

**Belfast Rapid Transit Consultation**  
**Comhairliúchán maidir le córas**  
**Luathiompair i mBéal Feirste**

**Detailed Policy Proposals**  
**Moltaí Mionsonraithe Polasaí**

November 2009



Department for  
**Regional  
Development**

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AN ROINN

**Forbartha Réigiúnaí**

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MÄNNYSTRIE FÜR

**Kintra Pairts Fordèrin**

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## **Participation in this Consultation Exercise**

If you wish to participate in this consultation exercise, the Consultation Pack contains a Summary Document, these Detailed Policy Proposals, an Integrated Impact Assessment document, and a Question and Answer Booklet to assist you when submitting your response. Alternatively, you may wish to access the Consultation Pack from our website, at [www.drdni.gov.uk](http://www.drdni.gov.uk).

This publication can also be made available, on request, in large print, Braille and audio alternative formats. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

The consultation period will run from 23 November 2009 to 19 February 2010. You must respond by **5pm on 19 February 2010**, otherwise we may not be able to take account of your comments. Submissions may be submitted in other languages, including Irish and Ulster-Scots, or in a different format, such as audio tape. We will acknowledge your submission in your chosen language and will publish the Department's response to the issues raised in due course.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## Introduction

- 1.1 This Detailed Policy Proposals booklet sets out the Department for Regional Development's (the Department) policy proposals for a Rapid Transit system in greater Belfast.
- 1.2 In this document references to the Department include any departmental agency which may be established with responsibility for public transport.
- 1.3 The document defines what is meant by Bus Rapid Transit, provides the background to Belfast Rapid Transit and outlines the specific policy proposals for its introduction. **The document includes a number of consultation questions which the Department would like you to consider. You can however provide comments on any aspect of the policy proposals that you consider relevant.**

## What is Bus Rapid Transit?

- 1.4 Bus Rapid Transit is a new type of quality public transport service offering improved speed, reliability, comfort and access features over conventional public transport services. It is a service that will be provided by modern, high quality vehicles operating on routes facilitated by the use of high level bus priority measures. Bus Rapid Transit systems are described as a "tram on tyres" and can operate using the latest types of clean fuel hybrid vehicles. Cities around the world including Amsterdam, Las Vegas, Nantes and Adelaide have developed and implemented Bus Rapid Transit systems. A state of the art Bus Rapid Transit system will reflect Belfast as a 21st century city.

## **Background to Belfast Rapid Transit**

- 1.5 The Department's Regional Development Strategy 2025 (RDS) provides a framework within which choices can be made on key decisions about the infrastructural development in the North of Ireland. The transportation network is recognised as critical to improved accessibility and mobility, and to deal with the problems of social exclusion. This means:
- giving more priority to public transport, walking and cycling modes;
  - gradually changing the travel culture;
  - extending choice; and
  - reducing reliance on the car particularly for journeys to school and work in Belfast and larger urban centres.

The RDS recognises that high quality, high capacity, accessible services could be provided by the development of a Rapid Transit network in Belfast.

- 1.6 The Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) 2002-12 supports the wider RDS and its long-term vision for transportation in the North of Ireland. The vision is

***“to have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone's quality of life”.***

The RTS is currently under review and a draft is expected to be published for consultation during 2009/10.

- 1.7 The RTS provided for an indicative future integrated public transport network for Belfast, which included a Rapid Transit system. The RTS indicated a total cost of £100m for the commencement of a Rapid Transit network and the example given was a high profile, innovative system linking Belfast city centre with Titanic Quarter, Dundonald and the West of the city. The RTS was the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment.

- 1.8 The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) was published in November 2004 and takes forward the strategic initiatives of the RDS and the RTS. It is a comprehensive and realistic transport plan for the Belfast Metropolitan Area (BMA). BMTP sets out a range of proposals to address the transport problems in the BMA and when implemented will start the move towards a sustainable transport system that supports the longer term aspirations of the RDS. The proposal to introduce Rapid Transit services is a key component of future plans for public transport and BMTP states that the pilot stage of a Rapid Transit network could be implemented (subject to economic appraisal, budgetary processes and the completion of statutory processes) within the 2015 Plan period. BMTP suggests a Bus Rapid Transit system, but notes that flexibility could be provided to allow the potential migration of the system to Light Rail at some point in the future. The BMTP was the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment.
- 1.9 The Programme for Government, which sets out the Executive's strategic priorities and key plans for 2008-2011, recognises the important role that Rapid Transit could play in providing a step change in public transport provision. Belfast Rapid Transit is a key priority within the Programme for Government with a target to commence work on the first Rapid Transit line in Greater Belfast by 2011.
- 1.10 In 2007 the Department commissioned transport consultants to undertake a feasibility study looking at possible routes and technologies for Rapid Transit in Belfast. These consultants produced a Strategic Outline Case (SOC), which was issued by the Department in April 2008. The SOC confirmed that a bus based Rapid Transit system is viable for Belfast. In addition the SOC identified a pilot network of three routes connecting East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter with and through the city centre.

- 1.11 In November 2008 the Executive endorsed the design and construction of a pilot Rapid Transit network in Belfast to link the City Centre with East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter. The Minister subsequently launched the proposals at the Bus Rapid Transit UK conference in Belfast on 1 December 2008.
- 1.12 EU Regulation (1370/2007) on public passenger transport by rail and road is due to come into force in December 2009. This Regulation requires that all authorities awarding an exclusive right or providing funding (of whatever nature) to an operator must do so within the framework of a public service contract, which defines the nature of the public service obligations and the agreed funding arrangements. This must be done in a transparent way that prevents overcompensation, with annual reports being completed by the contracting authority on performance, quality and financing arrangements.
- 1.13 A dedicated Rapid Transit Division has been established within the Department to implement Belfast Rapid Transit.

### **Belfast Rapid Transit**

- 1.14 The various studies outlined above (Regional Development Strategy, Regional Transportation Strategy and Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan) have established the need for a Rapid Transit system in Belfast. The city is the key economic driver of the region, and all successful regions have strong cities at their core. Strong, vibrant cities need modern and efficient transport systems. The Belfast Rapid transit system will improve the city's image and will help to regenerate rundown neighbourhoods and open up new development opportunities.

- 1.15 The Belfast Rapid Transit system is a major element of the delivery of a step change in the quality of public transport in Belfast, complementing increased investment in public transport. A good public transport system is crucial to the promotion of competitiveness and sustainable development. It is critical that the labour force has access to a reliable and efficient means of public transport in order for the economy to function at its optimum level. A good public transport system also assists in the delivery of an environmentally sustainable economy. The aim is to provide the Belfast Rapid Transit system as one element of an integrated public transport network in the city.
- 1.16 Rapid Transit is one of the key drivers for regeneration throughout Belfast, providing high quality access to and linkages between jobs, hospitals, schools and colleges in the different parts of the city. It is one of the signature projects for Belfast and will contribute to improving the quality of life, improving traffic flows, adding key infrastructure and maintaining Belfast's role as the major economic driver for the region. The Belfast Rapid Transit system will be the catalyst and driver for future regeneration and prosperity in both the neighbourhoods it passes through and the city as a whole.
- 1.17 The pilot network for the Belfast Rapid Transit system will link East Belfast, West Belfast and the Titanic Quarter with and through the city centre. In the development of this pilot network local people and organisations will be encouraged to provide input to the implementation plans for the Rapid Transit system. In doing so, the project will provide impetus for the social, economic, physical, environmental and cultural regeneration of Belfast and ensure that individual communities make a full contribution to and benefit equally from developments in the city as a whole. This network will, for the first time, allow cross-city journeys and will link communities to healthcare, education, jobs and leisure facilities. It will also enhance the accessibility of

tourist sites for visitors to Belfast and provide an efficient infrastructure for the future economic development of the city.

- 1.18 The exact details of the operation of the Belfast Rapid Transit system (including the alignment of the routes, location of individual stops/halts, ticketing arrangements, security, accessibility, etc) have yet to be finalised and these will form the basis of further public consultation in the future, including the required statutory impact assessments.
- 1.19 The Belfast Rapid Transit system will be a high-quality, customer-orientated public transport system; delivering fast, comfortable and affordable travel across Belfast. In order to provide this high level of service the system will include the following features:
- **Integration** – It will be integrated with existing public transport services (trains, buses, taxis, etc) to provide a better travelling experience for the passenger. In addition, Park and Ride facilities will be provided at convenient locations to encourage car drivers to make use of the system.
  - **Guaranteed journey times** – The speed and reliability of the vehicles coupled with maximum priority on dedicated public transport corridors will lead to guaranteed journey times therefore making the system more practical and reliable for passengers.
  - **Vehicle priority** – The Rapid Transit vehicles will have maximum priority at signalised junctions and on the dedicated public transport corridors to make the service faster and more reliable.
  - **Frequency** – It will operate as a high frequency service, especially during the morning and evening rush hours.
  - **Flexibility** – The flexibility of Bus Rapid Transit allows it to tailor the service to meet the needs of the community and urban area, detour if streets are closed, extend the network without major delay or

infrastructure costs and migrate the system to a Light Rail Rapid Transit system if future passenger numbers justify it.

- **Enforcement** – It is essential for the smooth and efficient operation of the network that there is no parking, loading/unloading or unauthorised use of the dedicated public transport corridors during operational hours. This will be strictly enforced by the use of cameras.
- **Distinctive branding** – The Belfast Rapid Transit system will have its own distinctive brand identity which will be displayed in the vehicle livery, the design of halts and in all marketing material.
- **Excellence in customer service** – The Rapid Transit service will be customer-centred and will deliver the highest standard of service both on and off the vehicles.
- **Competitive in cost** – The cost of travelling on the Belfast Rapid Transit system will be competitive in order to encourage as many people as possible to get out of their cars and onto public transport.
- **Ride quality** – The dedicated public transport corridors will be surfaced to a high standard to ensure the highest possible level of ride quality.
- **Attractive vehicles** – The Rapid Transit vehicles will be modern, clean, comfortable, accessible, safe and secure in order to provide the best possible experience for passengers.
- **Modern clean vehicle technologies** – The Rapid Transit Vehicles will use new engine propulsion systems (e.g. electric/diesel; LPG; hydrogen fuel cells). This will ensure that the vehicles are clean, quiet and as environmentally friendly as possible.
- **High quality stops/halts** – The Rapid Transit stops/halts will be comfortable, well equipped, safe and secure, with level boarding access to the vehicles.

- **Off-vehicle ticketing** – Tickets for the Rapid Transit system will be purchased before boarding the vehicle to speed up the boarding process and therefore reduce overall journey times.
- **Low dwell times** – As a result of off-board ticketing and vehicles with multiple doors, boarding and alighting will be speeded up which means the vehicle will not wait for long periods at the stops/halts. This will result in a reduction of overall journey times.
- **Real time passenger information** – Real time passenger information will be available providing information on timetabling and vehicle location.

