

## Respondent's Details

**Name:**

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**Please Return by 19 February 2010**

**Organisation (if applicable):**

NITHC / Translink

**To:**

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**I am responding:** as an individual  on behalf of an organisation

**Is your response confidential? If so, please explain why (see Appendix 1 "Confidentiality of Consultations – Freedom of Information Act 2000").**

**Provision is made throughout this questionnaire for you to provide additional comments. If, however, you wish to provide more detailed comments on any aspect of the consultation, please feel free to append additional materials and supplementary documents, clearly marked and cross-referenced to the relevant questions, as necessary.**

## Questions on Detailed Policy Proposals

### Question 1 (page 15)

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

Yes  No

Comments:

**The Department clearly has the authority to develop and implement significant public transport initiatives. If the business case shows the rapid transit proposal to be good value, if it is affordable and if its implementation can be delivered without an abstraction or reduction of funding for current public transport (PT) networks, the Department should exercise its authority to implement the proposals in the quickest, most cost effective and low risk manner possible. The Department may wish to consider implementation through direct award to its arm's length body – Translink as part of a best value approach to ensure capturing benefits of Translink's expertise**

**In addition, if it is the Department's intention to have the necessary authority at this time to implement Light Rail rapid transit as well as Bus rapid transit (c.f. comments on pages 8 & 9 re flexibility), then adaptation of existing institutional structures / powers might be a more pragmatic approach.**

### Question 2 (page 16)

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

Yes  No

Comments:

**NITHC / Translink – a DRD arm's length body – already has these powers. These could be utilised to implement the rapid transit proposals in the quickest, most cost effective and low risk manner possible and thereby maximising the synergies that exist between this organisation and DRD**

**Question 3 (page 16)**

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?

Yes  No

**Comments:**

**Translink – a DRD arm’s length body – already has these powers as well as considerable and demonstrable expertise and cost effective and COPE accredited procurement structures. It would be possible for the organisation to procure, perform/deliver or advise on these aspects with a potential to maximise value to the public purse.**

**These could be utilised to implement the rapid transit proposals in the quickest, most cost effective and low risk manner possible.**

**Question 4 (page 17)**

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

Yes  No

**Comments:**

**Regulation EU1370 requires a public service contract to be in place for operation of the rapid transit proposals. However, a direct award contract is compliant within the regulation which would have the benefit of implementation in the quickest, most cost effective and low risk manner possible thereby minimising potential cost and bureaucracy.**

### Question 5 (page 18)

Do you agree that the Department should be responsible for:

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

Yes  No

Comments:

**These responsibilities are as described for the proposed PT agency within the PT Reform policy consultation in respect of current bus and rail networks. If an agency is to be established it should have these responsibilities in respect of rapid transit too. To propose otherwise would lead to duplication and inefficiency.**

**The assumption by an agency of these responsibilities and direct award of a contract is also compliant with EU1370 and would deliver the benefit of implementation in the quickest, most cost effective and low risk manner possible. It would also avoid any risk of dis-integration.**

**However, it is our understanding that the proposed public transport agency will not be established until mid 2011. If the new agency is responsible for the specification and procurement of all public transport contracts / services, including Rapid Transit; the operational commencement of the CITI route by April 2012 becomes a challenging target.**

### Question 6 (page 18)

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?

Comments:

**The references to 'exclusive rights' in respect of the operation of rapid transit are unclear. To maximise return from public investment and deliver the best total PT network for customers and Belfast, current bus services (Metro and Ulsterbus) should have rights of use over any new infrastructure, etc. Equally, if there are to be financial incentives offered to grow rapid transit it seems only fair and reasonable that the same**

**should be offered to bus operators.**

**The use of financial incentives in relation to performance contracts should not mean an abstraction or reduction of funding for current public transport (PT) networks. The numbers so far presented show substantial abstraction. Bus passengers in Belfast are carried without revenue subsidy and it would be a shame if either subsidy were subsequently required to deliver the network of services on which current Metro customers rely or that carriage of the same people was by a more expensive means. It is not clear what is anticipated to happen to existing services along corridors such as Newtownards Road which are convenient for existing users. Indeed it would be unfortunate (and no doubt an unintended consequence) if public transport funding for services outside Belfast were displaced to deliver provision of rapid transit in Belfast.**

**In practice the relevance of financial incentives will vary with each of the candidate corridors for rapid transit. It is noted that the Department retains responsibility for fare levels and it is unclear as to the future relationship between maximizing passenger use (and social equity) with maximizing revenue. On the CITI route in particular, the opportunity to grow the market is totally dependent on the build rate and uptake of the surrounding development lands. On EWAY and WWAY growth will be largely influence by the introduction of complementary policies e.g. city centre parking restraint**

#### **Question 7 (page 20)**

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

**Yes  No**

**Comments:**

**It is recognised that current byelaws for bus and rail networks are outdated and in need of modernisation; there is an opportunity to modernise these in conjunction with the powers proposed in relation to rapid transit operation.**

**Through an integrated approach there would be consistency across the networks and in any shared facility, for which rapid transit would be liable to the same charging regimes as proposed in the PT Reform policy proposals.**

**Question 8 (page 21)**

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

Yes  No

**Comments:**

**Enforcement of PT corridors which would all be shared by rapid transit, Metro and Ulsterbus is essential for most efficient operation and maximum customer benefit. In fact extending to all corridors will completely maximise benefits.**

**It should be noted that the shared operation of these corridors will mean less active enforcement may be required as intensity of PT use will be significant.**

**In particular, an integrated and consistent approach to enforcement is needed rather than a 'premier league' standard for the limited number of corridors on which Rapid Transit is likely to operate and a 'lower division' standard for the remaining arterial routes that have QBCs. It will be important to ensure that prioritising rapid transit vehicles does not disadvantage either other vehicles traversing the same roads or other services which cross the rapid transit route.**

**Question 9 (page 21)**

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

Yes  No

**Comments:**

**These powers should be fully integrated / subsumed into the approach proposed for the agency within the PT Reform policy consultation. Translink already provides extensive integrated ticketing such as PlusBus and the recently launched iLink and has a wide network of off-vehicle ticketing through bus and rail stations, the web, agents in Metro and very soon through PayPoint outlets across the whole of Northern Ireland. Cash payments already account for a reducing proportion of fares and work continues to reduce this further. Translink has experience of specifying, designing and tendering for cost effective ticketing systems.**

**Although desirable, stored value has not proven to be an economic proposition and current equipment could not accommodate it.**

**However, were further funding available it would certainly be desirable. The cost of on-street ticketing also needs to be carefully evaluated and experience from elsewhere considered.**

**Translink could play a valuable role in the development of ticketing strategy and system implementation as the organisation has extensive experience of running the largest smartcard system on these islands (outside London) which allows people to travel on more than one route or more than one mode already (essentially multi-operator).**

**The nature of any involvement would depend exactly on how roles and responsibilities are allocated under public transport reform.**

**Please make any further comments on the Detailed Policy Proposals here, ensuring that you clearly refer to any relevant questions or responses submitted above.**

**Given the policy objectives for Belfast's Rapid Transit System (c.f. page 13) other powers and reforms will also be needed in areas such as securing developer contributions for service support as well as infrastructural improvements, interfaces with other Government Departments particularly Roads Service as to the allocation of road space, priority afforded at junctions, etc. and DSD & DOE in optimizing route alignments, maximizing the sizes of catchment areas for individual stops, etc.**