

Respondent's Details

Name: Mr. Peter Baillie

Please Return by 19 February 2010

Organisation (if applicable):

Ulster Unionist Party East Belfast
Association

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”).**

No

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:

We support the aim of improving public transport and of taking people out of cars and onto public transport or other modes of transport such as cycling or walking. The Department needs to have the authority to implement the rapid transit proposals.

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:

We do agree that the Department should take land acquisition powers for the implementation of the rapid transit system, but this should be limited to where strictly necessary and should be for the minimum amount, where absolutely necessary. The Department should have to demonstrate that any land acquisition is strictly necessary for the rapid transit system.

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:

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:

Yes we agree, but it would be important to understand how the rapid transit system will fit with the other bus and train services in Belfast. Performance targets should be set in the context of the public transport targets as a whole for Belfast, and not simply in isolation.

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:

We agree, subject to the Department taking appropriate advice. We would suggest that service levels be set by reference to best practice benchmarks elsewhere. We would suggest that there may be a case for regulation to be added to NI authority for utility regulation (NIAUR), as this type of regulation is their area of expertise.

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:

In principle this sounds sensible. However we cannot comment beyond this as no details or proposals have been provided. Sufficient flexibility should be provided in the contract to allow for future re-negotiation of elements of the contract with the operator to allow for changes as a result of innovation, perhaps at fixed review points. We do not think it would be sensible to specify incentives upfront without understanding the possibilities. It would be best to allow for renegotiation in light of specific innovations proposed by the operator.

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:

Translink have powers at present. The operator of rapid transit should have similar powers.

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:

We agree. However plans for rapid transit routes must take into account plans for local parking for businesses impacted along the route. These businesses must not be left without access to their premises, nor should customers not be able to park nearby businesses on the 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:

The LUAS system in Dublin has demonstrated that this type of system can work well, and will facilitate rapid transit, without the driver having to delay the bus to issue tickets to passengers.

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

We note that the detailed routes will be the subject of further public consultation, and welcome the opportunity to comment in due course.

We are strongly of the view that the Comber Greenway should be maintained as a vehicle-free route for cycling and walking and health and leisure pursuits. This is the view of the overwhelming majority of users of the Greenway (>90%) who value it highly as a traffic free, 'country in the city', health and leisure amenity.

Given the public view, and given the economic realities brought about through the recession, and given Peter Robinson's recently expressed views that the Comber Greenway should be part of a joined up network of tourist and cycle and leisure routes, we would request that no further work be carried out on assessing this route for rapid transit. All activity on that assessment should be stopped now, and no further money wasted on assessing this.

We also urge that a review of parking facilities along proposed routes to facilitate business access be undertaken to ensure that this is addressed as part of any detailed plans for rapid transit brought forward. This will avoid unnecessary detriment to local businesses along rapid transit routes. This would be complementary to the intention to promote regeneration along the routes.

Questions on Integrated Impact Assessment

In considering these questions you should bear in mind that it is proposed that a further Integrated Impact Assessment screening exercise will be undertaken prior to the implementation phase of the Rapid Transit project.

Question 1

Do you have any views on the Integrated Impact Assessment Screening conclusion reached by the Department?

Yes No

Comments:

Impact on the environment will need to be assessed when the proposed routes are consulted upon in due course.

Question 2

Are there any particular equality issues that need to be considered in relation to the policy proposals contained in the Detailed Policy Proposals booklet?

Yes No

Comments:

Comments on Equality Screening

We welcome your comments on any aspect of the draft equality screening document. Please bear in mind that it is proposed that a further screening exercise will be undertaken prior to the implementation phase of the Rapid Transit project.

Comments:

Impact on the environment will need to be assessed when the proposed routes are consulted upon in due course. We do not agree that there will be no environmental impact from the full assessment process. A full environmental impact assessment should be carried before finalising the selection of the proposed routes.