## **2 THE CURRENT SITUATION**

### **The Current Regulatory Arrangements**

- 2.1 The public transport system in the North of Ireland is regulated. This means that in order to operate a bus or coach service for fare paying passengers, the operator requires a licence which is referred to as a Road Service Licence. The Department of the Environment (DOE) is currently the licensing authority for Road Service Licences.
- 2.2 To obtain a Road Service Licence, an operator must complete two application forms. The first form requires evidence to confirm the operator's good repute, financial standing and professional competency. The second form must then be completed for each vehicle which the operator is proposing to use, and may include details of the Road Service Licensee, vehicle, driver, contract (if applicable), routes, stops, timetable, etc. and evidence of demand/proof of resources.
- 2.3 The two categories of Road Service Licence which relate to regulated public transport services are 'Stage Carriage' and 'Express Services'. In the context of regulated public transport within Belfast the category in use is 'Stage Carriage' which is for the carriage of passengers at separate fares, normally collected on board a vehicle, on a pre-determined route with pre-determined pick up and set down points, in accordance with a published timetable. In order to obtain a 'Stage Carriage' licence an operator needs to prove a particular need for the service and that the proposed service is scheduled at least 30 minutes before or after any existing licensed service.
- 2.4 The DOE operates a 'Use It or Lose It' policy, whereby licences that have been granted for stage carriage or express services are removed if they are

not being operated. The DOE also reacts to complaints received regarding the non-operation of existing licensed routes.

### 3 BELFAST RAPID TRANSIT – THE VISION AND OBJECTIVES

#### The Vision

- 3.1 The Belfast Rapid Transit system will contribute to the realisation of the vision for public transport which is:

***“The provision of a customer-focused, high quality integrated public transport system, which is sustainable, provides good value for money, enhances competitiveness, helps sustain economic growth, promotes regional development and contributes to social inclusion”.***

#### Belfast Rapid Transit – Overall Policy Objectives

- 3.2 The overall policy objectives of the Belfast Rapid Transit system are to deliver a system that:
- supports the implementation of the Regional Transportation Strategy and enables the maximum possible integration of a regulated Rapid Transit system within a regulated public transport network;
  - provides a safe, efficient and high quality public transport service;
  - complies with EU regulations and with contractual and funding arrangements that provide incentives to deliver an efficient, customer-focused and continually improving public transport service;
  - encourages greater use of public transport in support of the Government’s economic, social and sustainability objectives;
  - maximises efficiency and value for money through the use of benchmarking, continuous improvement of services and competitive tendering;
  - encourages mode shift away from non-essential car use by providing a safe, economic and reliable alternative;

- supports economic growth and provides high quality access to and between new land use developments in the city;
- promotes equality by providing access to employment, commercial, health, education, social and leisure facilities for all;
- integrates with Belfast city centre's public realm strategy and ensures consistency with the city centre traffic management proposals;
- provides high quality access to/from Belfast city centre enabling the city centre to compete with out-of-town centres;
- supports the cohesion of Belfast and enables movement to and across the city;
- provides a high quality 'symbolic' system capable of supporting the image of Belfast as a capital city;
- promotes social inclusion by ensuring that individual communities make a full contribution to and benefit equally from developments in the city as a whole;
- supports the integration of communities; and
- helps to promote and facilitate regeneration throughout the city.

## **4 POLICY PROPOSALS FOR BELFAST RAPID TRANSIT SERVICE DELIVERY**

- 4.1 This section outlines the key policy proposals for Belfast Rapid Transit and explains the reasons behind them.
- 4.2 It should be emphasised that references to the Department include any departmental agency which may be established with responsibility for public transport.
- 4.3 In this section we have included a number of questions to ask you what you think of the policy proposals. You can respond to these questions by completing the Question and Answer booklet which is included in this Consultation Pack. Alternatively you can download a copy of the Question and Answer booklet from our website, at [www.drdni.gov.uk](http://www.drdni.gov.uk).

### **Enabling power for Rapid Transit**

- 4.4 In order to establish the necessary legal authority to allow the Department to implement the Rapid Transit proposals, a specific statutory function for the provision of a Rapid Transit System will be conferred on the Department.

#### **Consultation Question 1**

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

### **Land acquisition for Rapid Transit**

- 4.5 It is proposed that the Department will take the necessary powers to enable it to acquire land, either by agreement or compulsorily, for any purpose in

connection with the Rapid Transit system. This power may be used by the Department to acquire land for Rapid Transit stops/halts, road widening, etc. and may also be used in any future expansion of the Rapid Transit network.

