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Developing the Regional Transportation Strategy

- 4.1 Introduction
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4.1. Introduction

4.1.1. This Chapter outlines the methodology used to develop the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) and considers the role that consultation played in its development (see section 4.2). In Section 4.3 the consultation undertaken on the Proposed RTS and the changes incorporated into the content of the Strategy are described.

4.2. Outline of Methodology and Role of Consultation

- 4.2.1. The overall development of the RTS was based on the Guidance on the Methodology for Multi-Modal Studies (GOMMMS)⁴¹, an objective-led approach to seeking solutions to transport-related problems. The methodology used is shown in Figure 4.1.
- 4.2.2. The GOMMMS approach was supplemented and complemented by the two further analyses:
- an Equality Impact Assessment⁴² in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - a Pilot Health Impact Assessment in support of the development of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's 'Investing for Health' initiative.
- 4.2.3. The Panel of Experts and the Technical Advisor⁴³ provided assurance that the RTS was developed in accordance with best practice. They affirmed the overall approach, including the methodology employed, to be appropriate.

⁴¹ Guidance on the Methodology for Multi-Modal Studies (GOMMMS), DETR, March 2000

⁴² Equality Impact Assessment of the Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012, DRD, July 2002

⁴³ A group of eminent transportation and other professionals provided guidance and assurance in regular meetings with the RTS Project team

