



Department for
**Regional
Development**

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Regional Transportation Strategy

A Sustainable Transport Future

Consultation Report

December 2011

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1. Introduction

Context

The Department for Regional Development undertook to review the Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002 – 2012 and published a consultation document in 2011 which mapped out a new approach to regional transportation in Northern Ireland beyond 2015.

The current 2002 Transportation Vision remains relevant and has not been changed:

“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 2011 review has been developed alongside, and aligned with, the new Regional Development Strategy to help integrate land use and transport planning. These documents are consistent with the aims and objectives of the Programme for Government.

Purpose of this Report

This report records the public consultation process which has shaped the review of the Strategy and the new approach to regional transportation. It details how consultation on the new approach was undertaken, summarises the responses received and indicates how this has influenced its development.

The Review Team is grateful to the many individuals, public representatives and organisations who participated in the consultation process, whether in attending public meetings or providing a written response. This participation has meant that the review was comprehensive and inclusive and influenced by a variety of views from transport users, providers and interested parties.

2. Consultation Stages

Introduction

The consultation process for the development of the new approach to regional transportation involved several distinct stages.

Discussion Paper

The Department published a Discussion Document in September 2009 with the purpose to share its initial thinking on transport and to start a process of debate on how best to ensure that future transportation needs are met in ways that were both viable and sustainable. The Discussion Document was divided into several sections and posed a number of questions to focus consultee responses.

The Department received a total of 38 responses from key stakeholders, including Local Councils, the business sector, transport providers and the voluntary and community sector.

All the respondents were supportive of the new strategic direction the review was suggesting. The responses identified a number of common challenges that transport faced now and in the future:

- Modal shift;
- Green House Gas emissions;
- Climate change;
- Current and future funding;
- Addressing the ratio of spend on Roads v Public Transport;
- Access to a car or living in a rural or socially deprived area: and
- Ensuring a reliable and affordable public transport system to address the needs of those who don't have access to a car.

The respondents also offered suggestions on how these challenges could be met. These include:

- Public transport – cheaper fares, integrated ticketing, quality bus corridors and more reliable and frequent rural services;
- Addressing the bias of spend on Road v Public transport;
- Better use of existing road space;
- Land use planning policies which encourage a more integrated approach and avoid further population dispersal;
- Continue to promote schemes such as Car Sharing;
- Congestion Charging;
- Increase funding to enhance and promote Active Travel such as walking and cycling;
- Build on Park and Ride facilities already provided; and
- Car park charging.

Public Consultation

The Regional Transportation Strategy - A Sustainable Transport Future with a Supporting Data supplement were published on 16 March 2011 for a 15 week public consultation period. The documents were distributed to organisations and individuals on the Department's Section 75 contact list and to a range of other key stakeholders.

The documents proposed a series of strategic aims and objectives designed to achieve the transportation vision for the region underpinned by a series of policies and programmes. At its core was a move towards greater sustainability which would contribute positively to growing the economy, improve the quality of life for all and reduce the transport impacts on the environment.

The consultation documents were available on the Department's website www.drdni.gov.uk/rts and in different formats as requested.

The consultation process sought to share the Department's thinking on a new approach to transportation decision making and to seek views that would inform the process and remain inclusive, realistic, meaningful and relevant. At various junctures questions were posed on the main issues to help assist and focus responses. The questions included:

1. What do you believe are the major challenges to delivering an improved and more sustainable transportation infrastructure here?
2. What are the challenges for society?
3. Are they challenges for you as an individual?
4. How should DRD respond to these challenges?
5. Do you agree that particular interests such as freight, active travel, and the needs of older and disabled people should be mainstreamed in the Strategy rather than being considered separately?
6. Do you agree/disagree that growing the economy in a sustainable way should be at the core of our strategy and if so why/ why not?
7. What do you see as advantages or disadvantages in this approach?
8. Do you agree with the strategic objectives proposed?
9. Please rank strategic objectives.
10. Are there other strategic objectives that you believe should be included? If so please add them to the table and rank them?
11. Do you agree with the interventions listed?
12. Have you any other interventions to suggest or any alternative wording that you would prefer?
13. Do you agree with our proposals for a prioritisation framework?
14. Have you any other prioritisation mechanism to suggest?

Public Consultation Meetings

The Department undertook a series of public meetings to discuss the issues and proposals contained within the document. These were held at the locations and dates below:

Date	Location
31 May 2011	Ballymena
1 June 2011	Londonderry
2 June 2011	Newry
7 June 2011	Belfast
8 June 2011	Omagh

The meetings were publicised in local and regional newspapers and on the Department's website. The Department also attended a number of meetings with representative groups as part of the consultation process which included the Inclusive Mobility Transport Advisory Committee, Confederation of British Industry, Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the Integrated Transport Stakeholders Group (Ministerial advisory group).