### **Consultation Question 2**

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

### **Procurement for Rapid Transit**

- 4.6 It is proposed that the Department will take the necessary powers to purchase, lease and dispose of goods, services and facilities in association with the Rapid Transit system. The purchasing power is primarily required to allow the Department to purchase the Rapid Transit vehicles which will be used on the network. The power to lease will enable the Department to lease the Rapid Transit vehicles to the successful operator and the disposal power will allow the Department to sell the Rapid Transit vehicles, should this be necessary.

### **Consultation Question 3**

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?

### **A regulated Rapid Transit system**

- 4.7 EU Regulation (1370/2007) on public passenger transport by rail and road is due to come into force in December 2009. This Regulation requires that all authorities awarding an exclusive right or providing funding (of whatever nature) to an operator must do so within the framework of a public service contract, which defines the nature of the public service obligations and the agreed funding arrangements. This must be done in a transparent way that

prevents overcompensation, with annual reports being completed by the contracting authority on performance, quality and financing arrangements. The changes arising from this EU Regulation will require a formalised performance-based contractual regime for the Rapid Transit operator. It is envisaged that such contracts would include quality-of-service matters that are important to users, such as reliability and punctuality.

- 4.8 It is proposed that the Rapid Transit system should be part of the regulated public transport network. This will be achieved through the introduction of a Department-led Rapid Transit contract, which will be awarded following competition. The Department will award and manage the performance of the Rapid Transit contract.
- 4.9 DOE will license the Rapid Transit operator through its current Road Service Licensing system.

#### **Consultation Question 4**

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

#### **The contract for Rapid Transit**

- 4.10 In order to facilitate the contract, it is proposed that the Department will specify the minimum service requirements, the quality-of-service to be provided and the fare levels. In specifying the service requirements, the Department will consult with consumer representatives, local authorities and other public transport operators. This will help balance the needs of users with the need to ensure an affordable network service.
- 4.11 The contract will be subject to open tender which will comply with the provisions of EU Regulation 1370/2007 and the relevant EU procurement

regulations. It is proposed that the operator will then design the detailed schedules and timetables and these will be packaged into a performance-based contractual arrangement between the Department and the operator. The contract for Rapid Transit will be managed by the Department. The Department will monitor operator performance and, as required by the EU Regulation, will report annually on this.

#### **Consultation Question 5**

Do you agree that the Department should be responsible for:

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

4.12 It is proposed that the operator will be given exclusive rights to deliver the Rapid Transit services for the duration of the contract. Whilst the precise form of contract does not need to be determined at this stage, it is anticipated that the contracted operator may be given some form of financial incentives to grow the Rapid Transit market, introduce innovation and improve services.

#### **Consultation Question 6**

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?

4.13 It is proposed that the contract arrangements outlined above will be deemed to represent a licence to operate on the Rapid Transit routes. This being the case, it is also proposed that the current statutory regime by which DOE

awards individual 'route licences' will be dis-applied to the operation of Rapid Transit routes.

- 4.14 It is proposed that breaches of contract by the operator or the Department will be managed through the contract itself, with enforcement clauses and any penalties being included in the terms of the contract.

### **Licensing offences, fines and penalties**

- 4.15 Enforcement of the regulations on operator licences will continue to be the responsibility of DOE. The table below shows the offences and fine levels currently in place, which will apply to Rapid Transit.