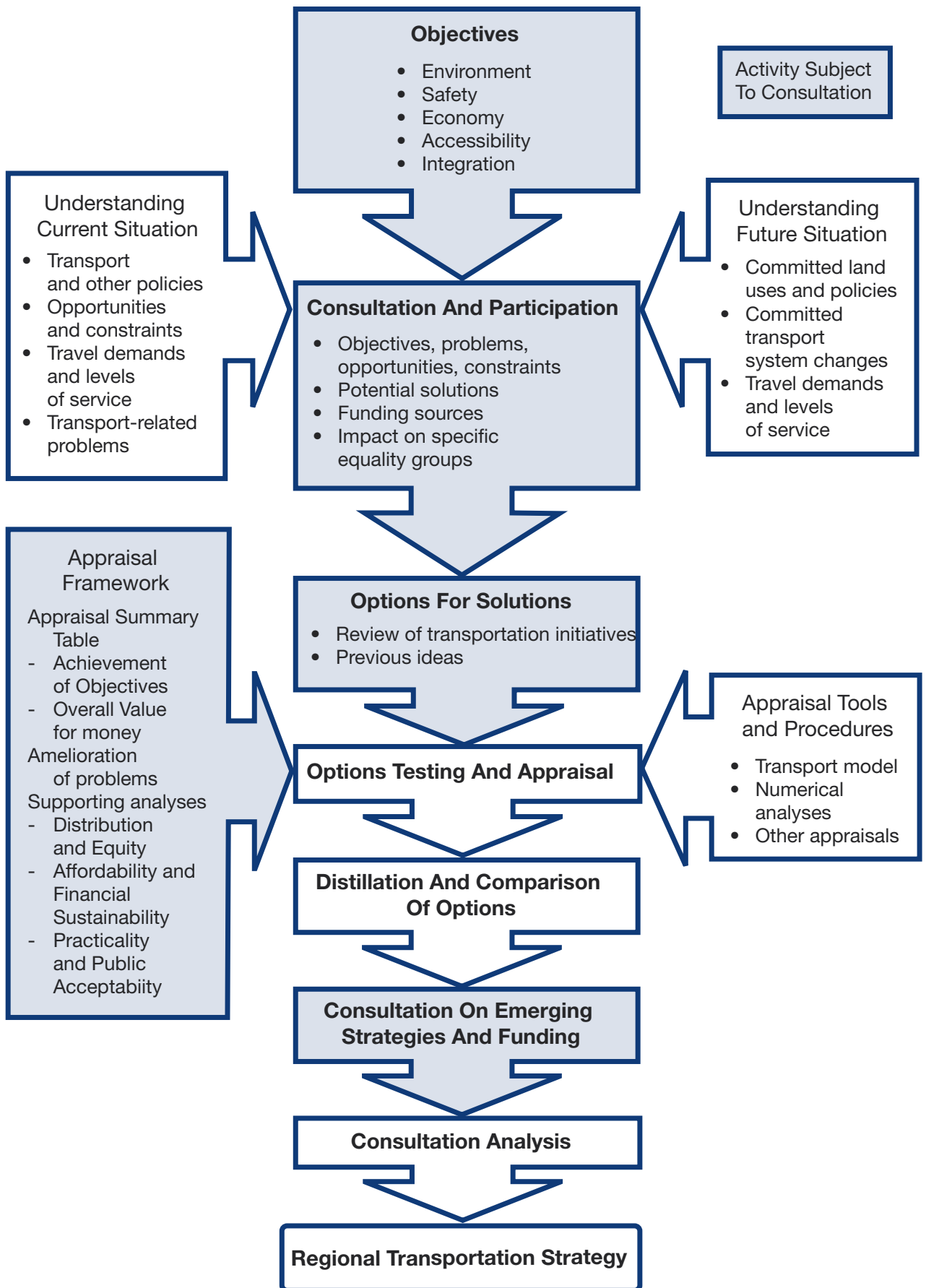


Figure 4.1 Regional Transportation Strategy Methodology

Objectives

4.2.4. HM Government's over-arching objectives are:

- to promote a strong economy and increase prosperity;
- to provide better protection for the environment; and
- to develop a more inclusive society.

4.2.5 Within this framework the Government set five objectives specifically for transport which are at the heart of the GOMMMS methodology and were fundamental to the development of the RTS:

- environmental impact – to protect the built and natural environment;
- safety – to improve safety;
- economy – to support sustainable economic activity and get good value for money;
- accessibility – to improve access to facilities for those without a car and to reduce severance; and
- integration – to ensure that all decisions are taken in the context of the Government's integrated transport policy.

Consultation and Participation

4.2.6. From extensive consultation on transportation issues facing the region, conducted both specifically for the development of the RTS and as part of the earlier Railways Task Force and Regional Development Strategy (RDS) work, and with input from key stakeholders, an understanding was formed of the:

- **current situation** – the perceived problems with and constraints of the transportation system, together with information on travel demands; and
- **future situation** – taking into account the socio-economic factors inherent in the RDS and the resultant projected travel demands; understanding the potential opportunities and solutions to the perceived problems and constraints; recognition of funding sources; and the potential for impact on specific groups of people.

Possible Initiatives

- 4.2.7. By comparing the perceived problems to potential solutions, using professional transportation knowledge and judgement informed by consultation feedback, a comprehensive list of potential transportation initiatives was drawn up, consistent with the widely endorsed transportation vision in the RDS, as agreed by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Appraisal of Initiatives and Development of Initial Strategies

- 4.2.8. Initially each of the transportation initiatives was tested separately against the appraisal framework. The appraisal framework takes the form of an Appraisal Summary Table (AST – see Annex A for description and example) whereby the impacts of the proposals are assessed against the five transport objectives, which are in turn broken down into 21 sub-objectives. The GOMMMS methodology also specifies three important Supporting Analyses to supplement the AST. These require assessments to be made of the distribution and equity impacts; the affordability and the financial sustainability of the strategy; and practicality and public acceptability issues. These were covered in detail in the Proposed RTS Consultation Paper and are summarised in Annex B. In respect of the Strategy presented in this document:
- distribution and equity impacts are considered in the Equality Impact Assessment;
 - affordability and financial sustainability issues are considered in Chapter 6 – Funding and Affordability of the Strategy; and
 - the practicality and public acceptability Supporting Analyses are referred to in paragraph 4.2.10.
- 4.2.9. Having tested each of the initiatives separately and recorded each using an AST, the next step was to identify the best performing initiatives. This used the assessments under each of the five main objectives, weighted by factors developed from the consultation exercises, and took account of the cost to give an estimate of overall value for money.
- 4.2.10. This estimate of value for money for each initiative combined with professional judgements (eg, on practicality, inconsistency or lack of synergy between initiatives) was instrumental in enabling initial strategies at alternative levels of funding to be prepared. Throughout subsequent stages of the development process, refinement of the Strategy was guided by additional information from the Supporting Analyses. Public acceptability including