Responses to the new approach

A total of 355 written responses were received during the consultation process. Of these, 293 letters from individuals and 3 petitions were received solely opposing any introduction of on street car parking in Newtownards.

A breakdown of all of the responses is shown below:

Respondent	Number of Respondents
Transport Service Provider	15
Voluntary Organisation	16
Individual	303
Local Authority / District Council / Public Body	21
Total	355

The written responses were broken down into individual comments and cross referenced to the relevant topic areas or objectives. An outline of the main topics are summarised in Chapter 3.

The feedback on the consultation document, together with discussions with key stakeholders, has led the Department to make a number of amendments to the proposed new approach and associated strategic objectives. It has also helped inform on the proposed delivery mechanisms.

Responses to the consultation are available to view on: www.drdni.gov.uk/rts

Responses on Supporting Documents

A number of supporting documents accompanied the consultation document.

These included:

- Supplementary Supporting Data;
- Draft Equality Impact Assessment; and
- Integrated Impact Assessment.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) provided comments on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the Habitat Regulations

Assessment (HRA). These have been assessed and where appropriate, amendments made.

No substantial comments were received on the draft Equality Impact Assessment or the Integrated Impact Assessment.

3. Consultation Feedback

Transportation is an issue which affects communities, businesses, individuals and the environment and there was a wide variety of views expressed throughout the consultation period. The Department has sought to reflect the diversity of opinion expressed in this report.

Overview

The review of the Strategy was welcomed by all given the changes that have occurred since 2002; the global economic downturn, changes in legislation, climate change, sustainability and the Executive's focus on the development of the local economy. It was apparent that there was an overall acknowledgement of the considerable improvements made to transport services in implementing the current Strategy. Many stated, however, that more still needed to be undertaken.

The vast majority of responses signalled support for the aims of the consultation to be inclusive, realistic, meaningful and relevant. Many also recognised that no strategy can be developed in isolation from the current budgetary constraints.

There was unanimous acknowledgement that a new approach was necessary and that it should support the objectives for the development of the region set out in the revised Regional Development Strategy.

Major Issues Highlighted

Most respondents stated that they were broadly supportive of the way forward outlined in the consultation document; however it was understood that further work would be required to successfully implement the new approach into schemes and services on the ground.

There was substantial agreement that the new approach should support the Executive's aim of growing the economy, with many stating that this could only be achieved through the development of sustainable transport solutions. It was universally agreed that this would only occur through the development of a sustainable, effective and efficient transportation network accessible to all. In particular it was recognised that the freight and logistics industries played an important part in the development of the economy and greater emphasis was needed to provide for the efficient movement of goods.

There was general consensus on the concentration of moving people and goods rather than vehicles and developing a transportation system aimed more at the user. There was strong acceptance that if this was to occur there needed to be a shift away from providing for private, low occupancy car travel towards the transport user and the needs of freight. This should result in the greater promotion of active travel and public transport, and making better use of the road and rail networks.

Many responses, in acknowledging the focus on the user and improvements to non-car alternatives noted that there was still a need to continue to invest and improve on roads maintenance. They also recognised the need to selectively improve the road network to avoid congestion. Access difficulties to transport for people in rural areas were also mentioned by a number of respondents.

Only a small number of responses commented on the 3 high level aims of the document and registered their support. As a result in the absence of any other comments, the Department intends to proceed with these strategic aims as part of the new approach to regional transportation.

Many consultation replies highlighted the need for change in the mindsets of both government and individuals if significant modal shift was to occur. This would require a greater consideration of where people live, work and socialise to reduce the need to travel. The need to achieve behavioural change despite severe budget constraints was strongly emphasised.

It was acknowledged that to achieve significant modal shift there was a need for high quality, more reliable, public transport services while also providing for more active travel opportunities for shorter journeys. Active travel was highlighted not only as an important means of providing sustainable transport but also of improving the general health of the population.

Many responses highlighted the detrimental impact of transport on the environment and climate change and the need to reduce related carbon emissions were seen by many as a crucial issue. It was suggested that reducing emissions and developing more sustainable transport would require significant changes in travel behaviours and require difficult decisions on how we prioritise and maximise the use of our current networks. A number of responses acknowledged the need to examine alternative fuel sources for transport vehicles; while others suggested that free public transport should be provided for all.

