation

Is your response confidential? If so, please explain why (see Appendix 1 "Confidentiality of Consultations – Freedom of Information Act 2000").

Provision is made throughout this questionnaire for you to provide additional comments. If, however, you wish to provide more detailed comments on any aspect of the consultation, please feel free to append additional materials and supplementary documents, clearly marked and cross-referenced to the relevant questions, as necessary.

Questions on Detailed Policy Proposals

Question 1 (page 15)

Do you agree that the Department should have the necessary authority to implement the Rapid Transit proposals?

Yes No

Comments:

There is a real need to ensure that transport proposals not only in Belfast but across Northern Ireland are coordinated. As DRD are currently responsible for Regional Transport issues which includes public transport and sustainable transport, IPH believes DRD is the most appropriate organisation to ensure there is connectivity with current provision and services.

Question 2 (page 16)

Do you agree that the Department should take land acquisition powers for the implementation of the Rapid Transit system?

Yes No

Comments:

Question 3 (page 16)

Do you agree that the Department should have the power to purchase, lease and dispose of goods, services and facilities for the Rapid Transit system?

Yes No

Comments:

Question 4 (page 17)

Do you agree that a performance-based contract should be introduced for the operation of the Rapid Transit system?

Yes No

Comments:

Question 5 (page 18)

Do you agree that the Department should be responsible for:

- specifying Rapid Transit service requirements, quality-of-service and the fare levels;
- awarding the Rapid Transit contract; and
- monitoring and reporting on Rapid Transit operator performance?

Yes No

Comments:

To maximise the useage of Rapid Transit in Belfast as a real alternative to private transport options it is essential that it has high quality of service. In a recent Consumer Council survey value for money was identified as the top concern for public transport passengers. It is essential that a regulated system provides best value for money whilst providing an acceptable level of service. Journeys not made due to unavailability of transport services can contribute to poorer health e.g. lack of access to education, employment opportunities or health care services.

Question 6 (page 18)

What are your views on the proposal to offer financial incentives to the Rapid Transit operator to grow the Rapid Transit market, introduce innovation and improve services?

Comments:

Question 7 (page 20)

Do you agree with the proposed powers to regulate passenger conduct on Rapid Transit Vehicles and in/on Rapid Transit premises?

Yes No

Comments:

Question 8 (page 21)

Do you agree that the dedicated public transport corridors on which Rapid Transit operates should be strictly enforced?

Yes No

Comments:

Question 9 (page 21)

Do you agree with the proposed powers for the Department to install, operate and maintain off-board ticketing machines?

Yes No

Comments:

Please make any further comments on the Detailed Policy Proposals here, ensuring that you clearly refer to any relevant questions or responses submitted above.

IPH welcome the opportunity to comment on the Belfast Rapid Transit proposals. We have however taken the approach to respond to only selected questions and in detail to the Integrated Impact Assessment section. These responses reflect the need to ensure the potential health outcomes of the Rapid Transit system are maximised.

Questions on Integrated Impact Assessment

In considering these questions you should bear in mind that it is proposed that a further Integrated Impact Assessment screening exercise will be undertaken prior to the implementation phase of the Rapid Transit project.

Question 1

Do you have any views on the Integrated Impact Assessment Screening conclusion reached by the Department?

Yes No

Comments:

The IIA has identified that while no immediate health impacts have been identified at this stage it will be necessary to screen the proposal again prior to the implementation phase. IPH welcome and support this recommendation as we consider that, as transport is a key determinant of health, the introduction of a Rapid Transit System in Belfast has the potential for both positive and negative impacts on health, for the population as a whole as well as for some groups within the population. Some key health considerations related to the proposal are outlined below:

- A Rapid Transit System has the potential to increase levels of physical activity as it will provide an alternative to private car use. Using public transport is a more active form of travel than using a private care as most journeys begin and end with walking or cycling to the place of access (stop/halt location). Measures to increase physical activity are critical as Northern Ireland is currently facing an obesity epidemic with 59% of adults identified as either overweight or obese and 10% of children obese in 2005/06. Physical activity can contribute to addressing obesity which is identified as an important risk factor for a wide range of serious conditions including heart disease, cancer, hypertension and diabetes.
- Alongside providing opportunities to encourage physical activity it is also important to provide an efficient alternative to private vehicles to reduce emission levels. Climate change is one of the biggest public health issues of the 21st Century and our current travel patterns and behaviours are unsustainable. It is recognised that current emission levels from public transport modes are relatively low in comparison to private transport. There is a need to change behaviour to enhance the useage of public transport and this can only be done by providing an efficient and effective and value for money service. The health impacts of climate change include floods, infectious and foodborne diseases and an increse in temperature change impacting on mortality levels. The introduction of a new option for travel by public transport has a major role to play in addressing climate change in Northern Ireland.
- Reducing emissions can also impact on air quality. Encouraging a modal shift to more sustainable travel patterns such as public transport can help to reduce

greenhouse gas emissions and improve overall air quality. Urban areas are particularly affected by vehicle-related air pollution which can contribute to respiratory disease especially amongst vulnerable groups such as the elderly. The proposed system is specially aimed at urban areas and therefore it is essential that the Bus Rapid Transit system uses fuel which is environmentally friendly which has minimal impact on air quality levels.

- Neighbourhood designs likely to promote social networks are those which enable residents to perform daily activities without the use of a car. The way in which people move about their environments impacts on their health through opportunities provided for physical activity alongside social connections and crime which can impact on mental health. Neighbourhood designs which enable people to undertake daily activities can reduce the need for using private transport. Therefore there is a need to ensure that the routes selected are most beneficial for linking residential and working/leisure areas for the population as a whole to allow access for all. Access to services can enhance opportunities for health e.g. providing access to education and employment opportunities.
- Transport plays a vital role in connecting communities to services but acknowledging the different needs of different users is essential. It is essential that the Rapid Transit System adopts a lifecourse approach which will consider the needs of different groups. For example, deprived communities are less likely to own private transport and have a higher rate of public transport usage. Given that low income groups are more likely to use public transport it is essential that this option is efficient in terms of financial costs, reliability and choice which will not further exclude this group from employment and education opportunities and access to healthcare services.
- In a recent Consumer Council survey value for money was identified as the top concern for public transport passengers. It is essential that the Rapid Transit System provides best value for money whilst providing an acceptable level of service. Journeys not made due to unavailability of transport services can contribute to poorer health e.g. lack of access to education, employment opportunities or health care services. PriceWaterhouseCoopers recently reviewed public transport in Northern Ireland in the 'Bridging the Gap' report and identified public transport in Northern Ireland received less investment than other regions in the UK and Republic of Ireland. To ensure that the Rapid Transit System is introduced as a viable option for public transport users and to get people to make the move out of their cars, investment is required to ensure it is implemented effectively and an efficient service delivered.

IPH welcomes the move to Rapid Bus Transit system which will assist in improving the attraction of public transport as an alternative to the private car. Changing behaviour patterns is also key to support people to make the modal shift to public transport.

Question 2

Are there any particular equality issues that need to be considered in relation to the policy proposals contained in the Detailed Policy Proposals booklet?

Yes No

Comments:

Comments on Equality Screening

We welcome your comments on any aspect of the draft equality screening document. Please bear in mind that it is proposed that a further screening exercise will be undertaken prior to the implementation phase of the Rapid Transit project.

Comments: