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A Vision for Transport Planning

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Vision 2035: Transport, Logistics and the Economy



LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORT

VISION 2035



A report on the future of logistics and transport in the UK

CILT's original 2011 Vision 2035 report paved the way for a series of new papers looking in detail at various aspects of the UK's future infrastructure and planning needs

The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport's (CILT) well-received report *Vision 2035* was published in September 2011. Its purpose was to look to the future and visualise how transport and logistics in Britain would develop, taking account of demographic changes, population growth, technological developments and social and political change. The aim was to identify the challenges the sector would face and the policy instruments needed to serve society as effectively as possible.

The main conclusions of the report were:

- Provision of effective freight transport capacity and reliable journey times must be key priorities to support recovery and growth
- Transport demand will be strongly influenced by population growth and an ageing population, and where these changes will occur
- The UK will never have sufficient capacity to meet all potential demands for transport services; the financial burdens on the UK limit its ability to fund new infrastructure over the next decade, and in the medium term the issue will be exacerbated by the fall in tax revenues from vehicle fuel duty
- Economic recovery can only be achieved if sufficient capacity can be released on, and added to, our transport networks, which requires demand management and behavioural change, as well as additional infrastructure
- The logistics and transport sectors should take the lead in promoting a reduction in freight and passenger traffic by supporting:
 - Alternatives to travel
 - Reduced commuting distances
 - Shorter, more localised supply chains
- Information technology has the potential to revolutionise the way we use and manage transport and logistics services and to make better use of capacity
- Transport planning must be integrated with economic and spatial planning and administered by organisations with regional or sub-regional powers

Vision 2035 did not claim to be the last word on the subject; neither should it be taken as established CILT doctrine. The Institute regards it as a starting point for continuing work on likely future changes and the development of more detailed ideas on how best to meet the likely demands on logistics and the transport system. The Institute is therefore promoting a series of studies, discussions and other activities to build on the original *Vision 2035*, update it and highlight new and emerging issues. Our new series of reports is called: *Vision 2035: Transport, Logistics and the Economy*.

This report, *A Vision for Transport Planning*, prepared in association with the Transport Planning Society (TPS), is the third of the series. In due course, we will be publishing further reports, and holding discussion evenings and events on a number of topics ranging from transport planning to aviation. The first report: *The Future of UK Freight*, was published in March 2014 and the second: *The Future of Aviation*, in August 2014.

The Institute hopes that this series of publications and events will stimulate debate, lead to a fuller understanding of future issues, and generate ideas on how our own members and the transport and logistics sectors more widely can help to improve our response to them.



A Vision for Transport Planning

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Introduction

- 1.1 Transport is at the heart of so much that affects our daily lives. A strong economy that can compete internationally requires high-quality networks to distribute goods efficiently, must enable people to travel to work and on business reliably, and provide the freedom of movement for everyone to enjoy their lives. Easy access to education, health and leisure facilities also forms an integral part of the service that transport systems must offer.
- 1.2 Over the next 20 years, forecasts suggest there will be a steady trend of economic growth and rising population, creating additional pressures on our transport networks. At the same time, industry and commerce will stress the need to avoid the costs of inefficiency caused by congestion and unreliability, while the public will demand a higher quality journey experience and increased mobility.
- 1.3 However, public funds for investment and operations are likely to remain restricted, and there is limited political or public appetite for major new roads. We will have to make more effective use of our transport systems to meet new and shifting patterns of demand. When allocating limited funds available for extending and revising transport networks, we will need to ensure we have a detailed knowledge of the underlying rationale, as well as the broad implications and interdependencies.
- 1.4 But transport is about more than movement of goods and people. How we travel and the technology we use has a major impact on levels of carbon emissions and other pollutants. It also has a significant effect on lifestyle and wellbeing – for example, promoting active travel, particularly walking and cycling, has the potential to make an important contribution to public health. Furthermore, the quality of our built and natural environments, and how we use them, is affected by our transport infrastructure. Its design needs to lift the public realm in a style sympathetic to local sensitivities, so that people can connect with one another safely and in surroundings that encourage social fulfilment and economic activity. Design in the public realm, which has too often been overlooked, should be a crucial element of transport systems.
- 1.5 Addressing this agenda, in all its facets, goes well beyond ensuring smooth traffic flow and minimising congestion that has been a key focus in transport planning over recent decades. It is about spatial planning, supporting national and regional prosperity, quality of life, public health and improving our local and global environments.
- 1.6 Rising to the challenge will require a depth and breadth of skills, a deep awareness of how transport systems and services work and are used, and a thorough knowledge of the local and national influences that affect the demand for transport in all its guises.
- 1.7 The need for an absolute understanding of local requirements and circumstances cannot be overstated. This emphasises the case for reversing the trend, entrenched over recent decades, of power shifting from local government to the centre, and for adopting the principles of subsidiarity. The centre should provide a guiding national transport framework for local institutions to work within, but only perform those tasks that cannot be carried out effectively at the local level.

- 1.8 Politicians will require the confidence and understanding to set clear policies and apply them consistently. In addition, they must provide a strong lead in ensuring effective co-operation between all parties involved in transport, economic, spatial, health and environmental management. This is fundamental to success.
- 1.9 Private sector investors with a clear grasp of the opportunities and policy priorities will also have a key role, working in close co-operation with the public sector.
- 1.10 The professionals responsible for planning and delivering transport systems and services must have a thorough knowledge of the policy framework and the personal and professional skills to engage with all decision-makers and stakeholders. They will also need to work closely with a wide range of colleagues from other professions to ensure the provision of cost effective transport systems that reflect national policy, local aspirations and benefit individual users, as well as society as a whole. Those involved will need to include spatial planners and urban designers, civil engineers, transport operators, economists, environmental and climate specialists, social scientists, health practitioners, investment analysts and lawyers.
- 1.11 This ability to bring together knowledge from a wide range of disciplines, and advise communities, stakeholders and users sympathetically, will be of paramount importance in helping decision-makers define objectives and determining how our transport networks should develop. The transport planning profession, with its very broad base that embraces graduates from across many initial degree disciplines and an ability to understand different perspectives, can play a central role.
- 1.12 Given the critical importance of ensuring our transport systems adapt to and meet the future requirements of government, business and communities (while making efficient use of available resources), CILT concluded that transport planning should be the focus of one of the reports in its *Vision 2035: Transport, Logistics and the Economy* series.
- 1.13 Our report: *A Vision for Transport Planning*, sets out the conclusions from a series of workshops attended by groups of transport planners from all areas of the country and in different phases of their career. It focuses on the most appropriate governmental structure and funding arrangements to deliver transport systems and services that are consistent with a broad range of objectives – economic, spatial, global, local, environmental and health related. We also set out some key requirements for the development of transport planning skills, so that appropriate policies and measures can be considered and implemented.
- 1.14 CILT and the TPS recognise that not all will agree with every element of the vision we set out; indeed, some might not agree with any part of it. However, we consider it important that we take time to think about a preferred future and contribute to discussions on the possible shape of that future.

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What is transport planning?

Transport planning is a relatively young profession. It began as a distinct discipline in the 1960s, as economic growth and the rapid increase in road transport in particular placed new demands on our towns and cities and the networks that link them. Its emergence was closely associated with the increasing power of computing technology to support the analyses on which transport planning draws.

The work involves the preparation, assessment and implementation of policies, plans and projects to manage and improve all transport systems and services – local, regional, national, international. Its starting point is to understand and respond to the requirements of decision-makers and other stakeholders.

The central themes include the role of transport in: shaping the form and development of our towns and cities over time; supporting the economy; managing damaging transport-based pollutants to protect the local and global environment; enhancing the quality of our lives; and improving our health through active travel. Central to transport planning is a strong evidence base.

As such, transport planning covers a broad range of skills, including engineering, spatial planning, mathematical modelling, quantitative and qualitative analysis, economics, social science (including behaviour analysis), demographic analysis, environmental analysis, urban design and investment analysis, as well as transport operations.

It requires people who are numerate, analytical, good communicators and facilitators. They must be able to:

- Take account of the social, economic and environmental setting of their work and appreciate the wider context
- Understand the legal, regulatory, policy and resource framework in which they work
- Communicate effectively with decision-makers and other stakeholders, so that they can turn their visions into transport policies, strategies and plans that contribute to meeting social, economic, financial, health and environmental needs
- Design appropriate transport policies, plans, projects, systems and services
- Understand the commercial aspects of operating transport systems and services
- Work productively within multidisciplinary teams and with stakeholders and the public
- Negotiate with interested parties in the projects they are working on and facilitate their progress

Following the recession and public sector austerity measures, most transport planners today are employed by private sector consultancies, providing services to local authorities and other public sector bodies that have reduced their in-house capability, as well as to developers, investors and transport operators.