A recurring theme was the need for better use of existing resources. It was suggested to develop further cross-departmental working, sharing resources between transport providers including health and education in order to reduce duplication and improve access to services.

The importance of sustainable urban planning was also raised by many suggesting that greater importance should be given to integrated land use and transport planning and which should result in a reduction in the need for travel. It was suggested that there should be greater linkage between the Regional Development Strategy and the Regional Transportation Strategy.

The majority of responses agreed with the proposed high level transport aims, strategic objectives and strategic transport interventions within the document. Many, however, found that it was difficult to rank the strategic objectives as they were interlinked and a number offered new or alternative wording for the objectives and suggested transport interventions.

From the 24 who did rank the strategic objectives, the most important were:

- Improving connectivity within the region;
- Better maintain transport infrastructure;
- Improve access in towns and cities;

Followed by:

- Improve safety;
- reduced greenhouse gases;
- Improve access in rural areas; and
- Transport systems focused on the user.

Some responses promoted local transport schemes that they felt were required. A number believed that the strategy was too high level and provided only a mechanism to assess transport infrastructure rather than the specific interventions to be developed.

Section 4 reports on the individual responses to the 14 questions posed within the consultation document.

4. Summary of Responses to the Questions Posed

Specific Issue

The Department received a total of 296 consultation responses opposing any introduction of on street car parking charges in Newtownards. No other comments on the document were offered and as such, while they have been considered, they have not been included within the summary of responses below.

The Section below summarises the content of the remaining 59 responses. The respondents are listed in Annex A.

Where are we now?

Question 1

What do you believe are the major challenges to delivering an improved and more sustainable transportation infrastructure here?

28 responses highlighted a greater need for further investment in the public transport network. 14 suggested that during the current economic downturn there was a need to make better use of the infrastructure and services as it was unlikely that any significant funding would be available in the short to medium term for new transportation infrastructure.

28 responses suggested that a different funding split was required between investment in roads and public transport if a public transport network was to be developed which would provide an alternative to the private car. 25 responses also highlighted that congestion was a major challenge while 42 suggested that improvements were needed to improve the connectivity of the network to develop a fully integrated transport system.

The issue of rural isolation was raised in 20 responses and that transport played a crucial role in connecting people with services. Many highlighted that if services were reduced this would add to rural isolation.

36 responses highlighted the need for the promotion of no-cost or low-cost infrastructure to improve active travel, stating that this would have positive benefits not only for transport but also for the health of the population.

The safety of the network was a concern highlighted in 17 responses, with 22 also commenting on the impact cost has on travel. Finally the importance of environmental and sustainability issues were highlighted in 28 responses.

DRD Response

It is accepted that the Department should make maximum use of its existing transport resources, particularly given the current financial constraints. Possible transport solutions highlighted by respondents will be reflected in the consideration of the strategic transport interventions.

Question 2

What are the challenges for society?

The issue of Northern Ireland's dependence on the private car was highlighted in 15 responses as a major factor to the current challenges to society. 26 responses stated that the biggest challenge would be to change people's behaviour and travel habits.

39 responses highlighted the need for Government to work together and demonstrate cross-departmental planning, working to achieve the best outcomes for users and integration across government bodies. This included sharing resources between departments and improvements in sustainable transport and land use planning to reduce the need for non essential car journeys.

DRD Response

The Department agrees that there are significant challenges for society to reduce the dependence on the private car and also to improve interdepartmental working on a range of transport issues. The Department will continue to work with others to further improve sustainable transport solutions.

Question 3

Are there challenges for you as an individual?

It was acknowledged in 7 responses that challenges existed for individual users with 18 stating the need for lifestyle changes. In particular it was highlighted in 10 responses that the personal health benefits of active travel should be promoted more to encourage more walking and cycling for shorter journeys while 7 responses highlighted cost as a major factor for individual travel choices.

DRD Response

The Department acknowledges that there are a range of challenges that exist for individuals as well as Government to develop sustainable transport. The Department will continue to promote these modes to encourage people to travel in more sustainable ways.

Question 4

How should DRD respond to these challenges?

A range of alternative suggestions were brought forward with 20 responses suggesting more investment in better and more reliable public transport services and 13 highlighting the need for greater and better education and promotion of services. It was suggested by 16 respondents that better use of

the existing transport network was necessary with 14 responses indicating that this should include greater use of active travel.

24 responses indicated greater integration between transport and land use planning was required to reduce the need to travel while 27 suggested that better interdepartmental planning and co-ordination was required.

