

**XXIIInd WORLD ROAD CONGRESS
DURBAN 2003**

UNITED KINGDOM - NATIONAL REPORT

STRATEGIC DIRECTION SESSION ST2
Roads and quality of life

Summary

UK Policy Priorities

- The main objective for the UK is to tackle road congestion and pollution, and to transform the whole of our transport system.

The road building process in the UK – planning and evaluation

- In England, the Highways Agency is responsible for the building and maintenance of the strategic road network on behalf of the Department for Transport.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes

- Planning Policy Guidance Notes set out objectives to integrate planning and transport, promote sustainable transport choices and create better accessibility through public transport.

Regional Transport Strategies

- RTS enable road users' needs to be addressed regionally in a sustainable manner, based on environmentally friendly modes, focusing on making better use of the existing transport infrastructure.

Network Strategy

- The Highways Agency's Network Strategy sets out to influence the RTS to reflect the service provided to users by motorways and trunk roads. It highlights priorities for effective investment, management and delivery of road network solutions.

Local Transport Plans

- At the local level, authorities are required to submit plans setting out their objectives and targets for transport strategies in line with national objectives.

Evaluation

- To improve existing policies to reduce pollution, road casualties, and to ease congestion.
- Emphasise the need to integrate environmental, social and economic factors into transport projects.

Impact of road projects

- In the UK, roads provide increased mobility with better access to employment and services. However those without access to a car are in danger of 'social exclusion'

Pollution

- The Government is attempting to reduce noise and air pollution with a number of initiatives e.g. introduction of 'cleaner' fuels.

Safety

- 'Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone' is a new Government Strategy, which sets out road safety and casualty reduction targets to be achieved by 2010.

Public reaction to roads

- All strategic road proposals in the UK are subject to public consultation, concern about their impact has meant that some schemes have received a hostile response from a small proportion of the local public and from lobby groups.

Implementing a 'roads and sustainable development' policy

- Environmental impacts are now taken into account when planning and designing new transport projects, considering air quality, noise, emissions, land, wildlife etc.

Highways Agency 'Toolkit'

- 'Toolkit' focuses on integrating the trunk road network with other modes of transport through measures such as safer interchanges between modes, up to date information, public transport issues, managing traffic and the efficiency of the network.

Multi-modal Studies

- Provide a comprehensive look at transport problems, and offer solutions in which all types of transport can play a part, rather than the one-dimensional approach used in the past.

Conclusion

- Transport policies and programmes require integration with other transport modes, in order to ensure that outcomes are beneficial in economic, environmental and social terms.

UK Policy Priorities

1. Good transport is essential to an enhanced quality of life, to a strong economy, and to a better environment. Roads are a key element of the UK's transport infrastructure and have an important role to play in ensuring the success of the Government's wider policies for a strong and prosperous economy.
2. The UK has a highly developed road network which consists of both inter-urban trunk roads and local roads, as well as a comprehensive motorway system. One of the main problems experienced by users of the UK road network today is congestion¹, caused by the increased amount of cars and lorries on our roads. It is forecast that the amount of traffic is set to grow by 22 percent between 2000 and 2010, and congestion will increase by 15 percent across the network as a whole, and by 28 percent on inter-urban trunk roads. Higher levels of traffic are entirely consistent with a growing economy. But the Government realises that it could not go on as before, building more and more roads to accommodate the growth in traffic, especially with its new obligations to meet targets on climate change, and that something must be done to reverse this trend. Another problem is the poor links to more peripheral areas which contribute to social exclusion and isolation. These poor links restrict access to essential activities such as work, learning, health care, and food shopping.
3. Our goal in the UK, therefore, is to tackle road congestion and pollution resulting from these increased levels of traffic congestion, but also to transform the whole of our transport system to give the travelling public a wider choice of quicker, safer, more reliable transport. Transforming the transport system will also contribute to the renaissance of our towns and cities and revitalisation of the countryside. The 1998 White Paper, 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone', and supporting documents, set out a framework within which the detailed policies for the UK will be taken forward. 'Transport 2010: The 10 Year Plan' was published in July 2000 and sets out how we intend to deliver these policies. It is a 10-year investment plan to modernise Britain's transport system, to put right the results of years of under-investment and stop-start funding. The Plan covers all surface transport in England, and railways in Great Britain. All modes of transport will benefit from greatly increased public and private funding totalling some £181 billion (including £132 billion of public spending) over a 10 year period until 2011. The Plan also includes a set of targets. Reducing traffic is not one of them, but reducing congestion is - the aim is to reduce congestion to below 2000 levels by 2010.