A Vision for Transport Planning

Developing this report



- 2.1 This report has been prepared drawing primarily, but not exclusively, on a set of four workshops conducted under the Chatham House Rule. The first, held in London in January 2013, was retrospective, but provided a foundation for looking to the future. It focused on transport policymaking and processes and the key drivers of transport planning in the 1960s and 1970s – a time when it became established as a distinct discipline. The main participants in the workshop included some of the leading figures in transport planning at that time, who continue to be involved.
- 2.2 The first workshop highlighted that governance and funding structures are central to good transport planning. It also stressed the importance of the development of appropriate transport planning methodologies and tools, and the skills required to apply them.
- 2.3 Governance and funding structures were, therefore, the primary focus of the other three workshops, held in London in October 2013, Leeds in November 2013 and London in January 2014. The final workshop considered the ideas generated at the previous meetings.

Scope of the report

- 2.4 In this report, CILT and TPS seek to set out the structures we believe are necessary to enable transport planning to meet the requirements of government, business and society over the next two decades.
- 2.5 In doing so, we fully recognise that transport is just one of many responsibilities in government, both central and local, and that planning transport is only one element in their overall transport remit. It is therefore necessary for this report to take a broad view of the structure and funding of government and how transport planning can have the most beneficial impact within the administrative and policy framework.
- 2.6 While our vision is intended to be relevant to all parts of the UK, much of the background reflects on central government in London over the past five decades, and its influence on local government. Where particularly appropriate, consideration is given to the different circumstances of the devolved administrations.
- 2.7 In setting out the vision, we recognise that we cannot consider transport planning in isolation, and that what might be ideal in a narrow transport planning context must take full account of wider issues.
- 2.8 It is important to note that references to 'the Department' are to the UK Government department responsible for transport, whatever its name.

Report structure

2.9 The next section is a summary of the key points of the report, including an overall vision for transport planning.

2.10 It is followed by sections that consider the:

- Functions of the UK Government and the devolved administrations
- Structure and functions of local government
- Regional and sub-regional perspectives
- Interrelationships between central and local governments
- Role of the private sector

2.11 These lead on to sections covering:

- Local government funding
- Procurement of professional services by the public sector
- Performance assessment and accountability in government

2.12 The document concludes with sections on:

- Research and best practice
- Transport planning skills and resources

2.13 In each of these sections we first set out a vision in which we summarise our view of where we think it desirable to be two decades from now, in 2035. This is followed by background, providing an analysis of where we are today and experience from the past in support of the vision.

Workshop reports

2.14 The reports of each of the four workshops are available, website: www.ciltuk.org.uk/PublicPolicy/PolicyandGuidance.aspx

A Vision for Transport Planning

Key points



Vision

- 3.1 Transport planning will play a key role in ensuring transport networks fulfil their potential to provide benefits across the policy agenda from economic development to improved environmental performance and public health. It will be based on a deep knowledge of how the modern world is connected and the aspirations of the wide range of stakeholders with an interest in our transport systems. It will ensure these requirements are reflected in network design and delivery. It will embrace the multiple skills needed to meet this broad agenda, and be resourced to do so. Its remit would be underpinned by medium to long-term central and local government spatial planning strategies and substantial devolution of powers to strategic local authorities.

Context for transport planning

- 3.2 The decades before 2035 will be characterised by burgeoning population growth, steady economic performance, an increasing requirement to reduce harmful emissions and a need to promote healthier, more active lifestyles. These issues, combined with ongoing constraints on public resources, will place new demands on our transport systems and services, and increase the need for innovative solutions from the public, private and community sectors. The resource constraints will make it essential for transport systems and services to have the capability to meet a variety of needs, assessed against a range of new yardsticks that reflect evolving priorities. These will include health and social factors, in addition to well-established assessments, such as cost-benefit, financial and environmental measures.
- 3.3 Achieving public endorsement of transport-related policies and plans will require a wide range of skills, not least political acumen, and must involve successful collaboration between a wide range of professions and bodies, as well as decision-makers in the public and private sectors.

Governance

- 3.4 It will be critical for stakeholders and the general public to have confidence in the ability of government, both central and local, to deliver the services they need, efficiently and on schedule. Bungled project management must be the very rare exception.
- 3.5 The planning and management of our transport networks and services requires a thorough knowledge of local needs, circumstances and priorities. The progressive centralisation of government over recent decades means current structures are not well suited to this task. Transport is one of the functions to which the principle of subsidiarity is very applicable.
- 3.6 Accordingly, central government's primary responsibilities would be to develop and manage the national road and rail networks, and to foster the development and management of airports and ports. These tasks would be carried out through agencies resourced with specialist staff.
- 3.7 In addition, a crucial central government responsibility would be to establish and maintain an overarching framework, process and funding regime that provides clear, high-level direction and enables high-quality decision-making at all levels. Within that framework, local government would develop and deliver spatial, economic and transport strategies and plans to meet the specific needs of their areas.
- 3.8 The Department¹ would prepare a medium to longer term spatial strategy for England covering economic development, land use, transport, the environment and climate change, with strong links to health and education. The Scottish and Welsh Governments already prepare broadly similar strategies. The Northern Irish Government would be required to prepare and publish one.
- 3.9 The strategies would cover a period of 15–25 years and be refreshed at least once every five years. They would be binding on incoming governments until a new strategy had been consulted on and put in place. In England, preparation of the strategy would be the responsibility of a Cabinet Committee that included the Secretaries of State for all relevant departments, as well as the Chancellor. It would be drawn up working closely with key stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh Governments would have comparable responsibilities.
- 3.10 In England, there would be an upper tier of local government based on city regions, where appropriate, and on existing shire county structures elsewhere. These strategic local authorities would have responsibility for economic development, spatial planning, transport (including all roads and parking), waste disposal, the environment and climate change. In city regions, the strategic authority would be complemented by a second tier responsible for some local services. In the rest of the country, shire county-based authorities would either have a similar structure or be unitary authorities.

1. This paper is based on the assumption that the UK Government will continue to be the government responsible within England for those matters devolved to the other national governments. Should England have its own national government, the matters considered here to be the responsibility of the UK Government, would, instead, be the responsibility of the English Government.



- 3.11 The strategic local authorities would be empowered by new responsibilities for raising and retaining a significant proportion of their income directly from their local area, making them considerably less dependent on central government grants. Authorities in areas with particular needs would continue to receive a formula-based equalising grant from the centre.
- 3.12 As with central government, the strategic authorities would have a statutory duty to prepare a 15–25-year spatial strategy, refreshed once every five years, covering economic development, land use, transport, the environment and climate change, with strong links to health and education. The strategies would be developed in partnership with key stakeholders, and would apply until replaced.
- 3.13 Formal partnerships between city region authorities and their adjacent authorities would be responsible for specifying and managing local rail services and awarding franchise contracts for interlinking public transport services.
- 3.14 With very extensive devolution of power from the centre to the strategic authorities, local government would attract visionary politicians, as well as highly competent administrators and professionals, expert in their fields.

Professional practice

- 3.15 All employers would provide well-designed and well-managed professional development training, encouraging all staff to work towards a professional qualification, which would be recognised as their careers progress. Client bodies would require transport planners advising them to be professionally qualified.
- 3.16 Transport research, as well as the preparation and dissemination of best practice, would be the responsibility of a body governed by representatives of central and local government, transport providers, the transport professions and the research community. It would be funded by central government, the strategic local authorities, transport providers and other interested parties.
- 3.17 The procurement of professional services by public authorities would be based on a value-for-money assessment that reflects the wide range of policy issues that transport interventions affect. Professionals with relevant expertise in the work to be undertaken would play a central role in the specification and selection processes. This would emphasise the need for, and value of, suitably qualified staff within client authorities.

