

Respondent's Details

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I am responding: as an individual <input type="checkbox"/> on behalf of an organisation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
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:

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:

NIEL agree this will be necessary. However it is important the Department does not abuse this power and that all relevant stakeholders are consulted prior to any area of land being considered for acquisition through this means. This is of particular importance if important ecosystems and/or recreational areas will be affected, e.g. the Comber Greenway. NIEL feel this route in particular already serves a vital role to the community and should not be acquired for the purposes of the Rapid Transit network.

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:

The Department must take the 'best technology' approach when purchasing new equipment. Purchases of equipment and facilities should also be well thought-out and include a whole-life costing. Purchases must be well maintained to ensure longevity.

The Department must ensure leases are awarded with a series of strict targets, including low carbon and efficiency measures, which are monitored and reported on regularly. This will ensure the provision of a high quality service ensuring the Public Transport Network as a whole and the Rapid Transit system in particular are viewed as a viable and preferable alternative to the private vehicle. It is only through this shift in behaviour that Northern Ireland will meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

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:

NIEL believes a performance-based contract is vital if the Rapid Transit system is to offer a high quality service and be considered the preferred mode of transport over the private vehicle.

NIEL would like clarification of the performance indicators proposed to be used. A broad spectrum of indicators with appropriate compliance monitoring will be necessary. These should include ensuring vehicles comply to the latest environmental standards in terms of emissions, fuel efficiency, etc.

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:

Sufficient funding must be in place to ensure the roles of the Department can be fulfilled. NIEL believes a reallocation of the transport budget (currently 20% to public transport, 80% road infrastructure) is required urgently to reflect the aim of shifting public behaviour towards using public transport instead of the private car.

NIEL believes that fare levels and structures must be regulated to ensure competitive rates for customers and make the Northern Ireland Rapid Transit system in particular and the public transport network as a whole the preferred alternative to the private vehicle. The aim should be to create a network that provides passengers with good value for money but is also financially and environmentally sustainable in the long term.

As stated in our response to Q 4, NIEL would like clarification of the performance indicators proposed to be used.

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:

NIEL believes financial incentives would help drive innovation and efficiency improvements and promote use of the service. However, these incentives should only be awarded on submission of a sound proposed action plan. The Department should then be responsible for monitoring progress of the plan.

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:

NIEL believes offences and fines must be sufficient to encourage good practice by operators and to deter antisocial behaviour including littering. Repeat offenders should be given higher fines and/or bans. This will help maintain a high quality service ensuring the public are more likely to consider public transport in preference to a private vehicle.

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:

The Rapid Transit network will only function effectively if the dedicated corridors remain free of unauthorised traffic and/or obstructions. NIEL would like to see an overall shift in prioritisation of road use from favouring private vehicles to favouring the whole public transport network. This will help reduce journey times and make public transport a more attractive option.

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:

NIEL believes the off-vehicle ticketing must be integrated across all forms of public transport, including the Rapid Transit system, to make the service more user-friendly, helping to increase usage of the public transport network. As suggested by NIEL in our response to the Public Transport Reform consultation, the Department should look at the oyster card system currently in place in London with a view to introducing a similar structure here.

Appropriate funding will need to be in place for the procurement, installation and maintenance of the necessary hardware and software. NIEL would like to reiterate the need to address the current 20% portion of the transport fund allocated to public transport.

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

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:

Any screening process must include a robust scoping study of urban rapid transport routes. This should clearly identify all environmental impacts including those on gardens, open space, street trees and wildlife. All viable routes must be considered and a holistic approach taken in the decision-making process. This should include environmental, social, economic and health implications.

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:

NIEL believe a strategic environmental assessment will be necessary if an environmentally sensitive area is likely to be impacted upon during construction of the dedicated Rapid Transit corridors. As stated in Question 1, all viable routes must be considered and a holistic approach taken in the decision-making process. This should include environmental, social, economic and health implications.

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:

No comment.