¹ There is currently no widely accepted definition of congestion. The definition used in the UK is based on the difference between the travel times road users would achieve in free-flowing traffic conditions and the travel times they are forecast to encounter at the levels of traffic, road capacity and hence speeds forecast in the Government's National Transport model. This measure is expressed in terms of the *average time lost per kilometre driven*.

4. The Welsh Assembly Government set out their transport strategy in the Transport Framework published in November 2001.² All public roads in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Roads Service, an executive agency of the Department for Regional Development, one of the departments in the Northern Ireland Executive. Their transport policy is set out in 'Shaping Our Future', the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) for Northern Ireland 2025 and the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) for Northern Ireland 2002 – 2012 Planning Policy guidance Notes.³ The Scottish Executive's Transport Delivery Report, published in 2002, sets out the Executive's transport vision for Scotland.⁴
5. Measures to reduce congestion include more effective use of the road infrastructure, reducing casualty and non-casualty accidents, better integration of the existing public transport network and improvements to its reliability, frequency and cleanliness. Legislation now exists to enable local authorities to introduce congestion charging. There are no direct initiatives to reduce car use; the Government recognises that the car will remain important to the mobility of millions of people and that the numbers of car owners will continue to grow. The priority, therefore, is to maintain existing roads rather than build new ones, and better management of the road network to improve reliability not only for car and lorry drivers but also for bus users. At the heart of the Government's policies for a sustainable modern transport system is better integration between all transport modes. This integrated approach – improved planning, easier connections, better traffic management and more park and ride – will ensure that all forms of transport work better together. The 1998 White Paper embodied new, modern thinking on integrating transport with other aspects of Government policy. By working closely with local and national transport providers, the Government is seeking to build improved links between differing forms of transport

The road building process in the UK – planning and evaluation

6. Responsibility for the building and maintenance of roads varies according to the type of road and which part of the UK it is in. In England, the Highways Agency, an executive agency of the Department for Transport, is responsible for the building and maintenance of the strategic road network on behalf of the Secretary of State. This includes all motorways and all purpose trunk roads. The building and maintenance of local roads is the responsibility of individual local highway authorities (County Councils and unitary authorities). Within London, the Mayor for London is responsible for transport planning. He is also the highway authority for some 500km of major roads in London. Roads policy for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has been devolved since 1998, and is therefore the responsibility of the Scottish Executive, the Welsh Assembly and the Northern Ireland Assembly respectively.
7. The 1998 White Paper (and the daughter document 'A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England') and the 10 Year Plan provide the policy framework for road development in England, but there are a number of other key documents.

² Transport Framework November 2001 can be found on the National Assembly for Wales website at: www.wales.gov.uk/subtransport/content/policy/framework/index.htm

³ These documents can be found on the Northern Ireland Government's website at: www.nics.gov.uk

⁴ Scotland's Transport: Delivering Improvements can be found on the Scottish Executive website at: www.scotland.gov.uk

Planning Policy Guidance Notes

8. Planning policy in England is governed by a series of Policy Planning Guidance Notes, which are national statements of policy aimed primarily at local authorities and developers.⁵ These are updated on a regular basis. Relevant to the roads agenda is guidance on integrating development plans with local transport plans (PPG12), our approach to regional planning (PPG11), and land use and transport (PPG13). The objectives of the latter are to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level to:
- promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;
 - promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling; and
 - reduce the need to travel, especially by car.
9. This guidance sets out the circumstances where it is appropriate to change the emphasis and priorities in provision between different transport modes, in pursuit of the Government's wider objectives. But it recognises that the car will continue to have an important part to play and for some journeys, particularly in rural areas, it will remain the only real option for travel.
10. In Wales, planning policy is set out in Planning Policy Wales (March 2002), which is a national statement of policy (including transport) aimed at local authorities and developers.

Regional Transport Strategies

11. At the regional level, regional planning bodies, which are groups of local planning authorities but may in the future increasingly be the Regional Chambers, have direct responsibility for preparing Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), which is formally approved by the appropriate Secretary of State. RPG includes a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) which provides the regional context for Local Transport Plans. The 1998 White Paper assigns to the RTS a key role to improve the integration of transport and land-use planning.
12. Each RTS should enable the accessibility and mobility needs of business and individuals to be addressed in a sustainable manner, based on environmentally-friendly modes, focusing on making better use of the existing transport infrastructure. It covers a fifteen to twenty year period with a particular focus on the immediate 5-year regional transport priorities.