Transport planning profession

- 3.18 Transport planning would be recognised as a challenging, innovative profession serving the community at all levels, and attracting high-quality graduates from a wide range of first degree disciplines, as well as school-leavers.
- 3.19 There would continue to be a range of world class Masters courses in transport, helping graduates develop the technical and the generic skills they need as transport planning professionals. Course content would be revised regularly to match the needs of the profession as they emerge.
- 3.20 There would be a number of high-profile, widely respected transport planners willing and able to speak on behalf of the profession.
- 3.21 Transport planners would play a central role in ensuring the limited resources available for the provision and operation of our transport systems and services are used to best effect. In doing so, they would work with all stakeholders (clients, operators, investors, local interests and others, as appropriate) and across the entire policy spectrum of central and local government to enhance the efficiency of transport networks and the wider value they provide.
- 3.22 Their work would be influential in defining the essential contribution of transport in fostering economic development, accommodating demographic change, minimising any damaging effects of transport and growth on the environment, and providing opportunity for a good quality of life. Place making would be a core element of their role, skilfully balancing smooth transport flows and convenient travel with issues such as pedestrian access to facilities, street environment, air quality and the quality of the public realm. They would also play a key role in determining the pace and timing of change in transport systems and services, including the interaction between different projects and modes, by balancing need with resource availability and opportunity.

A Vision for Transport Planning

UK Government and the devolved administrations



Vision

- 4.1 Effective transport policy would support many aspects of government activity in fields ranging from environment and climate change to economic development and health. In England, this very broad agenda would be fulfilled most effectively by a dedicated Transport Department with strong links to every area of government it impacts, rather than by incorporating transport into a large department responsible for a number of complementary functions. In the devolved administrations, the transport brief and its assimilation into other policy areas could be delivered by a Minister with a wider set of closely related responsibilities, such as economic development or local government.
- 4.2 The Department would be led by a Secretary of State committed to integrating policy with all areas of government where transport has an impact. The Secretary of State would be supported by a team of senior civil servants with a high level of expertise in transport, and, ideally, they would be motivated to stay in office for a sufficient length of time to obtain an in-depth understanding of the brief.
- 4.3 As at present, the Department would have overall responsibility for all aspects of transport within central government. Its remit would include airports, ports and harbours, roads and traffic, rail, buses, cycling and walking.
- 4.4 The UK Cabinet would have a formal Spatial Strategy Committee, established by statute. It would consist of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretaries of State responsible for economic development, climate change, the environment, health, local government, land use planning and transport. The committee would have a duty to prepare a medium to longer term (15–25-year) spatial strategy for England in close liaison with key public and private stakeholders, consult on it and lay it before Parliament. The strategy would be subject to refresh every five years, and it would be binding until replaced under a statutory process. The devolved administrations would each be required to prepare and publish a similar strategy. (The Scottish and Welsh Governments already do so.)
- 4.5 The national Spatial Strategies would provide the frameworks for similar plans that strategic local authorities would be required to publish.
- 4.6 Like the London Plan, prepared for the Mayor, the national and local spatial strategies would guide consistent decision-making by ensuring the constituent elements support one another (including people and places, economic development, transport, the environment and climate change). They would also recognise uncertainties and allow for emerging opportunities, avoiding the rigidity often associated with master planning.
- 4.7 The Department would focus on high-level policy. Key tasks would include defining the national transport strategy and creating the framework for its delivery by agencies and local government, consistent with the national spatial strategy. The Department would set a small number of high-level, carefully designed objectives to ensure a focus on the core outcomes of greatest significance. This light touch approach would provide local authorities with freedom to determine local priorities and how best to meet them, while contributing to national policy aims.
- 4.8 To inform its strategic functions and the design of a framework for local government, the Department would remain responsible for the collection, analysis and publication of nationwide sets of data relating to transport. It would also be responsible for the development and maintenance of a sound multi-modal national transport model.
- 4.9 The Department's responsibilities for the management and development of national transport networks would be exercised through modal agencies in line with the national strategy framework.
- 4.10 Responsibility for all local transport would be fully devolved to the strategic local authorities.
- 4.11 Government at all levels would take a longer term approach to policy and planning, avoiding stop-start scenarios and progressing policies, plans and projects with determination. It would also be highly efficient in procuring and progressing work, ensuring timely and cost-effective implementation.

Background

- 4.12 Despite the key role transport plays (or should play) in many facets of policy and life, the Department has been regarded as having a junior role in government for many years. The UK Secretary of State for Transport is normally in the lower ranks of Cabinet. In the February 2014 Cabinet, for example, he was above just four others – Culture, Media and Sport; Northern Ireland; Wales; and Leader of the House of Lords. Overall, the Department is not seen as demonstrating the strength of leadership – political, administrative and technical – needed to ensure that the wider role of transport in the economy and society is fully recognised across government.
- 4.13 Two of the transport secretaries most widely regarded as having made particularly strong marks – Ernest Marples (1959–64) and Barbara Castle (1965–68) – held office 50 years ago. Keenly aware of the need to manage traffic, Ernest Marples commissioned both the Smeed report (a seminal road pricing document) and the Buchanan report on *Traffic in Towns*, and created the London Traffic Management Unit. Barbara Castle introduced the strong analytic base for which the Department has an enviable reputation within government. She recruited Christopher Foster and Michael Beasley to establish the principles of economic assessment and created the highly innovative Mathematical Advisory Unit (MAU) that led the way in the development of transport modelling in the UK. She also commissioned Evelyn (later Baroness) Sharp to prepare the report: *Men for the Job*, on developing transport skills and research in universities, which led to the establishment of some of today's transport Masters courses and research institutes.
- 4.14 Since 1968, there have been 28 holders of the post of Secretary of State or Minister for Transport. As a result, few have developed a full grasp of their brief or of transport's capability to act as a significant enabler of wider policy. Its potential influence on wider government policy extends significantly beyond the Department's current remit and has done so for decades.
- 4.15 At various times, this has been explicitly recognised (although arguably not fully understood) by government. Since the 1960s, responsibility for transport has been absorbed within a department covering local government and environment functions on several occasions. These include the Department of the Environment created under Peter Walker in 1970 and disbanded by Harold Wilson in 1976. In 1997, the Blair Government effectively re-created this structure as the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) under John Prescott. In 2001, DETR was restructured as the Department for Transport Local Government and the Regions, which lasted just a year before the decision to revert to a standalone Department for Transport (DfT). Although John Prescott's large department had proved unwieldy, it did not include economic development in which transport has a key role. With the creation of DTLR, environment and climate change was also absent from the portfolio – another aspect of policy on which transport has a highly significant impact. Links with health policy, in which active travel (walking and cycling) is now seen as increasingly important, have not been developed to their full potential, and neither have links with the departments responsible for economic development.
- 4.16 Regardless of transport's place in the administrative structure, over many governments, the relevant Department has failed to set out a clear and abiding national transport strategy; indeed, it has rarely tried to do so. The one recent exception was: *Transport 2010: The Ten-Year Plan*, published in 2000, which proved too detailed and prescriptive to succeed or to set a lasting foundation.
- 4.17 Although a clear strategic framework for the railways has been established, it exists in isolation from the Department's other modal responsibilities. The Coalition is planning to apply some features of rail strategy to the road network currently managed by the Highways Agency. However, there is no strong evidence of a truly strategic overall approach to transport policy being developed. There is also a strong perception that the Department places a disproportionate level of attention on local rather than national issues, scrutinising councils' decisions and projects in detail.
- 4.18 Over recent decades, the Department has developed a number of transport models, but they are seen as having deficiencies, with serious questions about whether the National Transport Model is truly fit for purpose. In addition, the Department is often perceived as regarding transport planning as little more than economic assessment. Many in the profession believe the Department has minimal understanding at senior levels of the role of good planning in the development of transport policies, strategies and projects. The Department is also seen as having a London-centric view of transport, with insufficient understanding of needs outside the capital (a weakness that is seen as applying to government more widely).

4.19 In Westminster and Whitehall, there is an evident lack of trust in the competence of local government, including its ability to make good decisions and to use available funding effectively. This situation has been apparent for a number of years and shows little sign of resolution. Despite the Coalition and Blair Governments' policies of localism, central government appears unwilling to empower local authorities and, in a number of respects, control is continuing to revert to the centre. This centralisation adversely affects local authorities' ability to attract and retain highly skilled professional staff, and to make local political office attractive for capable candidates.

4.20 The UK Government is regarded as too focused on the short term. The perception is that the Treasury is particularly driven by balancing the books for each financial year and has failed to take the lead in ensuring the UK invests in infrastructure for the longer term. Transport has a reputation as an area where it can be politically easy to make cuts in the short term, causing uncertainty for the supply side and resource shortages when the Treasury releases the brakes. In addition, many politicians are driven by a search for media exposure, photo opportunities and sound bites. Projects can take an excessive time to move from initial concept to operation. The time being taken for completion of Thameslink 2000 and to progress improvements of the A14 and A303 are but some of the examples often cited.

4.21 The devolved administrations are viewed as having a mixed record. However, the creation of Transport Scotland is widely regarded as a very constructive move, providing the Scottish Government with a highly professional resource.

