

Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2015

Executive Summary



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EI. The Sub-Regional Transport Plan

Introduction

The Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP) has been prepared by the Department for Regional Development (the Department) based upon the guidance provided by the Regional Development Strategy and the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS). The SRTP deals with the transport needs of the whole of Northern Ireland with the exception of the Belfast Metropolitan Area and the rail and trunk road networks which are covered in earlier Transport Plans.

The purpose of the SRTP is to study the needs of the designated areas in detail and to confirm a package of transport schemes, consistent with the general principles and indicative levels of spend in the RTS. This package of schemes and initiatives must aim to service the future transport demands taking account of financial allocation, planned developments and any changes in Government policy.

In line with the Regional Transportation Strategy, the SRTP notes the highway linkages with the Regional Strategic Transport Network and identifies separate packages of measures for the period 2002 – 2015 by mode of transport:

- walking and cycling;
- bus;
- rail; and
- highways.

The costs of the packages are consistent with the relevant indicative expenditure, by mode of transport, given in the Regional Transportation Strategy, enhanced by the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI). It is important to note that the implementation of the measures proposed in the SRTP will be subject to:

- appropriate economic appraisal;
- any relevant statutory procedures such as environmental assessment, planning and land acquisition; and
- the availability of public money through the normal budgetary processes.

Other Urban Areas and Rural Areas

The Sub-Regional Transport Plan is concerned with two quite distinct areas, designated by the Regional Transportation Strategy:

- Other Urban Areas (OUA) – the towns and cities; and
- Rural Areas – the smaller settlements and the dispersed population living in the open countryside.

The proposed measures are presented separately for each.

E2. Total SRTP Costs

Total Costs of Proposed Measures

Table E2.1 summarises the total costs of all the measures proposed in the Sub-Regional Transport Plan covering the period 2002 – 2015, using 2005 prices. The first two numerical columns in the table present the cost of OUA measures and Rural Areas measures. The third numerical column presents the Cross-cutting OUA and Rural Areas measures which can neither be forecast reliably nor allocated specifically to the OUA or the Rural Areas.

Further information on the measures contributing to these spending proposals are given in later sections. As for all Transport Plans, the implementation of individual schemes and measures will be subject to the completion of appropriate economic and environmental appraisals and the normal budgetary processes.

Table E2.1 - SRTP Costs and RTS Financial Controls

Mode	OUA Measures (£ m)	Rural Measures (£ m)	Cross-cutting Measures (£ m)	SRTP Total Measures (£ m)	RTS 2002 – 2015 Spending (£ m)
All Modes	0	0	5	5	5
Walk/Cycle	33	16	29	78	78
Rail	5	0	1	6	6
Bus	70	88	293	450	450
Highways	73	40	1708	1821	1781
Total	180	144	2035	2359	2320

Note: All values are quoted in rounded form which may lead to apparent minor inaccuracies in summation. For reference, the unrounded values are presented in Table 9.1. (page 91)

Comparison with RTS Spending Extrapolated to 2015

The final two columns in Table E2.1 provide a comparison of total SRTP costs with the 2002 – 2015 RTS funding in 2005 prices. The comparison highlights that the SRTP costs are in line with RTS spending. The SRTP includes a small relative increase over RTS spending in Highways. This is a result of the additional proposed funding in ISNI.

In addition, since the RTS was published in 2002, there have been increases in bus expenditure¹ which exceed the RTS baselines and are not reflected in Table 9.1. These are attributable to increases in the number of bus services and the number of passenger journeys and increases in expenditure on concessionary fares arising out of changes in eligibility and fares. The impact of these increases will be addressed as part of the RTS Review.

¹ Includes Transport Programme for People with Disabilities, Rural Transport Fund, Fuel Duty Rebate and Concessionary Fares.

E3. Proposals for Other Urban Areas

Introduction

Transport conditions in each of the 29 towns and cities in the SRTP area have been examined by Local Transport Studies. Each Local Transport Study has gathered data from a range of sources and carried out surveys in the town or city to get an independent view of the transport conditions. Each study has also estimated traffic conditions in 10 years time, where possible in conjunction with the Development Plan process.

Whilst the scale of the problems and the specific needs vary considerably between towns and cities, the Local Transport Studies have, in general, found a number of common problems, including:

- variability in the standard of provision for pedestrians;
- limited provision for cyclists;
- underdeveloped local bus networks, unattractive to potential users;
- limited provision for people with disabilities or others with reduced mobility;
- localised traffic congestion in the peak periods; and
- limited enforcement of parking regulations in advance of the decriminalised parking enforcement.

