

Revised Regional Transportation Strategy 2011

Public Consultation Document – Executive Summary

The current Regional Transportation Strategy 2002-12 was successful in securing high levels of public funding to improve our transportation infrastructure. However the speed and direction of change in society has prompted the need for review. The increase in population and vehicles has placed significant pressures on our transportation networks coupled with fiscal constraints and the need to reduce our environmental impacts.

The revised Strategy will seek to build on what has been achieved and summarises where we are at present in transportation terms. It sets out a range of objectives which we want to achieve and proposes how to get there.

The revised Strategy concentrates on moving people rather than vehicles, creating space on the networks for people and also for freight and on maintaining what is in place and using it in a smarter way.

The revised Strategy is different from the current strategy in that it isn't constructed on schemes and projects. Rather it seeks to set the High Level Aims and the Strategic Objectives for transport in the region. At its core is a move towards greater sustainability which will contribute positively to growing the economy, improving the quality of life for all and reducing the transport impacts on the environment.

The revised Strategy proposes a mechanism to better prioritise transportation interventions so that they offer a better 'policy fit', value for money, political and public acceptability and equality.

High Level Aims:

A. Support the Growth of the Economy

Growing the economy is the Executive's key priority. Our transportation networks must be designed to support this.

B. Enhance the Quality of Life For All

It is important that we help achieve the Executive's goal for our society, deliver modern high quality and efficient public services and promoting tolerance, inclusion, health and wellbeing

C. Reduce the Environmental Impact of Transport

While supporting economic growth, this cannot be at the expense of the environment. There is a tension between these two High Level Objectives, the RTS consultation exercise will help us find the right balance between them.

Strategic Objectives

A. Support the Growth of the Economy

1: Improve connectivity within the region

We need reliable and efficient connections within the Region. People need to be able to get to and from their places of work. Businesses need to be able to receive goods reliably, with better connections to the air and sea ports, the Gateways to the region, in order to move the goods they produce.

To achieve this, we need to complete the work identified in the current Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan and Strategic Road Improvement Programme, while we develop new programmes of work for the main roads and railways.

2: More efficiently use roads and railways

There is limited capacity on the network. On roads, our choice is whether to try to meet increasing demand by building new roads or to manage demand for road space and find innovative ways of getting the best use we can from our infrastructure. While we have purchased new trains that will increase the number of passengers, the increase is limited by the capacity of the rail infrastructure.

We will give priority on our networks to the movement of people and goods rather than the movement of vehicles. This will result in increased priority for buses, improving public transport which will produce a better balanced network and a better, more reliable service for all users.

3: Better maintain transport infrastructure

We want a reliable transportation network that allows people and freight to move safely and to have reliable journey times. To do this, we need to regularly maintain roads and railways. To make public transport an attractive option, we need to make sure that the vehicles, stops and stations are safe, clean, well maintained and well lit.

4: Improve access in our towns and cities

We want to ensure that people have the opportunity to access education, training and employment as well as key services such as health, cultural, shopping, sporting and leisure activities. These facilities and services are usually located in, or around, towns and cities. Recognising that not everyone has access to a car, a more inclusive society will require high quality and affordable public transport with appropriate infrastructure or walking and cycling routes which enable people to access these key services

5: Improve access in rural areas

As public transport provision is limited in rural areas, the car is the main mode of travel from rural areas to services and facilities located in or around our towns and cities. The roads linking all rural areas to these services and facilities must be reliable, our public and community transport must also be timely and reliable. Taxis, walking and cycling can play an important role for those living where there is no or limited public transport.

6: Improve connections to key tourism sites

We live in an area with a significant cultural and historical heritage and proper access to key tourism sites is increasingly important for the economy. Unlike other businesses, tourist attractions cannot choose where they are located.

We need to ensure that the roads successfully connect visitors to tourist attractions, and that the connecting public transport system is frequent, reliable and represents value for money.

B. Enhance the quality of life for all

7: Improve safety

We want to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads, for car users, pedestrians and cyclists.

We also want to improve the attractiveness of public transport by making it safer. Feelings of safety can be improved by well designed, well lit infrastructure which discourages crime and anti-social behaviour.

8: Improve social inclusion

Transport can bring communities together or the infrastructure can keep them apart or cut them off from services. We want to design the transportation networks to bring communities together and ensure equitable access to key services and facilities, particularly by sustainable modes.

9: Develop transport programmes with the user in mind

We do not want to design infrastructure or services that suit policy makers, planners or engineers, rather we want to focus on the user, understand their needs and demonstrate the value and benefits to them that can also benefit the community through the travel choices people and businesses make. We also aim to provide transportation services that meet the needs of people, businesses and the community as a whole.

C. Reduce the Environmental Impact of Transport

10: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport

Road traffic is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions and accounts for 26% of our emissions. To allow the Executive to meet carbon reduction targets, greenhouse gas emissions from transport will have to be reduced.

11: Protect biodiversity

The Assembly has passed “The Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill (Northern Ireland)” which includes a duty to conserve biodiversity. This will require all Government Departments and their agencies to produce measures to halt the loss of biodiversity.

12: Reduce noise and air pollution

Noise and air pollution from transport can have a significant impact on the quality of life and health of communities, especially in urban areas. We will seek to reduce noise and air pollution wherever possible.

A new approach to implementation – a Transportation Policy Prioritisation Framework

Traditional transport planning is problem-based. It starts with the identification of transport problems and then develops infrastructure solutions to solve those problems. The solutions are then subjected to individual transport appraisals that check aspects such as the costs and benefits of the solution. This approach, however, does not prioritise the solution against agreed Strategic Objectives which we believe is vital to ensure their delivery and the efficient use of limited resources.

Our proposed new approach seeks to recognise this need and will be objective-led, with a broad view on which transportation programmes contribute to the specific Strategic Objectives to be set in the revised Regional Transportation Strategy. The aim is to link transportation programmes to the Executive's objectives for the region, based on evidence. These programmes will comprise elements designed to achieve a complete transport chain. A Park and Ride programme, for example, would include constructing the site, a dedicated public transport service from it, a Quality Bus Corridor or other priority measures on the road and any other associated infrastructure required. This would ensure a more "joined up" result for users, helping to maximise benefits and value and avoid any piecemeal approach with individual and disjointed projects.

Our new approach will use a Policy Prioritisation Framework to identify the priority programmes and projects that most closely align with the Executive's and Department's strategic direction. The Policy Prioritisation Framework will set transport interventions within existing and emerging strategic economic,

environmental and social contexts so that transportation schemes planned for the future can focus on supporting the Executive's aims and objectives.

Projects and initiatives will be scored to assess their "policy fit". The Policy Prioritisation Framework will be supported with guidance on "scoring" to ensure a fair and consistent approach. It will not replace detailed project appraisals, these will come later at the project delivery stage, but will act as a first step in the process.

Developing and using a Policy Prioritisation Framework is not a short term measure, it will require extensive work alongside our key stakeholders and involve ranking our Strategic Objectives in order of importance as part of the process.

The Policy Prioritisation Framework will allow us to make more informed choices based not just on Value for Money, but on a wider strategic fit as well. It is an inclusive, transparent process that seeks to build consent rather than consensus. In other words, an agreed prioritisation that stakeholders agree is the best way to achieve the RTS Strategic Objectives.