4.22 Unlike the UK Government which, in the exercise of its English functions has eschewed the preparation of a national transport strategy, the Scottish Government has a National Spatial Strategy that reflects:

'a commitment to respond to the challenge of climate change; the role of our cities in driving growth; the critical importance of knowledge and skills; the increasing premium investors are putting on quality of place and environment; and developing digital technologies.'

4.23 The Scottish Spatial Strategy is supported by a National Transport Strategy, with three key strategic outcomes:

- Improve journey times and connections between our cities and towns and our global markets to tackle congestion and provide access to key markets
- Reduce emissions to tackle climate change
- Improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of transport to give people the choice of public transport and real alternatives to the car

4.24 The Welsh Government also has a National Spatial Plan, providing a 20-year vision. The objectives include:

- Making sure decisions are taken with regard to their impact beyond sectoral or administrative boundaries and that the core values of sustainable development govern everything we do
- Setting the context for local and community planning
- Influencing where we spend money through understanding the roles of, and interactions between, places
- Providing a clear evidence base for the public, private and third (voluntary) sectors to develop policy and action

4.25 The Greater London Act requires the Mayor to prepare the London Plan, covering land use, transport, the economy, housing, health and the environment.

A Vision for Transport Planning

Local government



Vision

- 5.1 Local government would be based on areas large enough to support sound strategic planning for economic development, land use and transport. There would be a consistent structure within each of the UK nations (but differing between nations), providing clarity of function and responsibility.
- 5.2 In the major English urban areas, the strategic local authorities would cover city regions, incorporating both the central city and the surrounding area of mutual dependency. Elsewhere in England, away from the major urban areas, they would be based on established county structures.
- 5.3 Within the city regions, the strategic authority would be complemented by a second tier responsible for some local services. These second tier responsibilities would be broadly similar to those of the London Boroughs, other than for local roads and parking, which would be the responsibility of the strategic authority. By statute, the strategic authorities would have primacy in those matters within their remit, enabling them to make decisions affecting their communities with only light touch control by central government.
- 5.4 In the rest of England, shire county-based authorities would have a similar structure or be unitary authorities. Crucially, the structure would be such as to enable the authorities to plan and deliver all local services with great sensitivity to community needs.
- 5.5 The strategic authorities would be required to prepare, consult on and publish a medium to longer term (15–25-year) spatial strategy for their area that would reflect the high-level policy set out in the central government strategy. The strategy would cover economic development, spatial planning (including housing, employment, transport and waste disposal), climate change, the local environment, conservation and design. It would be refreshed every five years and be binding on any incoming administration until it had been replaced by one prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements (as is the case in London).
- 5.6 Formal partnerships between city regions and the adjacent strategic authorities would be responsible for specifying and managing local rail services and awarding service franchise contracts. Each strategic authority would be empowered to award bus operating contracts using a franchise model (most likely similar that used by Transport for London (TfL)), forming partnerships with adjoining authorities for cross boundary services. They would also have the power to set, collect and retain charges for the use of their roads in addition to the current congestion charging powers.
- 5.7 The mix of road pricing powers and control over public transport would be among a menu of options to deliver efficient use of transport networks. Deployment of these powers would be covered by integrated transport plans within the strategic spatial planning framework. Objectives would include promoting economic and urban development in designated areas, as well as access to key local retail destinations and community facilities
- 5.8 Impacts on prosperity and quality of life in local town centres would be a key metric. It would drive a balance between investment to ensure ease of pedestrian movement (itself a significant determinant of economic success), attractive public realm and efficient access by cycle, car and public transport.
- 5.9 The strategic authorities would have a duty to inform the public of their multi-modal choices throughout their journey (directly and/or by making the necessary source data fully available to third parties – open data – as in London). As well as receiving transparent information on travel choices, the public would be made aware of the financial and environmental costs of alternatives. Effective provision of this information would play a key role in managing the supply of and demand for transport services, and balancing capacity and usage across all modes. This would include joining up all different types of transport, including patient transport, public transport and private transport, into integrated networks.
- 5.10 With very extensive devolution of power from the centre to the strategic authorities and a stimulating statutory remit, local government would attract visionary politicians. as well as highly competent administrators and professionals expert in their fields.
- 5.11 The evolution from the current arrangements to the future structure would take place in stages, as local authorities develop their strengths and methods of raising finances from within their area, and as trust is built between the centre and local authorities (in both directions).

Background

- 5.12 When transport planning was developing as a process and a skill in the 1960s and into the 1970s, local authorities had considerable powers and authority, with able political and professional leadership. It was through the determination of councillors supported by highly competent officers that Tyne and Wear Metro was built, and key parts of today's motorway network were developed through the drive of County Surveyors.
- 5.13 However, since then, a coalition of Westminster and Whitehall has progressively weakened local government, taking more and more powers to the centre. Today, we have one of the most centralised governance systems in the western world. The deliberate weakening of local government has made serving on local authorities and a career in local government significantly less attractive for aspiring politicians and ambitious administrators and professionals. The lack of trust shown in local government by Westminster and Whitehall, and the downward spiral created, has become self-perpetuating.
- 5.14 The early commitment of the Coalition Government to localism has led to some increases in effective local empowerment, including the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Local Transport Boards. However, the overall initiative has been very limited in effect, and some of the processes associated with the new bodies are inconsistent with the principle of localism. Furthermore, the creation of LEPs and Local Transport Boards has complicated governance structures and responsibilities.
- 5.15 The creation of the post of Mayor of London, coupled with the devolution of nearly all responsibility for spending decisions and transport within the capital, is seen as a clear demonstration of what can be achieved when local government is truly empowered. Both Mayors to date have been charismatic, high-profile individuals, supported by an administration that has been able to attract and retain highly talented staff. This has enabled successful delivery of major transport programmes, including the Congestion Charge, Oyster card, bus service improvement, the Overground, Crossrail and the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. Devolved responsibility has assisted in making the case for funding that no other city region has any real prospect of attaining under current central government policies, practice and legislation.
- 5.16 In the early years of transport planning, there was a simpler and more consistent local government structure, with two-tier shire county/district authorities (together with parishes and town councils), and single-tier authorities within the metropolitan areas outside London. Successive changes outside London have created a variety of different systems in England. Some two-tier shire/district authorities remain, but where they do, the split of transport and planning powers can give rise to inconsistencies in decisions. However, much of England, in population terms, is now governed by unitary authorities that vary considerably in size in terms of area and population. The situation has been made more complex by the geographic structure and powers of LEPs. One consequence of the inconsistency between areas is confusion among residents, business and other interest groups about who does what.
- 5.17 The uniform set of arrangements that existed for the English metropolitan areas (a number of unitary authorities with an area-wide Integrated Transport Authority and Executive) also appears set to change. A complex set of arrangements is emerging as different city regions choose their own form of shared governance.
- 5.18 London is widely regarded as having a rational structure, with the Greater London Authority being responsible for economic development, strategic planning and transport as well as public transport operations, and the Boroughs having local powers. Greater Manchester has created a workable set of arrangements, demonstrating that, with good leadership, political differences can be overcome. The West Midlands, with three LEPs, is cited as an example of local politics seeming to be more important than a sound governance structure.
- 5.19 Outside London and the metropolitan areas, the structure of local government in England has two key weaknesses. Firstly, many unitaries are too small to be effective transport or strategic planning authorities, although there are some examples of success, such as York. Secondly, the structure of a shire county surrounding a unitary county town (formerly within the shire authority) can lead to conflict, and have an adverse impact on the quality of strategic planning and action. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is frequently quoted as one example of such political conflict. The small Berkshire unitaries are an example of authorities that have insufficient scale to function as effective strategic bodies, with some relationships also adversely affected by political conflict.
- 5.20 While sharing some functions, including back office services, can reduce costs for the participating authorities, political control is retained by the individual councils. Thus, the service sharing model provides no assurance of consistency in policy across the participating authorities.
- 5.21 Some see merit in enabling areas to adopt structures that meet their particular needs or are mutually acceptable at a particular juncture, rather than have a structure imposed on them. However, there is a real risk of instability with such arrangements; many alliances depend on key players, or shared interests at the time of their formation, with key bonds weakening as people or circumstance change.