The major drivers for change in the OUA arise from:

- concerns over road safety in Northern Ireland;
- economic and demographic forces; and
- trends in the availability and use of different transport modes.

Proposed Measures

The Local Transport Studies have identified and confirmed the value of a number of individual schemes and measures for each town and city in the Other Urban Areas, as summarised below. The total costs of the measures proposed are presented in Table E3.1. It should be noted, however, that work will continue throughout the period to 2015 to identify and implement additional schemes and measures.

Table E3.1 - Costs of Proposed Measures for Other Urban Areas

Mode	OUA Measures (£ m)
Walk/Cycle	32.8
Rail	5.0
Bus	69.5
Highways	73.1
Total	180.4

Overall, the proposed measures represent a substantial improvement in local transport provision in the 29 towns and cities. Whilst the proposals differ according to individual circumstance, the Department proposes a number of features that are common to the majority of towns/cities.

Walk/Cycle Measures

The Local Transport Studies have identified walk measures across NI estimated to cost £29.8 million at 2005 prices. The SRTP also identifies additional walk links, which are beyond the scope of the Plan, but which could potentially be implemented in the future.

In the town or city centres the Department proposes the following walking measures:

- a continuous pedestrian network designed and maintained to an appropriate standard;
- footways that make it easier for children's buggies and people with mobility aids to pass more easily;
- additional crossing facilities where people normally wish to cross, taking account of safety and the volume of traffic; and
- upgraded links on the pedestrian network from the town centre to bus and rail stations, where required.

The Local Transport Studies have identified cycle measures across NI estimated to cost £2.8 million at 2005 prices. Cycle facilities are proposed where it is considered that they are most needed and most likely to be used. The provision of continuous cycle networks is considered most beneficial in towns with significant numbers of existing cyclists or where large student populations and flat cycling conditions suggest greatest potential. The SRTP also identifies potential additional cycle links, which are beyond the scope of the Plan, but could be used for long term planning and negotiation with developers and other stakeholders, as opportunities arise.

The proposals for cycle measures include:

- networks of cycle routes which, depending on road widths and physical constraints, may be on-road, shared footway/cycleways or off-road paths; and
- cycle parking at bus and rail stations.

Highway Measures

The Local Transport Studies have identified highway measures across NI estimated to cost £72.4 million at 2005 prices. These costs incorporate estimates for urban land values at 2005 prices for appropriate schemes. It should be noted therefore that schemes requiring land purchase may be subject to significant cost changes in the future.

It is proposed that in general towns and cities will include the following:

- traffic management measures to lessen the effects of forecast increases in traffic flows;
- measures to reduce bottlenecks at key junctions; and
- measures to direct traffic away from areas where there are high pedestrian flows.

In some towns and cities more extensive measures are proposed:

- new roads to provide access to new development areas - where these are directly related to new development, developers will be expected to fund them as appropriate; and
- new roads to provide congestion relief to the town centre or other environmentally sensitive areas.

In addition, some towns and cities obtain direct benefits from the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan schemes. These schemes may increase capacity on existing key links or provide new bypass routes hence reducing congestion in the urban centres and providing opportunities for environmental improvements.

Parking Measures

A draft parking strategy has been developed for each of the 29 towns/cities to take advantage of the improved enforcement that will result from the decriminalising of parking enforcement. The strategies may be refined or further developed in due course, in line with future changes in parking demand and accessibility.

In general, the draft parking strategies have been devised to provide:

- convenient short stay parking close to the town or city centre;
- longer stay parking located further from the town or city centre;
- appropriate additional exclusive provision for loading vehicles, taxi stands and Blue Badge vehicles; and
- where practical, parking has also been proposed convenient to bus and rail stations to encourage public transport use by commuters.

Public Transport Measures

Bus Measures

The Local Transport Studies have identified a spend of approximately £3.3 million at 2005 prices for bus facilities.

The Department proposes improvements in bus facilities in towns /cities to:

- upgrade a number of bus stops in towns and cities where necessary, paying particular attention to the stops in town centres and other well-used stops in housing areas;
- provide those upgraded stops with raised kerbs to allow all passengers, including those with buggies and wheelchairs, to board fully accessible low floor buses; and
- provide priority for bus services, with measures allowing buses to enter or exit bus stations likely to be the most practicable.