political acceptability, as indicated by the consultation processes was particularly important.

4.3. Consultation on the Proposed RTS

Consultation Topics

4.3.1. The Proposed RTS⁴⁴ was developed taking account of consultation feedback from the RTS Conference held on 28 September 2001. The Proposed RTS Consultation Paper was issued for consultation on 4 February 2002 by way of a debate in the Assembly. Comments were invited on the following topics:

- the appropriateness of the funding split between the 'areas' and the modes;
- the proposals for other transportation-related initiatives by the Department for Regional Development;
- the sources of funding;
- targets;
- the proposal to implement the RTS using three transport plans; and
- the relative priority to be accorded to each 'area' and mode.

Consultation Analysis

4.3.2. The analysis of the consultation feedback on the Proposed RTS is reported in detail in the associated Consultation Process Report⁴⁵. In summary:

- the proposed split by 'area' and mode was generally accepted;
- many consultees argued that the Strategy should adopt a funding level significantly above the proposed total level of funding of £3049 million;
- there were strong demands for an increase in:
 - strategic highway improvements to support the economic well-being of the region;
 - enhancements to the public transport proposals in the Belfast area to initiate a shift away from the use of private vehicles; and
- there was also a call for demand management measures to be applied in Belfast if these would provide a net benefit to the whole community.

⁴⁴ Proposed Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland - A Consultation Paper, DRD, February 2002

⁴⁵ Regional Transportation Strategy Consultation Process Report, DRD, July 2002

Changes to Strategy Content

4.3.3. The Supporting Analyses of practicality and public acceptability were determined by feedback and subsequent discussions with the principal transport organisations ie, Roads Service and Translink, and by feedback from key stakeholders, lobby groups and members of the public. Practicality and public acceptability were the primary reasons for supplementing the Proposed RTS with the following additional initiatives:

- an additional £76 million to provide £100 million for rapid transit in Belfast;
- an additional £86 million to accommodate increases in the estimates for rail infrastructure costs;⁴⁶
- an additional £66 million for increased public transport capacity;
- an additional £18 million in total towards the concessionary fares scheme and the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities; and
- an additional £163 million to provide increased strategic highway improvements.

4.3.4. In finalising the content of the RTS, it was also recognised that demand management measures could be needed in Belfast in order to:

- optimise the contribution of the additional public transport investment; and
- reduce the possible negative impacts of additional private car use.

These demand management measures may take the form of increased charges or reduced availability of spaces for long-stay (commuter) parking. In the event that these measures are successful in producing a sustained and publicly acceptable shift from private car to bus and rail, more comprehensive demand management measures, such as road user charging, are likely to be considered. Any additional revenue raised by such measures would be used to improve bus and rail provision further.

4.3.5. In addition, the RTS includes the commitment to establish a Regional Planning and Transportation Division and a technical Data Monitoring and Modelling Unit. The work of this unit will include identifying changes in traffic flows and public transport passenger levels following the implementation of initiatives. Assessments and forecasts made by the Unit will be key in influencing decisions on how the additional sums of money are allocated to individual initiatives.

⁴⁶ Over the period between the preparation of the Proposed RTS and RTS, significant upward market adjustments have affected cost estimates for track relay work and railway safety improvements.

Regional Transportation Strategy

for Northern Ireland 2002 - 2012