- 5.22 In addition, there is a view that functions could be split between separate authorities operating in the same or similar areas. For example, one authority could be responsible for 'place' functions, including economic development, spatial planning and transport, while another could be responsible for 'people' functions, including education, health and social care, and culture and leisure.
- 5.23 Scotland and Wales each have a set of unitary authorities sharing some transport responsibilities through regional partnerships. However, the Welsh Government is considering plans to change local government arrangements, including disbanding the regional transport partnerships. The powers of the Scottish Regional Transport Partnerships have been diluted over time.
- 5.24 Overall, transport planning is seen as having insufficient impact in shaping towns and cities across much of England. Nonetheless, even in the current environment, there are examples that illustrate the potential to drive improvements in transport that have a direct impact on quality of life and economic prosperity, and create civic pride. London, Manchester, Nottingham, Brighton, Reading, Oxford and York are often cited among the examples.
- 5.25 In **London**, as already noted, there is a legal requirement for the Mayor to produce a London Plan. A new Mayor retains the inherited plan after taking office until it has been replaced by a plan that has been prepared in accordance with the statutory provisions. These requirements have contributed to a stable framework that has produced a far-reaching programme of investment and reform across the policy matrix in London.
- 5.26 In **Manchester**, the Combined Authority structure, credible political leadership and positioning transport as a key enabler of economic regeneration have enabled Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) to win funding for a £0.75 billion 'big bang' extension to Metrolink, and to reallocate road space across the conurbation to tram and bus use.
- 5.27 In **Nottingham**, despite opposition from businesses, the city council has introduced a workplace parking levy, providing it with a local revenue stream that enabled it to win central government funding for the extension of its tram system. However, conflict with the surrounding county authority has limited the potential benefits of the tram network and other city policies.
- 5.28 **Brighton and Reading** have been successful in developing bus services, while Brighton, **Oxford** and **York** are among the cities that have sought to limit the use of the car through a variety of policies, including access for cars and car parking.
- 5.29 The plans for council and PTE involvement in refranchising rail services in the north of England (although less significant initially than once envisaged) are considered an important step towards greater local control over this key element of transport in the city regions and their hinterlands. The success of Merseyrail, where franchising responsibility passed to the PTE a decade ago, is seen as an example of what can be achieved.
- 5.30 TfL's powers to manage Greater London's bus and Overground services (as well as light rail and river operations) have provided the Mayor with an ability to support wider policies in a way not permitted elsewhere.
- 5.31 Leadership, influence over local bus and/or light rail services (through partnership or control) and consistent strategic planning, with transport acting as an enabler of wider policy, are features of the areas where transport has prospered. However, too often these key requirements have been realised in spite of, rather than being facilitated by, the generic features of local government in England.
- 5.32 Other lessons are also available from history. After the inner city riots in **Birmingham** during the 1980s, the government provided substantial funding to the city council to set up city partnerships. The council had a very broad remit and substantial freedom to make the inner city a place people would want to live, work and set up businesses. The programme attracted substantial interest from central government because of its impact. Freedom to make decisions locally was a key factor.
- 5.33 Outside London, the limited ability of local authorities to manage the provision of public transport is seen as a weak link in directing economic development, land use and sustainability policies.
- 5.34 Pressures to reduce costs, originating before the 2008 financial crisis but heightened by austerity measures, have led many local authorities to cut staff, replacing them with various outsourcing arrangements. However, effective outsourcing requires in-house expertise to specify, manage and assess the quality of the contracted work. The implementation of some outsourcing arrangements, together with the recent staffing cuts, has led to the loss of that essential capability in many authorities. In addition, few local authorities now have a continuing graduate intake and associated professional development programme – a deficiency that is likely to lead to serious potential succession problems.
- 5.35 Although professional administrators with experience across a variety of local authority functions can be highly effective, they often lack specific professional expertise in areas for which they are responsible, such as transport planning. Instead, they need to depend on staff with the relevant skills reporting to them.
- 5.36 Overall, the current resourcing arrangements coupled with the lack of investment in staff development amount to a ticking bomb.

A Vision for Transport Planning

Regional and sub-regional government



Vision

- 6.1 In England, the strategic authorities would be required to co-operate to ensure cross-boundary consistency in policies, plans, projects and public transport services. A regional or sub-regional tier, which could in theory facilitate this function, would only be developed if ongoing circumstances meant it proved to be necessary. Examples of the need for such a function could include: preventing inappropriate competition for development if shire county strategic authorities are disadvantaged relative to adjacent city region authorities in the drive for urban growth; or ensuring a reasonably equitable distribution of resources across a region.
- 6.2 In Scotland and Wales, the current structures provide a basis to create regional spatial planning authorities, whose responsibilities would include economic development, land use and transport.

Background

- 6.3 Forms of regional governance have existed in England since the early days of transport planning, with the South East Lancashire North East Cheshire (SELNEC) transport study of the late 1960s an early example of authorities working in partnership. Another was the London and South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN), consisting of the local authorities of London, Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, East and West Sussex and the Isle of Wight. However, these were ad hoc arrangements, developed by the participating authorities to meet specific needs.
- 6.4 The regional government structures introduced by the Blair Government for England, and then abolished by the Coalition Government, had a mixed record. Some regions were successful in promoting economic development and achieving a degree of consistency in local strategy, including transport investment, others less so. The South East and South West regional structures were seen as too large geographically, with too many differing needs, to form an effective and rational administrative unit.
- 6.5 In England, the introduction of LEPs (which have a haphazard geography in some areas) has provided a layer of sub-regional governance for those functions within their remit, and provides for the direct involvement of stakeholders with interests in fostering their local economy. However, that involvement reduces democratic accountability through the ballot box.

Forms of regional governance have existed in England since the early days of transport planning, with the South East Lancashire North East Cheshire (SELNEC) transport study of the late 1960s an early example of authorities working in partnership.

A Vision for Transport Planning

Local and central government links



Vision

- 7.1 In England, regional government offices would be re-established, staffed by representatives of each central government department contributing to the national spatial strategy. They would provide key links between local authorities and their spatial planning team/priorities and the centre. Crucially, their role would be totally consistent with the principle of subsidiarity, and they would have no powers of direction.
- 7.2 While some of the English regional government offices would be based on standard regions, others, including those in the south east and south west of England, would be based on smaller, more cohesive groups of strategic authorities.
- 7.3 Given the differences of scale and demographics, there is no compelling case for similar arrangements in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

Background

- 7.4 As already noted, it is apparent that Westminster and Whitehall do not trust the ability of local government to manage its affairs competently and to take actions that are in the national interest and consistent with the central government policy. There is also a perception that Westminster and Whitehall have a very London-centric perspective, inadequate understanding of the needs and priorities of the rest of the nation, and are unwilling to trust local government to responsibly spend funds collected by central government. The trust deficit may be based, in part, on a perception that local authorities see central government grants as free money, and tend to spend it accordingly.
- 7.5 The former Government Offices for the Regions were viewed by many transport professionals as providing a vital link between local authorities and the centre. In addition, their structure and size fostered collaboration between representatives of government departments to a much greater extent than is common in Whitehall.
- 7.6 Initially, their primary role involved two-way communication and assistance. The decision by the Director of the Government Office for London to create the Road Charging Options for London (ROCOL) study to inform mayoral candidates on the use of congestion charging powers is a particularly good example of the role a regional office can play. However, there is a perception that they developed into another arm of the centre, directing and controlling.
- 7.7 There appear to be much closer links between the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and local government than there is in England, primarily due to differences in scales.

While some of the English regional government offices would be based on standard regions, others, including those in the south east and south west of England, would be based on smaller, more cohesive groups of strategic authorities.