The RTS identified a spend of approximately £45.6 million at 2005 prices to improve local town services. The SRTP has progressed to identify minimum levels of service for each of the towns and cities on the basis of finding a balance between the cost to the Department (in subsidy) and the level of service offered to the public. These levels of service are expressed as the number of hours, throughout a weekday, when a frequency of at least one bus per hour is maintained. Table E3.2 presents these minimum levels of service in the first column.

As part of the Ulsterbus Strategic Review, Translink will seek to introduce additional local town or city bus services where viable. Modern fully accessible low floor buses will run these services to frequent, user friendly, clock-face timetables throughout the day. The routes will join the residential areas to the town or city centre and the main shopping centres and places of work. Translink plans to implement the services by

the end of 2008. Table E3.2 presents the Translink proposals in the final column. It is notable that, in a number of towns/cities, Translink's proposals for 2008 will substantially exceed the SRTP minimum levels of service for the period up to 2015.

Table E3.2 - Daily Period Of Hourly Bus Service Operation (Mon – Fri)

SRTP Minimum Operating period	Towns / Cities	Translink Proposed Operating Period	
4 hours	Portrush	14.5-17 hours	
	Kilkeel	7 hours	
	Ballynahinch	7 hours	
	Ballycastle	8 hours	
7 hours	Ballymoney	N/A independent operator	
	Comber	7 hours	
	Magherafelt	10.5 hours	
	Portstewart	14.5-17 hours	
	Newcastle	9-10 hours	
	Warrenpoint	N/A independent operator	
11 hours	Omagh	9.5-11 hours	
	Larne	10 hours	
	Banbridge	11 hours	
	Armagh	9-10.5 hours	
	Enniskillen	9-11 hours	
	Strabane	7-10.5 hours	
	Limavady	10 hours	
	Dungannon	11 hours	
	Cookstown	10.5 hours	
	Downpatrick	9-10 hours	
	Craigavon	9-10 hours	
	13 hours	Ballymena	10-11 hours
		Newtownards	10-11 hours
Newry		12-15 hours	
Coleraine		10.5 hours	
Antrim		10.5 hours	
Portadown		9-10 hours	
Lurgan		9-10 hours	
17 hours	Londonderry	9-16 hours	

The Local Transport Studies have identified a spend of approximately £10.5 million at 2005 prices for bus station refurbishment. The proposals will be examined and decided within the context of local Development Plans and the Ulsterbus Strategic Review.

The following improvements are proposed at selected bus stations:

- new or refurbished bus station to include access improvements and compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act; and
- additional parking at the bus station.

The Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD) funds door-to-door accessible transport services for people with disabilities or for those who find mainstream public transport either difficult or impossible to use.

The RTS identified a total spend of approximately £10.95 million for TPPD during the SRTP period. However, since 2002, much higher funding has been secured with a current annual spend in excess of £4.0 million across Northern Ireland.

TPPD funding is providing new door-to-door transport services for mobility impaired people as follows:

- new services first introduced to Dungannon on 29 September 2006;
- further new services recently introduced in Cookstown, Newry, Newtownards, Comber, Dundonald and Armagh; and
- new services being rolled out to every urban area with a population of 10,000 or more by Summer 2007.

The Local Transport Studies have made an allowance for bus based Park and Ride schemes totalling £5 million in Londonderry and possibly Ballymena in the longer term.

Rail Measures

The rail network forms part of the Regional Strategic Transport Network. Individual rail schemes and projects in support of the RTS are shown in the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan. However, the SRTP Local Transport Studies have identified a spend of approximately £5.0 million at 2005 prices.

The following rail station improvements are proposed:

- refurbishment at main rail stations;
- upgrade to all rail stations to improve access for all passengers and ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act; and
- additional car parking where opportunities have been identified.

Taxi Measures

The provision of on-street taxi stands will provide convenient access to taxis for potential users and help taxis to fulfil their role in an integrated transport system. In addition, appropriately sized and located stands should help reduce the likelihood of traffic congestion to other road users.

In general it is proposed to improve taxi facilities as follows:

- each town and city should have at least one on-street taxi stand; and
- further taxi stands considered where practicable and where sufficient demand exists.

E4. Proposals for Rural Areas

Introduction

Identification of problems has been drawn largely from existing sources. Market research undertaken in the preparation of the RTS has provided a significant base. Research undertaken for the Accessible Transport Strategy and annual surveys undertaken by the Statistics and Research Agency and the Roads Service Customer Satisfaction surveys has also contributed in addition to regular Roads Service consultation with District Councils.