<b>Offence</b>	<b>Current NI Fine</b>
<b>Operator Licensing (Currently Road Service Licensing)</b>	
<b>Operator Licensing</b>	
Operating without an operator licence	Level 5 (£5,000)
Breach of Conditions of a licence	Level 3 (£1,000)
Conditions as to matters required to be notified	Level 4 (£2,500)
Forgery of a licence	(i) On summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding level 3 (£1,000) on the standard scale or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and such imprisonment; (ii) On conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, with or without a fine.
False Statements	Level 3 (£1,000) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months.
<b>Conduct on Buses</b>	
Not complying with regulations regarding conduct on buses	Level 3 (£1,000)

### **Passenger conduct on Rapid Transit vehicles**

- 4.16 It is proposed that the Department will take responsibility for making regulations regarding passenger conduct on Rapid Transit vehicles. This will

give the Department the power to make and enforce such regulations. The enforcement of the regulations will provide for a safer and more pleasant journey for passengers.

### **Passenger conduct in and on Rapid Transit premises**

- 4.17 It is proposed that a power is created to allow the owners of Rapid Transit premises to make byelaws (with the approval of the Department) regulating the conduct of passengers in and on Rapid Transit premises. In certain circumstances the Department may need to make regulations itself. The owner of the Rapid Transit premises would enforce these bye-laws and thereby provide a safer and more pleasant environment for passengers.

#### **Consultation Question 7**

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

### **Enforcement of Rapid Transit bus lanes**

- 4.18 It is essential to the efficient operation of the Belfast Rapid Transit system that the dedicated public transport corridors on which it will run are strictly enforced. In order to ensure that the dedicated public transport corridors remain free of unauthorised traffic, thus ensuring that Rapid Transit journey times can be guaranteed, the Department will use a number of enforcement methods, including:
- Enforcement cameras on Rapid Transit vehicles;
  - Static enforcement cameras (at stops/halts, etc);
  - Moving vehicle offences;
  - Ticketing and towing of vehicles parked illegally in dedicated public transport corridors; and
  - Adequate fines levels to ensure compliance with enforcement regulations.

### **Consultation Question 8**

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

### **Off-Board Ticketing**

- 4.19 It is proposed that the Department will take the necessary powers to enable it to install, operate and maintain off-board ticketing machines. These powers will allow for off-board ticketing machines to be located at each stop/halt and at other suitable locations. Off-board ticketing will speed up boarding and alighting, meaning that the vehicle does not wait for long periods at the stops/halts. This will result in reduced overall journey times. The powers will include creating new offences in relation to improper use of and interfering with the machines.

### **Consultation Question 9**

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

- 4.20 It is proposed that the Department will make an 'activating order' under Article 67K (2) of the Transport Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 to provide for the introduction of penalty fares on Rapid Transit vehicles. This will provide equivalent powers and penalties as currently apply on bus services in relation to travel without a valid ticket.

### **Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)**

- 4.21 In order to provide the highest priority for Rapid Transit vehicles at junctions controlled by traffic lights the Department will make use of ITS. This priority, combined with strict enforcement of the dedicated public transport corridors, will ensure that Rapid Transit journey times can be guaranteed. ITS will also

be used to provide real time passenger information including timetabling and vehicle location information. The availability of this information will add to the quality of the service provided to passengers.

## **Appendix 1: BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Regional Development Strategy** – “Shaping Our Future” is a Regional Development Strategy which offers a strategic and long-term perspective on the future development of Northern Ireland up to the year 2025.

[<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/shapingourfuture>]

**Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-12** – identifies strategic transportation investment priorities and considers potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives over the 10 year period.

[<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/rts>]

**Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015** – takes forward the strategic initiatives of the Regional Transportation Strategy and sets out transport proposals for the Belfast Metropolitan Area up to the year 2015.

[<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/bmtp/reports.htm>]

**EU Regulation 1370/2007** - Regulation (EC) No 1370/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on public passenger transport services by rail and by road and repealing Council Regulations (EEC)

Nos 1191/69 and 1107/70

[<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:L:2007:315:SOM:EN:HTML>]

**Strategic Outline Case** – The Strategic Outline Case – Consideration of Options for a Rapid Transit Network for the Belfast Metropolitan Area, was prepared by KPMG/Atkins and was issued by the Department in April 2008.

[<http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/rapid-transit/rapid-transit-reports.htm>]

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