A Vision for Transport Planning

Role of the private sector



Vision

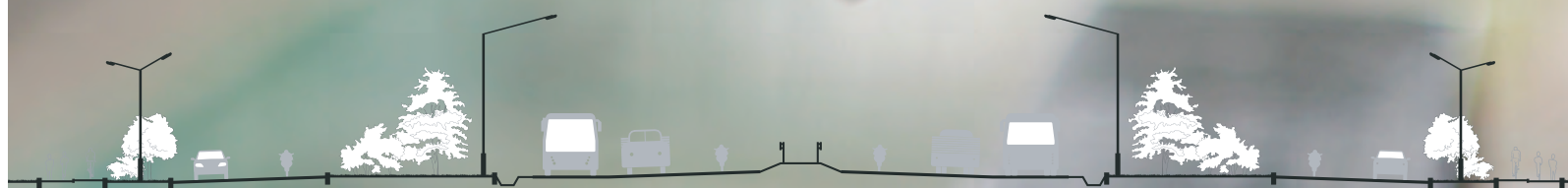
- 8.1** Constraints on public sector capital expenditure will continue to restrict local and central government's ability to invest in transport. As a result, the private sector would continue to provide bus and rail services, but in many cases under contract to the strategic authority. It would also continue to be responsible for the maintenance of roads, as well as for road construction and the provision of associated services, including information, communications and lighting, under contract to the highway authority.
- 8.2** The introduction of a national road pricing system would enable the wider use of privately financed toll roads.
- 8.3** The ability of private sector organisations to provide capital, innovate and take calculated risks would be captured in the capital financing and operation of transport schemes and beyond. Examples include maximising the potential of data streams to provide real-time information for users and for planning and assessing new local schemes and services.
- 8.4** In addition, the private sector would play a central role in working with government at national and local level to determine the nature of evolving policies and plans to facilitate economic development, while satisfying social and environmental needs.
- 8.5** The challenge for central and local government would be to harness private sector resources and expertise to maximise public benefits, including ensuring all contractual agreements continue to provide value for money and meet changing societal needs over their lifetime. This will require highly developed skills within the public sector in understanding how private sector organisations operate and how to negotiate with them not only initially, when awarding contracts, but also throughout their duration.
- 8.6** In addition, many privately financed schemes and services that have direct relevance to transport will not be under the control of public sector authorities; satnav and real-time traffic information and taxi/private hire apps are current examples. The public sector would need to develop partnerships with the providers of such services to channel the benefits in a way that strengthens its policies and operations.
- 8.7** Although most transport planners would be employed by consultants, the strategic local authorities' teams would be very much stronger than many are today. This would enable them to act as truly intelligent clients and to work productively with private sector interests in the development and management of local schemes and services.

Background

- 8.8** In the early days of transport planning, transport provision was dominated by the public sector. The state or local authorities owned the railways, airports and ports and the companies operating passenger transport services. Even a large proportion of road freight transport was provided by the nationalised British Road Services. Public ownership continued until the 1980s, when the Thatcher Government began privatising much of the national transport portfolio.
- 8.9** The National Bus Company, which provided bus and coach services throughout much of England and Wales, was privatised, along with its Scottish counterpart, following the 1985 Transport Act, under which bus services outside London and Northern Ireland were deregulated. However, local authorities were permitted to subsidise services that operators would not provide commercially. Although London's bus operations were privatised, service specification and fare levels continued to be determined by London Transport and, from 2000, TfL, under a franchise model.
- 8.10** Today, with the notable exceptions of Edinburgh, Nottingham and Reading and some community services, all bus services are operated by the private sector, as are light rail services (with the exception of Edinburgh).
- 8.11** The English, Scottish and Welsh railways continued in public ownership until after the 1993 Railways Act, but the government has retained control over passenger service provision through the franchising system. With the exception of the East Coast (until May 2015), all heavy rail services (passenger and freight) are now provided by the private sector, and freight services are totally free market. London's Underground has remained in the public sector, although responsibility for investment and maintenance was briefly passed to the private sector under a failed Public Private Partnership (PPP) set of arrangements. Rail infrastructure is the responsibility of a public interest company, without shareholders, but its debts are now included as part of the national debt.

- 8.12** Since the privatisation of British Road Services, freight transport by road has been wholly in the hands of the private sector, along with the associated logistics centre infrastructure.
- 8.13** Despite an attempt in the early 1990s to attract private investment, roads have remained almost exclusively in public ownership with the exception of some estuarial crossings and the M6 toll road, which are financed by direct user charges. However, a number of road improvements have been privately financed through Design Build Finance Operate agreements, under which the investors are rewarded by the government on a use and availability formula.
- 8.14** The major barrier to privately owned and financed roads in the UK has been the good network of roads that are free at the point of use. As a result, the market will not bear the level of toll required to deliver an adequate financial return for investors; the M6 toll is often cited as evidence of this barrier.
- 8.15** The private sector has played an increasingly important role in the provision of local transport improvements through conditions associated with the award of planning consents. TfL has used revenue from a Crossrail Business Rate Supplement, as well as Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy to support capital borrowing.
- 8.16** Road maintenance and some construction were formerly undertaken by the highway authorities' direct labour forces (with the maintenance of government roads managed by local authorities). Today, highway authorities contract maintenance to the private sector. The arrangements include a number of longer term PPP contracts, under which the private sector finances capital investment – for example, for street lighting – and maintains the system in return for an annual stream of payments.
- 8.17** The private sector's dominant role in service provision has caused issues for transport planning. The primary impact is the inability of local authorities outside London (and Northern Ireland) to marry local bus and rail services with their economic, spatial and social development policies. No local authority has yet attempted to re-regulate bus services through applying for Quality Contract powers introduced by the Blair Government in 2000. The barriers to making the case are seen as difficult to overcome, although the threat has been used to enhance partnership deals with operators.
- 8.18** The development of mobile internet and smartphone technology has opened a wide range of new opportunities for transport information services, particularly real-time journey information for users – for example, TfL has made its live stream of bus location data available in line with open data principles, enabling private organisations to process it and pass it on to users in a multitude of formats. Mobile apps are also transforming the taxi and hire car sectors. In addition, data streamed from road users' mobile phones is collected and interpreted by private companies to offer current information on road conditions to drivers through satnav as well as mobile apps.
- 8.19** The potential for 'big data' to provide information for planning purposes is enormous, provided arrangements can be made to enable planners to access and use it satisfactorily. In TfL's closed system, the matching of Oyster card use with its Automatic Vehicle Location system, iBus, is providing detailed information on bus patronage.
- 8.20** Although, consultants have provided transport planning services for many years, their main function initially was to supplement local authorities' in-house skills with specialist services and to help meet peak demands. However, the strength of local authorities' in-house teams has waned considerably, and most transport planners are now employed by consultants.

The development of mobile internet and smartphone technology has opened a wide range of new opportunities for transport information services, particularly real-time journey information for users.





Vision

- 9.1 The strategic authorities would have powers to set the level of, and retain the revenues from, council tax and business rates, as well as all other local charges. These would include road pricing, which would apply across the country. The case for its introduction would become clear as government tax take from hydrocarbon fuel falls and as pressures on the road network increase.
- 9.2 Further options to meet future local financial needs might include more extensive use of Business Rate Supplements or tax increment financing, a general land value tax or other ways of capturing enhanced property values. Employment-based taxes might include an adaptation of the French *versement transport*.
- 9.3 The strategic authorities would have extensive autonomy over how to spend their funds. To help ensure considered and targeted spending, they would be required to develop medium-term funding programmes to facilitate implementation of their strategic spatial strategies.
- 9.4 The distinction between capital and revenue would be restructured for some expenditure to allow local authorities greater freedom in the use of funds available to them, not least in balancing initial capital investment and lifetime operating costs.
- 9.5 To ensure fair availability of resources, local authorities in less prosperous areas would receive a formula-based central government equalising grant to enable them to meet particular requirements. The same would apply to rural authorities in areas with low population densities and necessarily extensive road networks, as well as those with more severe winter climates.
- 9.6 Competitive challenge funding provided by central government would be largely replaced by regular plan-based funding, flexed by performance measures against agreed indicators. Central government would only use competitive funding to test specific innovative measures.

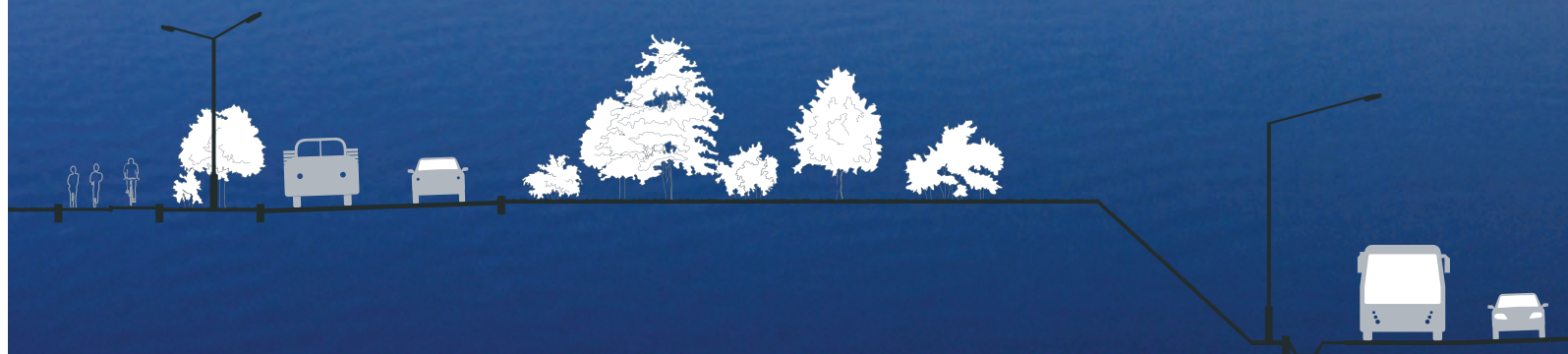
The strategic authorities would have powers to set the level of, and retain the revenues from, council tax and business rates, as well as all other local charges. These would include road pricing, which would apply across the country.