Finally 3 respondents suggested public transport should be free or subsidised further with 1 respondent suggesting this could be funded from a reduction in the capital Roads budget.

DRD Response

The Department acknowledges the range of suggestions on the challenges and notes that many of these involve a change in travel behaviour. These suggestions will be taken forward and considered as the delivery plan is developed.

Question 5

Do you agree that particular interests such as freight, active travel, and the needs of older and disabled people should be mainstreamed in the Strategy rather than being considered separately?

22 responses recorded that the particular interests such as freight, active travel and the needs of older and disabled people should be contained within the strategy and that their importance is not lost.

DRD Response

The Department recognises the respondents' concerns on the risk of a range of competing transport strategies and the value of a collective integrated approach to transportation.

Where do we want to get to?

Question 6

Do you agree/disagree that growing the economy in a sustainable way should be at the core of our strategy and if so why/ why not?

24 of the responses agreed that the economy should be at the core of the revised strategy with 3 disagreeing with the question. Many however stated that any focus on the economy must not be to the detrimental impact of society, the environment or the health of the region.

DRD Response

The Department acknowledges the consultation responses affirming the growth of the economy as a priority but not at the expense of the other sustainability elements.

Question 7

What do you see as advantages or disadvantages in this approach?

A diverse range of views were recorded on the advantages and disadvantages of having growth of the economy at the heart of the strategy. 5 highlighted that this could only be achieved if it was undertaken in a sustainable way.

A number of respondents suggested that having the economy at the centre of the strategy may have an effect on various elements including the environment (3), health (2) and social inclusion (3).

DRD Response

The Department notes the concern on the potential disadvantages of having the economy at the heart of the strategy at the expense of the environment, health and societal issues. The Department will work towards an appropriate balanced approach.

Question 8

Do you agree with the strategic objectives proposed?

28 out of 59 responses signalled broad support to the proposed strategic objectives with 2 responses highlighting any major discontentment. A number of responses suggested changes to the wording of the objectives or provided new objectives. Comments on these are included in answer to Question 10.

DRD Response

The Department recognises the broad support for the proposed strategic objectives. A number of changes have been made to their wording and supporting text following suggestions in the consultation responses. These include strengthening the linkage to the RDS and revising the wording for a specific environmental objective.

Question 9

Please rank strategic objectives.

24 of the 59 respondents ranked the strategic objectives. Of those who ranked the objectives 10 highlighted Improving the connectivity of the region as the

most important. Other strategic objectives recorded in the top 5 by respondents included: Better maintaining transport infrastructure, Improving access in towns and cities, Improving safety and Reducing Green House Gases.

10 indicated however that it was difficult to rank these objectives given that many of the objectives are interlinked,

A graphical summary of the ranking of the objectives is included in Annex B.

DRD Response

The Department recognises the difficulty some experienced in ranking of the objectives however is encouraged that many respondents were able to indicate their preferred choice. This will assist in the development of the Policy Prioritisation Framework.

Question 10

Are there other strategic objectives that you believe should be included? If so please add them to the table and rank them?

A number of additional strategic objectives were suggested within consultation returns. A summary of the suggested new objectives included:

- Greater linkages to RDS and development planning;
- Improvements required to railway network, specifically between Coleraine and Londonderry;
- More interdepartmental working;
- Mode shift from car to public transport;
- Targeted infrastructure improvements;
- Improved public transport;
- Freight travel;

- All island approach to transport;
- Promotion of towns and cities (especially Belfast & Londonderry);
Value for Money;
- Active travel networks to improve public transport interconnectivity;
- Improvements to sustainable transport network;
- Improvements to health outcomes;
- Improved access to and from BMA.

DRD Response

The Department has considered the proposed additional strategic objectives and believes that many can be included through the policy prioritisation and appraisal process.

How will we get there?

Question 11

Do you agree with the interventions listed?

14 respondents signalled their contentment with the list of interventions contained within the consultation document while 6 indicated they were partially content. Respondents included a number of alternative suggestions for possible interventions within their responses along with potential changes to the wording of those listed.

DRD Response

The Department will add the range of interventions received through the consultation exercise and consider each individually as part of the development of the delivery plans.

Question 12

Have you any other interventions to suggest or any alternative wording that you would prefer?

A total of 49 new interventions were suggested within the consultation returns. Many of these were location specific schemes within particular geographical areas. These included proposals for congestion charging, improvements to road capacity, capacity improvements on the rail and bus networks, traffic management measures, Park & Ride and active travel schemes.