The principal problems in the Rural Areas include:

- limited facilities for pedestrians and cyclists in some small settlements;
- few public transport services; and
- inadequate levels of investment in roads maintenance.

The key forces with potential to change transport needs in the Rural Areas are:

- the RTS drivers of transport, social exclusion, and road safety;
- planned economic interventions aimed at bringing added prosperity to the Rural Areas;
- planned growth of the rural population especially in small towns, villages and settlements; and
- the increase in car ownership and the resulting progressive reduction in rural bus services as passenger levels drop.

Table E4.1 summarises the total costs of measures proposed for the Rural Areas. These are described in more detail below.

Table E4.1 - Costs of Proposed Measures for Rural Areas

Mode	Rural Measures (£M)
Walk/Cycle	16.2
Rail	0.0
Bus	87.6
Highways	40.1
Total	143.9

Proposed Measures in Rural Settlements

There are a large number of settlements in the Rural Areas, each with its own characteristics and transportation needs. Rural settlements will be considered for a range of measures with care taken to ensure that they complement each other.

Walk/Cycle

The Department proposes, as far as practicable, the following walk/cycle measures in rural settlements:

- infill missing footway links within the built-up areas of settlements paying special attention to links, both pedestrian and cycle as appropriate, between schools and residential areas. Delivery of such schemes may be complemented by the 'Safer Routes to Schools' (SRS) initiative;
- continuous pedestrian footways to link residential developments or community facilities on the edge of the settlement to the built-up area. In line with PPS3 the Department, through Planning Service, will seek to ensure that developers play their part;
- additional crossing facilities where people normally wish to cross, taking account of safety and the volume of traffic; and
- traffic calming measures to reduce inappropriate speeds and volumes where demand occurs. Such schemes may provide further opportunities to improve pedestrian crossing facilities where people wish to cross and gateway features on main routes through settlements.

Bus Measures

The Department proposes the following improvements in bus facilities in rural settlements:

- each settlement to have at least two principal bus stops equipped to modern standards;
- these principal stops will be provided with raised kerbs to allow all passengers, including those with buggies and wheelchairs to board fully accessible low floor buses; and
- each stop will have up-to-date information on the services using that stop, a convenient shelter and adjacent crossing facilities, if appropriate.

The Department proposes the following improvements in bus services to rural settlements:

- introduce new services linking isolated communities to villages and towns using the Rural Transport Fund. Indicative service standards by settlement classifications are shown in Table E4.2.

Table E4.2 - Proposed Service Levels For Rural Settlements

Settlement	Population Band population	Minimum journeys / day	Notes
Other Small Towns	4500 - 5000	6	6 return journeys every weekday
Villages and Intermediate Settlements	1000 - 4499	3	3 return journeys every weekday
Small Village	500 - 999	1	1 return journey every weekday

For Hamlets with a population of less than 500 a proposed service frequency of two return services per week is envisaged using Demand Responsive Transport DRT.

The RTS identified a total spend of approximately £27 million (at 2005 prices) for the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) during the SRTP period. However, since 2002, a substantial increase in RTF investment has been secured with a current annual budget of £3.75 million.

Proposed Measures in Open Countryside

Highway Measures

The SRTP proposes the following measures for the open countryside:

- to continue to identify a range of improvement measures in the Rural Areas using existing systems to prioritise maintenance, collision remedial and network development schemes; and
- in future that the rural prioritisation procedures take linkage to the RSTN into account as an additional attribute.

The RDS Strategic Planning Guideline for Rural Northern Ireland RNI 4.2 states that the Department will “continue to invest in maintaining and upgrading the rural road network and particularly local rural roads feeding the Regional Strategic Transport Network”. Roads Service has well established and proven procedures to prioritise maintenance and improvements on the rural network. The procedures take account of attributes of need such as traffic flows and the strategic importance of routes, as identified by the Protected Route Network designated in PPS3.

Bus Measures

The RTS acknowledges that the private car plays an important and dominant role in the Rural Areas, and for people with cars that will remain so. However, it is also recognised that public transport is important, not only to offer a more sustainable choice, but especially to provide access to key services for people without cars. In addition it is noted that a mix of different types of public transport service is necessary to improve access from the Rural Areas in a manner affordable to Government and that the mix is likely to vary from location to location.