⁵ Similar planning advice notes or planning policy statements are being prepared or revised in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

13. Critical to developing an RTS are the objectives set for the spatial strategy for the region and the environmental, economic and social impacts of the integrated planning and transport options. The RTS sets out the regional priorities for transport investment and management, across all modes, to support the regional spatial strategy, including the role of trunk roads and local highway authority roads of regional or sub-regional significance. In addition, the RTS:
- provides a strategic steer on the role and future development of railways, airports and ports in the region, consistent with national policy;
 - provides guidance on measures to increase transport choice, including the better integration of rail and bus services;
 - looks at public transport accessibility criteria for regionally or sub-regionally significant levels or types of development, which should be set out in development plans and local transport plans;
 - guides the location of new development and the provision of new transport services or infrastructure;
 - provides advice on the approach to be taken to standards for the provision of off-street car parking; and
 - provides guidance on the strategic context for demand management measures such as road-user charging and levies on private non-residential car parking.

Network Strategy

14. For England, the Highways Agency has its own strategy which aims to explain how it will develop the road network for which it is responsible in the coming years. The strategy sets out the Agency's analysis of the priorities for investment in, and management of, the network and provides the basis for influencing Regional Transport Strategies to reflect the service being delivered by the motorways and trunk roads. The network strategy is intended to evolve over time, keeping pace with changes in the demands for transport, and reflecting the views of national and regional stakeholders. The strategy includes a targeted programme of road improvements.
15. In Wales, the then Welsh Office published *Driving Wales Forward* in July 1998. This identified a set of criteria to inform decisions, a set of strategic priorities and a short-term programme of improvements together with a series of area or corridor studies.

Local Transport Plans

16. At the local level in England outside London, highway authorities (working with local districts and, in metropolitan areas, the Public Transport Authorities) are required to submit 5-year plans setting out their objectives and targets for transport and their strategies for achieving them. These plans must be in keeping with both national planning guidance and the national framework for transport. Similar arrangements operate in Scotland and Wales. In England, Local Transport Plans provide the basis for allocating to local authorities the transport capital resources they need to deliver their plans. In Wales, they form the background for the local authority's own spending and the allocation of specific transport grants by the Welsh Assembly Government. In 2000 English local authorities were allocated £8.4 billion for the next 5-years to implement their Local Transport Plans. Support from central and devolved governments will enable authorities, in partnership with transport operators, businesses and others, to deliver real improvements on the ground, helping to achieve the ambitious outcomes and targets set in the 10 Year Plan.

Evaluation

17. In the past we have used a policy of predict and provide, building more roads to meet the forecast growth in traffic. This policy is, however, clearly unsustainable, as land for building roads is a finite resource, and more roads can have an adverse effect on the environment. The Government realises that existing roads will need to be improved to reduce road casualties and to ease congestion. Therefore, when planning new road schemes, or widening existing roads, the main objective is to evaluate the impacts of the road in keeping with the Government's policy of sustainable development. Roads can have – and we work hard to achieve this – a positive impact on the environment by creating refuges for wildlife, improving land husbandry, and improving drainage needs.

18. The Department for Transport has adopted the 'new approach to appraisal' (NATA) for application to all transport investment decisions. NATA is an integrated appraisal method, bringing together the assessment of environmental, economic and social impacts to enable decision-makers to assess the sustainability of solutions. Guidance on NATA is prepared and published by the Department and is applied by the Highways Agency and by local authorities to the appraisal of road building. It is a key component in the advice given to Ministers about major road improvement schemes. It is revised from time to time as required.

19. NATA is a method of multi-criteria analysis. It assesses the expected impact of a proposed transport investment on the environment, safety, economy, accessibility and integration. While some impacts are assessed in monetary terms, others are assessed quantitatively or qualitatively. Decision-makers are provided with a concise summary (the Appraisal Summary Table) of all impacts, but are not advised on how they should be weighted to reach an overall conclusion.

20. For national road schemes, overall decisions are taken by Ministers, but more detailed decisions may be taken by officials. For local authority highway schemes over £5m, specific ministerial approval is required. Stakeholder views are a key consideration in decision making at all levels.
21. The NATA approach highlights that environmental and other expertise is an essential component of all road project study teams, and that such expertise is often provided by professionals other than road engineers. The Department for Transport's adoption of NATA has added emphasis to the need to integrate these various professionals into a team, rather than allowing them to work independently.