DRD Response

The proposed list of interventions was not definitive and the Department is therefore content to consider further suggestions as part of the exercise in preparing a list of strategic transport interventions for future consideration.

Making Choices

Question 13

Do you agree with our proposals for a prioritisation framework?

18 of the responses agreed in principle to the overall development of the policy prioritisation framework with 5 disagreeing. 3 responses partially agreed with the proposals however felt they were unsure how this would work in practice, how agreement would be reached on developing the framework and associated priorities.

Overall the majority welcomed the proposed approach to developing a Policy Prioritisation Framework to identify programmes and projects that fit with the overall direction for transport. Many recognised that evaluating projects on purely financial terms has led to an unbalanced spend on road schemes due to their positive economic assessments over alternative public transport

schemes. The proposed Framework was accepted as giving greater consideration to wider transport, social and economic benefits of schemes. There was some concern however, as to how such a Framework would be used in practice.

DRD Response

The Department is keen to continue to engage with key stakeholders on the development and implementation of a Policy Prioritisation Framework. The Department welcomes the positive support from many on this proposed mechanism of assessment.

Question 14

Have you any other prioritisation mechanism to suggest?

5 respondents suggested a range of other prioritisation mechanisms. These included the development of action plans, prioritising schemes which have social benefits, linking schemes to other Executive plans and strategies and undertaking a data capture exercise before decisions are made. There was however, no consensus amongst respondents, on a preferred alternative.

DRD Response

The Department's analysis of the consultation responses did not highlight consensus for an alternative option to the Policy Prioritisation Framework.

Other issues highlighted during the consultation

A number of other issues were highlighted during the consultation stage. 7 responses indicated that the targets within the original RTS had not been met while 6 suggested that targets should be included within the new approach. The resilience of the transportation network during the winter was also highlighted in 2 responses. Some responses expressed their disappointment that specific schemes were not included within the new approach and suggested that the document was a framework rather than a strategy. Finally there were many comments received on changes required to the text within the new approach.

DRD Response

The Department will examine the suggested changes in wording while finalising the new approach.

Annex A – List of Consultee Returns

Consultee Reference Number	Consultee
1	Alternative Vehicle Technology
2	Antrim Borough Council
3	ARC 21
4	Armagh City Council
5	Ballymena Borough Council
6	Banbridge District Council
7	Belfast City Council
8	Belfast Healthy Cities
9	Belfast International Airport
10	Border Regional Authority
11	British Medical Association
12	Castlereagh Borough Council
13	CBI
14	Charter Institute of Highways & Transportation
15	Cllr S McKillop
16	Community Relations Council
17	Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside
18	Craigavon Borough Council
19	CTC
20	Derry City Council
21	Down District Council
22	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
23	Fermanagh District Council
24	Freight Transport Association
25	Go Skills
26	Green Action
27	Guide Dogs
28	ILEX
29	IMTAC
30	Individual – Frank Adam
31	Individual – Neil Alldred
32	Individual – Mr Allen Niblock
33	Individual – Prof Austin Smyth
34	Individual – Stephen Wood
35	Individual – WJ McMahan
36	Individual – Peter McCarron
37	Institute of Directors
38	Institute of Public Health in Ireland
39	Into the West
40	Lisburn City Council
41	Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment
42	National Transport Authority

Consultee Reference Number	Consultee
43	Newry & Mourne District Council
44	NI Cycling Initiative
45	NIEA – Pat Corker
46	NIEA
47	NIEL
48	Nilga
49	Omagh District Council
50	Public Health Agency
51	QPANI
52	RICS
53	Road Haulage Association
54	RSPB
55	RTPI
56	Rural Community Network
57	Sustrans
58	Women's Support Network
59	WWF

Annex B – Ranking of Strategy Objectives

Strategic Objective	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Improve connectivity within region	█		█			█		█	█	█	█	█
Use road / railways More efficiently	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		█	█	█	
Better maintain transport infrastructure	█	█	█			█	█				█	█
Improve access in towns and cities	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			█
Improve access in rural areas	█	█		█	█	█	█	█	█	█		█
Improve connections to key tourist sites	█	█	█			█	█		█	█		█
Improve safety	█	█		█	█	█	█	█	█	█		█
Improve social inclusion	█		█	█	█	█	█	█		█		█
Transport systems focused on user	█			█	█	█	█	█		█	█	
Reduce greenhouse gasses	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Protect biodiversity	█	█		█			█	█	█	█	█	█
Reduce noise and air pollution	█		█		█		█	█	█	█	█	█

Table graphically illustrates the relative ranking given to the Strategic Objectives

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