

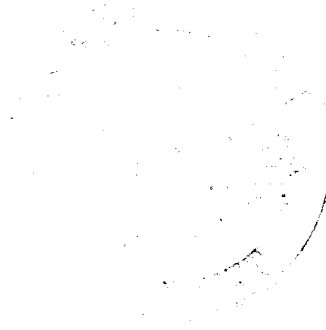
Your Ref:

Our Ref: ED/5/3/1

Date: 23 June 2006

Being dealt with by: Head of Development

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Omagh
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Geraldine O'Neill
Sub-Regional Transport Plan Team
Transportation unit
Roads Service
Department for Regional Development
Room 3-29 Clarence Court
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BELFAST BT2 8GB

Dear Geraldine

DRAFT SUB-REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2015 (STRIP)

Enclosed please find the response of Omagh District Council to the above consultation document.

Should you require any further information regarding the submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Alison McCullagh

for Alison McCullagh
Head of Development

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DRAFT SUB-REGIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2015 (SRTP)

RESPONSE BY OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Omagh District Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Draft Sub Regional Transport Plan 2015 which is based upon guidance provide by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The Council will return to some of the key themes of this submission in its forthcoming response to the RDS 5-year review. In addition, the Council plans to make a further, substantive response in relation to the document in the context of the West Tyrone Area Plan.

The Council notes the contents of the SRTP and the Technical Supplement for the Omagh district and would make the following comments on the documents:

2.0 EMERGING ISSUES

2.1 OMAGH:

At the outset, it is perhaps appropriate to recall that within the Shaping Our Future (Family of Settlements) report, Omagh was identified as a regional town and major service centre as follows:

Omagh has strong potential growth with relatively few constraints to development and a high level of residential growth is envisaged...

Omagh's location on the Belfast to Derry/Londonderry transport corridor and its central location in the rural west equip it well to develop as the major service centre for the west of the region...

Omagh has considerable potential to develop its industrial and retail base and its role as a centre for tourism for the rural west of the region...

Reproduced from "Shaping our Future: The Family of Settlements Report", 1998

This potential can only be achieved by appropriate roads and transportation infrastructure.

2.2 LOCAL VS REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The Council recognises the document as determining and agreeing expenditure for improvements of local routes. It would however, argue that it is essential for these local improvements to be integrated into the wider context of strategic, regional upgrading of routes.

In particular, the Council would restate its view that urgent attention and expenditure be focused on the dualling of the key strategic A5 corridor from Ballygawley to Omagh. Such investment would ensure that the Omagh is able to fulfil its role as “the major service centre of the west of the region”.

The real potential of this local investment therefore can only be achieved in the context of substantial sub-regional infrastructural investment.

2.3 HIGHWAY BLUEPRINT

The Council welcomes the proposals stated, and would suggest provision is made for the following additions:

2.3.1 Hospital Link Road:

A requirement will exist for a new hospital link to the A5; such a road should be constructed to trunk road standard.

2.3.2 Strathroy Link:

The Council welcomes the inclusion of the Strathroy link road. As this is a key strategic route from both an orbital and economic perspective, this route must be constructed to trunk road standard. In addition, to maximise the potential of this route, provision must be made for a bridge to fully integrate this road into the wider local highway network.

2.3.3 Orbital Route:

The Department is already aware of the Council’s views on the urgent necessity for an orbital route for Omagh. It is suggested that provision is made for orbital route planning.

2.3.4 Tamlaght Road Junction:

Urgent attention is required at the Tamlaght Road Junction, both with regard to road design and traffic priority.

2.3.5 Ballinahatty Road:

The Council would suggest that there is potential for the Ballinahatty Road to be extended, to act as a link road.

2.4 WALKING BLUEPRINT:

The Council's general view is that to ensure pedestrian safety, provision should be made for footpaths on all highways; and that pedestrians should be prioritised wherever possible. The Council welcomes the proposals stated, and would suggest provision is made for the following additions:

2.4.1 King James' Bridge:

The current traffic and pedestrian situation at King James' Bridge is unsafe and untenable. Urgent provision should be made for a pedestrian bridge further down the river, which is more convenient for town centre and school access.

As an interim measure, the Council would suggest an extra bulb on the existing traffic lights which would facilitate pedestrian priority.

2.4.2 Riverside Walk:

The Department is aware of the aspirations for a riverside walk in Omagh, as a strategic walking route, provision should be made for this within the plan.

Town Centre Footbridge:

Provision had previously been made for a footbridge linking Back Market Yard and the Drumragh Avenue Car Park; this should also be included in the plan.

Scarffe's Entry:

Scarffe's Entry is a key walking route, and should be identified as such on the plan.

General Provision of Walkways:

The Council would emphasise the importance of providing walkways within a pleasant environment, and would suggest that wherever possible, opportunities for walking are maximised.

2.5. CAR PARKING:

The Council accepts the underlying principle of convenient short stay parking close to the town centre, and longer stay parking further from the town.

2.5.1 Land Use:

In general, the Council would consider that town centre land should be used for continuing regeneration development, however, land use and parking requirements should be continually assessed.

2.5.2 Findings of Parking Survey:

It is the Council's experience that there is considerable pressure on existing car parking within Omagh, as such we would question some of the findings of the Department's survey. The Council would recommend that at the very least the plan should retain the existing levels of car parking. The need for a multi storey car park should also continue to be assessed.

2.5.3 Park and Ride:

The Council would contend that Park and Ride and particularly, Park and Share are relevant concepts for Omagh, and is worthy of further consideration by the Department.

2.6 PUBLIC TRANSPORT PROVISION:

The Council would wish to see continued and substantial investment in public transport provision within the town and district.

2.6.1 Identification and Linking of Bus Stops:

The Council would request that consideration be given to linking all the main bus stops within the town; that is, that they should each be identified by the same road and kerb marking. In addition, they should all be linked to a real time electronic timetabling system.

2.6.2 Bus Measures (Open Countryside):

The Council would suggest that with regard to the Open Countryside, the Department should give consideration to entering into relevant Community Transport schemes, such as Mid Ulster Community Transport. Not only will this meet the needs of rural communities, it will also assist in the long term sustainability of such transport schemes.

2.6.3 Taxi Parking:

The Council would also advise of the urgent necessity to make provision for additional taxi parking in the town centre; there is substantial congestion in Bridge Street because of this and, at the very least, an appropriate "holding" position should be established.

2.7 CYCLING PROVISION:

The Council's general view is that to ensure cyclist safety, provision should be made for safe, marked cycle lanes on highways.

2.7.1 Linking Cycle Routes:

The Council would suggest that there should be a presumption in favour of linking existing paths to ensure an integrated network of safe, cycle paths.

2.7.2 Links to Town Centre

The Council would draw particular attention to the anomaly that currently there are no designated cycle paths leading into the town centre and that this situation should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.0 CONCLUSION:

As evidenced from above, Omagh District Council considers the Draft Sub Regional Transport Plan 2015 in a mainly positive light. The Council would wish to consider its positive and constructive dialogue with the Department centrally and locally with Roads Service to ensure the opportunities for the Omagh district are realised.

As previously noted, further substantive responses, in the context of the West Tyrone Area Plan and the review of the Regional Development Strategy will also be tabled.

ENDS