Impact of road projects

22. In the UK, roads have a tremendous impact on our lives. They offer us the possibility of increased mobility, and better access to employment and services such as schools, health care and shopping. Taking advantage of this increased mobility does, however, depend largely on people having access to a car, or to the provision of good public transport. It also depends on them being able to afford it. The Government recognises that poor and expensive transport is therefore one of the main contributors to 'social exclusion', since it restricts people's mobility and access to activities and services.
23. We do not have any specific tools to evaluate impact of roads on human activities. We do carry out some evaluation after schemes are completed but, at present, this is limited to direct impacts on travel habits and transport modes.
24. We have also carried out research into the impacts of road building; in particular, considerable effort has been devoted to the impact of road building on the economy. For example, the congested sections of motorways carry high volumes of car commuters. These commuters have widely dispersed origins and destinations, many travel long distances, and most travel alone in their car. Many could not make their journeys efficiently using the existing public transport system. The reasons why this pattern of travel has arisen are many and varied. Over the last two decades, both housing and employment locations have decentralised, and lifestyles have changed. A generally good trunk road system has been provided, car prices have not increased in real terms, and have actually decreased in recent years, and the price of fuel in terms of pence per mile has decreased in real terms. All these factors have contributed to the widely dispersed patterns of long-distance car commuting on the strategic road network. The planning guidance mentioned earlier is intended to reflect this, and help reduce the need to travel and avoid the urban sprawl that has lengthened journeys and consumed precious countryside.

Pollution

25. The Government recognises that roads and traffic have a significant impact on the health and safety of individuals. Road traffic is a major contributor to air pollution. Up to 24,000 vulnerable people are estimated to die prematurely each year, and similar numbers are admitted to hospital, because of exposure to air pollution, much of which is due to road traffic. Tighter standards and advances in vehicle design have helped to reduce those emissions that cause the greatest concern but, in the longer term, these gains could be at risk if traffic growth continues unchecked. Even this downward trend in emissions will not be sufficient in all places to reach our local air quality objectives in England set for 2005. We are taking significant steps to improve air quality, including further controls on vehicle emissions that have brought about significant reductions in emissions without imposing unreasonable burdens on car users or on business.
26. Motorists themselves and their passengers are at most risk from exhaust fumes. Cars offer little or no protection against the pollutants generated by traffic. Car drivers face pollution levels inside a car two to three times higher than those experienced by pedestrians. Car commuters may receive more than a fifth of their total exposure to some pollutants from their daily journey to and from work, as well as adding to the pollution on our streets.
27. In certain areas traffic contributes substantially to the noise that is part of the everyday environment. There is now some evidence that this noise contributes to disturbed sleep and effects performance in school children, and that the stress this noise causes may increase the risk of developing heart disease and psychiatric disorders. The Government's policies, therefore, include measures to reduce noise and vibration from transport.
28. The Government is trying to reduce the problem caused by road pollution with a number of initiatives. This process began with the introduction of unleaded petrol in the early 90s, as pollution from lead in petrol was linked with brain damage in young children. This has now extended to the introduction of cleaner fuels such as Low Sulphur petrol and diesel, both of which enjoy a slight cut in fuel duty in order to encourage more people to use them. Most notable at present, however, has been the introduction of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) which significantly reduces emissions of carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide. In addition, the Government has frozen duty on LPG and, through the "Power Shift" initiative, is encouraging motorists to buy new vehicles which run on LPG or to convert their existing vehicles. The "Power Shift" initiative provides a subsidy towards the cost of conversion or of purchasing a new vehicle which runs on LPG or other cleaner fuels.

Safety

29. Britain's record on road safety is one of the best in Europe and indeed the world. However, our record on child pedestrian casualties is not as good as many other EU countries. Because of worries about safety, many parents now shuttle children to school by car when previously they would have made their own way on foot or by bike. The British Medical Association has warned that the effects on children's physical health and mental development could be serious.
30. There has been a substantial reduction in road casualties in recent years. A target was set in 1987 to reduce all casualties by one third by 2000. By 1998 we had achieved a 39% reduction in the number of road deaths and a 45% reduction in the number of serious injuries. However, there had not been a similar reduction in the number of accidents or slight injuries.
31. Each year, around 3,400 people are still killed on our roads and nearly 40,000 are seriously injured. In total, there are over 300,000 road casualties every year. This is an enormous toll in both human and economic terms and, despite our good record compared to other countries, there is no room for complacency. This is why the Government has decided to set ambitious new targets and launch a comprehensive new strategy. The strategy ('Tomorrow's Roads – Safer for Everyone') covers child safety, driver training and testing, speed, vehicle safety, enforcement, driver impairment, motorcycle safety, the safety of vulnerable road users like pedestrians and cyclists, road infrastructure safety and publicity in Great Britain. Our aim is to have achieved a 40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured by 2010 and, within this, a 50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured. (All reductions are compared with the average for 1994-98.) At the same time, we shall also be paying special attention to road safety in deprived areas, as casualty rates are often higher there.
32. The Department for the Environment has responsibility for road safety matters in Northern Ireland. It has prepared a Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy 2002 – 2012, which it hopes to publish in October 2002. The strategy will set region specific targets and objectives.