Background

- 9.7 Local government has very little control over its revenues, and hence its spending power. UK local authorities depend on central government for the vast majority of their income and capital to an extent that is unique among OECD countries (83% in the UK compared with an OECD average of 50%).
- 9.8 Central governments have sought to control local authorities' fund raising with caps or other restrictions on the amounts they can collect through council tax and, recently, car parking and other traffic-related measures. However they do have prudential borrowing powers, and the Greater London Authority has the power to raise a supplementary business rate, as used to contribute to the funding for Crossrail. The tight central control of local expenditure is seen as one of the deterrents to attracting high-quality politicians to serve in local government.
- 9.9 Over the years, there have been various attempts, including the poll tax, to raise a higher proportion of local authority finance. However, there has invariably been an associated need for a significant element of redistribution broadly to maintain spending levels area by area.
- 9.10 While local authorities' regular transport expenditure is covered by a complex formula-based block grant, they can supplement funding through competitive challenge fund bids. However, the bidding process is relatively expensive in resources. The bidders and the grant provider can both need to employ consultants to prepare and assess the bids. The process also does little to create and help maintain expertise within local authorities. Inevitably, the competition means more bids are unsuccessful than successful, resulting in considerable wasted expenditure and use of scarce professional time. Furthermore, the process engenders a short-term initiative-based approach to priorities and plans, rather than a properly thought through long-term approach. It is not surprising therefore that some authorities now choose not to participate in challenge funding rounds.
- 9.11 The approach to funding is exacerbated by the Treasury's distinction between revenue and capital funding, and the apparent disconnects that can occur when capital funding is not supported by the revenue funding stream subsequently required. Furthermore, the short-term nature of central government funding decisions for local authorities effectively prevents them from taking a longer term view.
- 9.12 Although the Blair Government introduced the powers that enabled the London Mayor to introduce congestion charging, and appreciated the case for road pricing, a commitment to introduce a national scheme was dropped after over one million people signed a Downing Street petition of objection. Referenda in Edinburgh and Manchester made it clear that residents were not willing to accept transport plans that included local charging.
- 9.13 However, a number of factors will place new pressures on central and local government. They include the need to replace falling government tax take as revenues from hydrocarbon-based fuel duties decrease and as the difference in levies between vehicles incurring fuel duties and those using alternative fuels starts to be seen as inequitable. In addition, there will be a need to maximise the efficiency of road use (and the transport network as whole) as population increases. Together with constrained public funds for investment projects, these issues are likely to provide added impetus to the case for road pricing, which is already theoretically strong. It is highly likely that within the next 20 years the need to create an acceptable road charging regime will become apparent to all political persuasions. This will, in turn, require a review of the pricing policies for other transport modes.



The approach to funding is exacerbated by the Treasury's distinction between revenue and capital funding, and the apparent disconnects that can occur when capital funding is not supported by the revenue funding stream subsequently required.



A Vision for Transport Planning

Public procurement of professional services



Vision

- 10.1 Public sector bodies would be thoroughly intelligent clients. They would have the capability to specify the outputs they require with precision and in a way that would deliver intended results. This would ensure the process selects the most suitable contractor. The contractor would be managed effectively so that the brief is properly satisfied.
- 10.2 Public procurement processes would be relatively simple and provide a level playing field for smaller (and specialist) organisations to compete. Specification and selection processes would fully involve experts in the work to be undertaken. Contract award would place an appropriate balance on quality and value for money. Weightings would reflect the wide range of policy issues transport affects and ensure consistency with the spatial strategy. Price would not be the overriding criterion.

Background

- 10.3 Public sector procurement of professional services has become increasingly bureaucratic, imposing significant costs on clients and contractors. The process is widely seen as being driven by procurement specialists, lacking any detailed knowledge of the work being procured, sometimes excluding those possessing relevant expertise from any effective role in the process.
- 10.4 A further weakness is that the criteria for contract award can emphasise cost over quality or value for money. While some bureaucracy is driven by the operation of a European single market, much is specific to practice developed over recent years by UK authorities.
- 10.5 In some instances, key assets and professional indemnity insurance criteria present high barriers to entry that can make it difficult, even impossible, for some transport planning consultancies to participate in the bidding process. The nature of some processes effectively excludes potential bidders with highly relevant professional expertise.
- 10.6 Many public sector organisations have limited skills in transport planning (as well as in other areas). As a result, they are finding it increasingly challenging to act as an intelligent client to procure the services required and to ensure they are carried out to an appropriate standard.

Public sector bodies would be thoroughly intelligent clients. They would have the capability to specify the outputs they require with precision and in a way that would deliver intended results.

A Vision for Transport Planning

Performance assessment and accountability



Vision

- 11.1 The House of Commons Select Committees would have greater powers and resources to hold the government to account, enabling them to press ministers for effective remedial actions, or sound reasons why their recommendations are not appropriate. Similar powers would exist for the Northern Ireland Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly committees.
- 11.2 Local authorities would have highly effective, adequately resourced scrutiny procedures, ensuring politicians and senior staff could be held to account by local residents through their councillors.
- 11.3 A body similar to the Audit Commission would be reintroduced in England. It would be responsible for assessing the value for money provided by local authorities, as well as the effectiveness of their policies and plans.

Background

- 11.4 Changes to the appointment of the House of Commons Select Committees have greatly strengthened their ability to hold the UK Government to account, and the National Audit Office is generally effective in examining value for money.
- 11.5 However, the Select Committees have very limited research resources. In some cases, the mismatch between the committees' and the government's understanding of the issues under scrutiny can be very apparent. Further, it appears that governments can be too ready to dismiss criticisms, and fail to consider fully whether effective steps are available to address the recommendations and issues raised in committee reports.
- 11.6 The Northern Ireland Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly all have committees that scrutinise their governments. Like the UK Parliament's Select Committees, the Northern Irish committees are based on government departments. In Scotland and Wales they have a functional structure. In Scotland, transport is part of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's brief, which also covers a wide range of other functions from housing to public procurement. The Welsh Assembly committee responsible for transport has a remit that also includes economic development, infrastructure and technology and science.
- 11.7 The Competition Commission and watchdogs such as Passenger Focus also have a role in holding public and private sector organisations to account. However, the work of the Competition Commission in transport has attracted criticism and the public interest watchdogs have limited influence or power.
- 11.8 Local government scrutiny committees have limited effect in holding the executive to account, particularly when membership is dominated by the same party as the council leader and its cabinet. They have even fewer expert resources to call on than the House of Commons Select Committees.
- 11.9 The Coalition's decision to abolish the Audit Commission and replace its finance audit functions with professional audit firms has left a serious gap in holding local government to account and in promoting service improvement. By contrast, Northern Ireland has an Audit Office, Audit Scotland has an Accounts Commission that covers local government, and Wales has an Auditor General covering all public sector organisations.

A Vision for Transport Planning

Research and best practice



Vision

- 12.1 There would be a well-funded research programme designed to meet the needs of UK central and local government and organisations involved in the provision and management of transport systems and services. Dissemination of the findings would be effective and timely.
- 12.2 The programme would be managed by a body with representatives from central and local government, transport providers, the transport professions and the research community. It would cover all modal interests, people and freight. The US Transportation Research Board (TRB) has a broadly similar model. The organisation would have a medium-term committed funding programme supported by the government and the strategic local authorities, transport providers and other interested bodies. Like the TRB, it would commission and manage research and the development and dissemination of best practice, but it would not undertake research itself. Instead, it would support centres of research excellence, helping them to attract and retain staff with world class skills. Its activities would be complemented by research sponsored by others, including the Research Councils and the European Commission.