The RTS includes proposals in the open countryside for:

- new innovative Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services for residents living in open countryside areas and for residents with a mobility impairment in rural settlements across Northern Ireland; and
- investigating the potential cost of providing these levels of service through evaluation of a number of current innovative DRT initiatives including flexibly routed Rural Rover schemes and the recently introduced door-to-door services for mobility impaired residents in the OUA.

The RTS identifies a spend of £47.25 million (at 2005 prices) for DRT initiatives during the SRTP period.

E5. Additional Proposals

This section outlines the balance of measures which comprise the SRTP. These are measures which cannot be forecast reliably and are not allocated explicitly to either the OUA or the Rural Areas and are therefore classified as cross-cutting. Table E5.1 summarises the total costs of cross-cutting measures by mode. As for all Transport Plans, the implementation of individual measures will be subject to the completion of appropriate economic and environmental appraisals and the normal budgetary processes. The principal measures contributing to the modal totals are explained below.

Table E5.1 - Costs of Cross-Cutting Measures

Mode	Cross-cutting OUA and Rural Measures (£m)
All Modes	4.5
Walk/Cycle	28.6
Rail	0.9
Bus	293.1
Highways	1707.8
Total	2034.9

All Modes

Research, monitoring and review work will seek to ensure that the measures implemented are achieving their desired outcomes and remain relevant. This may require detailed data collection and computer modelling exercises.

Walk/Cycle

The SRTP proposes expenditure totalling £24.7 million on traffic calming in the OUA and the Rural Areas. The objective of a traffic-calming scheme is to improve driver behaviour and reduce traffic speed in order to make the environment safer for both pedestrians and cyclists.

The SRTP proposes expenditure totalling £3.7 million for improving accessibility in the OUA and the Rural Areas. The proposals include dropped kerbs and other measures to assist all users including people with disabilities. A further £0.2 million is proposed for promoting sustainable modes.

Bus Measures

The RTS identified expenditure totalling £48.2 million (at 2005 prices) on **Fuel Duty Rebate (FDR)** in the OUA and the Rural Areas. FDR is a grant which rebates a proportion of the duty paid by bus operators on fuel used in providing approved stage carriage services. Current annual expenditure is over £6 million for the SRTP area

The RTS identified expenditure totalling £102.3 million (at 2005 prices) on the **Concessionary Fares Scheme** in the OUA and the Rural Areas. The Scheme offers free or half fare travel on all public transport in Northern Ireland to elderly people,

people with disabilities and young people (up to 16 years) in full time education. Current annual expenditure is over £9 million for the SRTP area.

The SRTP proposes expenditure totalling £128.1 million on the **Bus Replacement Programme** in the OUA and the Rural Areas. The programme helps Translink purchase new accessible vehicles and achieve high standards of comfort and accessibility across its stage carriage fleet.

The balance of measures making up the bus total include other Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company costs for which the Department is responsible.

Highway Measures

The SRTP proposes expenditure totalling £922.7 million on **structural roads maintenance** in the OUA and the Rural Areas. Structural maintenance involves the upkeep of the surfaces and foundations of the road and footway network. As well as strengthening the foundations of roads to withstand the damage inflicted by heavy vehicles, structural maintenance also improves skidding resistance and makes an important contribution to road safety.

The SRTP includes an allowance for spending totalling £27.3 million for specific **collision remedial schemes** within the SRTP area. The Department is committed to ensuring that the public road network is developed and maintained to improve road safety. Roads Service has prepared a Road Safety Plan, which sets out its intent to make a contribution to the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy.

The SRTP proposes expenditure totalling £301.2 million on **routine maintenance** in the OUA and the Rural Areas. Routine Maintenance refers to a wide range of activities such as winter service (gritting and snow removal), bridge maintenance, replacing street lighting bulbs, the maintenance of signs and road markings, cutting grass verges and clearing drainage gullies.

The SRTP proposes expenditure totalling £67.5 million on **bridge strengthening** in the OUA and the Rural Areas to continue an extensive assessment and strengthening programme allowing vehicles of up to 40 tonnes use our roads.

The SRTP proposes expenditure totalling £9.2 million on **Street Lighting Capital Programmes** in the OUA and the Rural Areas. Streetlights can help road safety in urban areas, but they also help create better conditions for walking and cycling and aid the uptake of public transport.

The SRTP proposes expenditure totalling £341.0 million for **network management** costs in the OUA and the Rural Areas. These 'overhead' costs of managing the road network include staff, buildings and Information Technology.

The balance of measures making up the Highway total includes car park maintenance and promoting sustainable modes.