Public reaction to roads

33. Although all strategic road proposals in the UK are subject to public consultation, concern about their impact has meant that some schemes have received a hostile response from a small proportion of the local public and from lobby groups.

34. There have also been instances of traffic blocking being used as a means of protest about other concerns, because of the recognition that any disruption to the system can bring the country to a halt. The most high profile case of this in recent years was the fuel protest in September 2000, in which lorry drivers blockaded fuel depots and oil refineries due to the high duty on diesel. The protests had a profound effect, restricting the movement of goods, and people's mobility, and showed just how much we rely on petrol and diesel and road transport in general.

Implementing a 'roads and sustainable development' policy

35. The main objective of roads policy throughout the UK now is to make better use of the roads we already have. In England, we are putting our new approach to better management of the existing road network into practice through, for example, the Highways Agency's development of a 'Toolkit' of techniques and equipment which can be used individually or in combination.

36. Environmental impacts are taken into account from the earliest stages of planning and designing new transport projects. Environmental appraisal considers a range of effects including air quality, noise, emissions, land, wildlife, the countryside, the built environment and cultural heritage as well as the effects on people and their health. Because of the potential environmental impacts of major new construction, it is important that alternatives to new construction are considered at the earliest stages of planning. Alternatives include making better use of existing infrastructure and managing demand for it and the use of other forms of transport. All projects likely to have a significant effect on the environment are subject to a formal environmental impact assessment in accordance with EU legislation.

37. In Wales, the Assembly policy mirrors the "making better use" approach in England. The Transport Framework (2001) for Wales aims to provide better travel information for users of all modes of transport and to make better use of the existing network utilising traditional highway techniques, but primarily through deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems.

Highways Agency 'Toolkit'

38. As well as bringing forward local environmental and safety improvements, the Department for Transport has asked the Agency to focus the development of the 'Toolkit' on integrating the trunk road network with other modes of transport by providing:

- safer and more accessible interchanges between modes;
- clear, comprehensive and up-to-date information using the latest technology to assist route and mode choice;
- priority measures to assist public transport and vulnerable users;
- managing traffic demand on the network, including giving priority to buses, coaches and lorries where appropriate; and
- increasing the efficiency of network operation.

39. 'Toolkit' measures are likely to be most effective if deployed as part of a 'Route Management Strategy'. This is a technique being implemented by the Highways Agency to provide a framework for managing individual trunk routes as part of wider transport networks. Route management strategies will interlock with local transport strategies (set out in Local Transport Plans), within the context established by Regional Planning Guidance.
40. The Route Management Strategy (RMS) process has been developed to help the Highways Agency to do this, by taking a strategic approach to the maintenance, operation and improvement of its network, and involving regional stakeholders and the public in the decision-making process through workshops and seminars, public exhibitions and roadshows. Each RMS will lead to the adoption of a ten-year strategy and a three-year investment plan for each of the routes comprising the strategic road network. Nineteen RMSs are currently underway, and up to 50 more will follow over the next two years. We intend to have an RMS in place for each route in the strategic road network by March 2004.

Multi-modal Studies

41. We are putting our new integrated approach into practice by applying it to a series of transport problems around the country. To find solutions to these problems we have set up a series of Multi-modal Studies. The 1998 White Paper proposed that these Studies should address problems on the strategic trunk road network not addressed in the targeted programme of improvements being taken forward over the next seven years.
42. The programme of Multi-Modal Studies is being taken forward by the Government Offices for the Regions in partnership with Regional Planning Bodies. They reject the old approach of focusing on one-dimensional solutions and, instead, look at the contribution that all modes of transport and traffic management might make - including road, rail, bus and light rail, as well as walking and cycling. They will take a comprehensive look at transport problems, and offer solutions in which all types of transport can play a part. This approach is characterised by a number of principles. The Studies should:
- address the most severe problems in specific transport corridors or areas;
 - be driven by regional and integrated transport objectives;
 - provide an open process, with the opportunity to build consensus; and
 - consider ways to minimise environmental impacts.

Conclusion

43. Roads, whether they have a national, regional or local role, are an integral part of the UK's transport system. The Government believes they cannot and should not be managed and developed in isolation. As this paper has sought to demonstrate, our transport policies and programmes take full account of the need for integration with other transport modes. Only in this way can we ensure that the outcomes are beneficial in economic, environmental and social terms.

**Department for Transport
November 2002**