Background

- 12.3 Extending the work of Foster, Beasley and the MAU initiated by Barbara Castle, the Department had been a leader in research and development in many aspects of transport planning and assessment. However, its involvement in research, development and best practice, other than in some aspects of transport economics, has declined over the last decade, as has that of the Research Councils.
- 12.4 The hiving off of the world renowned Transport Research Laboratory and the cancellation of the UK Transport Research Centre (UK TRC), which was to have been part funded by the Department, are but two indicators of the UK Government's progressive withdrawal.
- 12.5 The most recent cuts (as in the cancellation of the UK TRC) reflect pressures on public spending. Although the Department has committed funding for the Transport Catapult programme, which includes a National Transport Systems Modelling (NTSM) facility, the effectiveness of this initiative and its significance in demonstrating longer term government support for research is yet to be established.
- 12.6 Following publication of the Sharp report, the government established centres of research and teaching excellence, providing the UK with a number of world class and enduring university research centres. With the reduction in government funding for research, universities have increasingly turned to EU-funded programmes, which focus on issues of pan-European interest and require collaboration between organisations from a number of EU member states. EU-funded research accounts for between a quarter and a third of research income in some university transport research centres, rising to some three-quarters in one case.
- 12.7 The challenges facing the UK require a much deeper understanding of many aspects of transport, and its relationship with economic development, climate change and the environment, as well as with personal health and quality of life. These challenges will become increasingly pressing. They include containing carbon emissions, catering for a growing population, and supporting an expanding economy against a backdrop of constrained funding and limited political and social appetite to create extra highway capacity. Failure to address them will result in increased congestion on our roads, trains, trams and buses, and consequent damage to the economy, environment and quality of life.
- 12.8 With universities needing to contain costs, many researchers are on short-term contracts, reducing the attractiveness of careers in research for UK residents. As a result, UK universities are drawing on researchers from around the world. Having acquired skills, many then return to their native countries, impacting the development of UK capabilities.
- 12.9 A further issue is that the Department has very limited involvement in encouraging dissemination of best practice. Its withdrawal of funding for the Local Transport Planning Network is quoted as a particular example.

A Vision for Transport Planning

Transport planning: the profession, skills and resources



Vision

- 13.1 Transport planning would be widely recognised as a key profession with lead roles in supporting economic development, in managing the local and global environments, in improving the public realm and in the promotion of active travel and healthy lifestyles.
- 13.2 Transport planners would co-operate closely with colleagues in these and other fields to develop and achieve a broad range of related policy objectives and to maximise the benefits provided by our transport networks. In doing so, they would facilitate the planning and delivery of all modes and types of transport and would work with the responsible agencies and providers (public, private and voluntary) to create efficient, coherent networks, integrating all available modes and resources.
- 13.3 Place-making would be an overarching element of transport planning, with a focus on creating more cohesive communities and better streets, with associated improvements to the public realm. Smooth transport flows to retail centres, workplaces, health facilities and schools would be skilfully balanced with issues such as pedestrian access, street environment and air quality. Public amenities, housing and commercial premises would be planned alongside and integrated into transport routes.
- 13.4 To fulfil this remit effectively, transport planners would have acute political awareness and the ability to listen to and inform all stakeholders through an in-depth understanding of local considerations and wider policy issues. Strong interpersonal skills would include facilitation and negotiation, helping to progress decisions, plans and projects. These qualities would contribute to an outward-looking approach, enhanced by links with professions such as architecture, urban design and the human sciences, bringing a highly creative perspective to their work.
- 13.5 This skill set would build on the profession's established high levels of competency in the technical processes of planning for transport, and be developed continuously to incorporate effective application of current and emerging technologies.
- 13.6 The role of transport planning in shaping communities and improving prosperity and quality of life, together with the skills involved, would attract highly able and creative graduates. These new recruits would enjoy the opportunity to progress their careers in a stable and stimulating profession.
- 13.7 Graduates would continue to enter the profession from a wide variety of first degree disciplines, and many transport planners would have a Masters degree. While most transport Masters courses would have a core element of generic skills, they would also provide for a broad variety of interests. In particular, content would cover communication, negotiation and facilitation, and spatial appreciation, as well as the established analytic, modelling and economic skills. Universities would regularly revise course content to match the needs of the profession as they continue to evolve.
- 13.8 Training schemes would enable school-leavers to develop a career in transport planning, with some progressing to become fully qualified professionals.
- 13.9 In England, the Department would provide leadership for development and recognition across all professions that have a role in fulfilling its policies, including transport planning. The devolved administrations would provide similar support in their nations.
- 13.10 The strategic local authorities would have substantial transport planning capabilities to enable them to act as truly intelligent clients. They would support this capability with ongoing graduate recruitment and professional development programmes, and offer clear and progressive career development paths for their staff.
- 13.11 All employers of transport planners in the public and private sectors would recognise professional qualification as an essential requirement for their professional staff, and would provide the training opportunities to enable them to achieve it.
- 13.12 Organisations procuring transport planning services would require the transport planners employed on their contracts to have a relevant professional qualification.

Background

- 13.13** Nearly all transport planners enter the profession as graduates from a very wide range of first degree disciplines. Although, transport planning does not form a significant part of undergraduate degree courses, many UK transport Masters courses are recognised as world class, attracting students from around the globe. However, participation by UK residents has declined, after reaching a peak in 2009. Causes include the withdrawal of student funding by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the recession, the increase in undergraduate student debt with the introduction of fees and increased fees for Masters courses.
- 13.14** Although international participation has enabled most courses to continue, two universities have closed their courses. There are concerns that the focus of others is changing to satisfy the needs of the foreign students, on whom their viability is increasingly dependent, reducing their direct relevance to the UK market. UK employers have expressed concern that some courses are not meeting their emerging needs, which include generic skills such as communication, facilitation and negotiation, as much as technical skills including transport modelling and economic analysis. While course content is evolving, some perceive that it is not doing so fast enough.
- 13.15** As already noted, in the early years of transport planning the Department played a central role in the development of transport Masters courses and university research centres. However, when EPSRC withdrew support for taught Masters courses in 2009, the Department made clear that it did not see the development of transport skills as part of its function. This has not always been the case. Previously, it had provided support, including funding, for TPS's Transport Planning Skills Initiative (TPSI) which was created to address the skills shortage identified at that time. TPSI was launched in 2002 by a transport Minister.
- 13.16** Senior Departmental staff have supported their current position on the grounds that the Department does not employ transport planners. Whether, given its responsibilities, it should is a moot point. Either way, the Department has an essential dependence on transport planners employed by consultants and local authorities for the development, assessment and implementation of its policies and plans.
- 13.17** Unlike some other ministries that have a senior level post filled specifically by an experienced professional – for example, DCLG's Chief Planner and the Chief Medical Officer – the Department no longer has a head of profession. Even its Chief Scientist and Chief Economist functions are perceived as having considerably less influential roles than in the past. The days when the Department employed a Chief Highway Engineer leading on skills and professional standards are long gone.
- 13.18** The TPSI led to TPS and the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation developing and jointly offering the Transport Planning Professional (TPP) qualification, which provides transport planners with the professional recognition they require. The TPS Professional Development Scheme (PDS) forms the basis for achieving the TPP and has become the industry standard for consultants.
- 13.19** The shortage of skilled transport planners throughout most of the 2000s came to an abrupt end with the recession of 2008 and subsequent spending cuts. Many consultants cut their staff by a third and halted their graduate recruitment programmes. The effects of the spending cuts had a slower, but similarly dramatic impact on local authority staffing levels. While consultants have reinstated graduate recruitment, there are few signs of a revival among local authorities.
- 13.20** The skills shortage that preceded the recession reflected, in part, the impact of the economic downturn in the early 1990s. The TPSI found that those who had left the profession then did not return when the economy recovered. If that experience holds true, it is highly probable that there will be a shortage of experienced transport planners in the years to come.
- 13.21** Although many consultants are committed to the professional development of their staff, through to the award of a relevant professional qualification, few local authorities have such a commitment. Funding cuts mean many now have very small training budgets, with most expenditure focused on meeting short-term needs rather than longer term staff development.
- 13.22** Few organisations in the public sector have recognised the need to develop the next generation of professional transport planning staff. Leicestershire County Council and Hampshire County Council are among the rare exceptions. In addition, some organisations with devolved powers and larger budgets, notably TfL and Transport Scotland, have maintained their professional development programmes. In Transport Scotland's case, commitment to professional development also covers its contractors through its procurement process.
- 13.23** While the profession has done much over the last decade to promote the status of its senior staff, it still has a low profile among the bodies that depend, or should depend, on transport planning skills, as well as with the general public – and with career advisors.
- 13.24** As already noted, public procurement is seen as one way of encouraging technical and professional development. This is clearly demonstrated by the beneficial impacts of TfL's policy on apprenticeship training provided by consulting engineers.
- 13.25** Although transport planning is widely seen as a graduate profession, there has been some limited interest in the development of either apprenticeship or other training schemes for younger entrants, including school-leavers.

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