

Transport Research Series

National Transport Strategy: Analysis of Written Consultation Responses

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A Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department consultation on Scotland's National Transport Strategy took place between 20 April 2006 and 13 July 2006. A consultation paper was issued to which over 300 responses were received from a wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in national transport policy. This is a summary of the analysis of the responses to the written consultation. The findings will combine with those from other related consultation events to inform the development of the National Transport Strategy for Scotland.

Main Findings

- There was much support for the draft vision, aims and high level objectives of a future National Transport Strategy, as outlined in the consultation document.
- It was considered that the future balance of investment on transport should be shifted more in favour of maintenance of existing transport infrastructure rather than funding new developments.
- A recurring theme was that closer integration of transport and land use planning was required to address many transport problems.
- Whilst some respondents favoured improving international connectivity by air, others opposed this on environmental grounds. However, most agreed that it would be beneficial to the economy and the environment to improve cross-border rail links, and in particular, develop a faster Scotland to London rail service.
- Much support was expressed for Demand Responsive Transport although many respondents identified operational barriers as presenting the biggest hurdle for future expansion of these services.
- There was much support for the consideration of accessibility planning for local or regional transport strategies. Much support was also expressed for the production of travel plans by larger employers.
- The maintenance of lifeline air and ferry networks was seen as vital by many respondents.
- Many consultees considered that walking and cycling should receive a much higher profile within the finalised National Transport Strategy.
- It was considered that buses would be more attractive if more attention was paid to the quality of service provided and fares were more competitive. Calls were made for rail fare structures to be simplified.
- There was much support for the promotion of integrated ticketing between different transport operators.
- Around three-quarters of those who commented supported national and/or local road pricing. However, many stressed that high quality alternative transport options should be put in place first.
- Respondents recommended the future promotion of the uptake of biofuels and called for these to be made more widely available at an affordable cost.
- It was recommended that a robust evaluation framework should accompany the implementation of the National Transport Strategy which should be reviewed on a 4-yearly cycle.

Context

The 2004 White Paper, *Scotland's Transport Future*, made the commitment to develop a National Transport Strategy for Scotland, underpinned by 5 high-level objectives. The objectives are:

- To promote economic growth by building, enhancing, managing and maintaining transport services, infrastructure and networks to maximise their efficiency;
- To protect our environment and improve health by building and investing in public transport and other types of efficient and sustainable transport which minimise emissions and consumption of resources and energy;
- To promote social inclusion by connecting remote and disadvantaged communities and increasing the accessibility of the transport network;
- To improve safety of journeys by reducing accidents and enhancing the personal safety of pedestrians, drivers, passengers and staff; and
- To promote integration by making journey planning and ticketing easier and working to ensure smooth connection between different forms of transport.

A series of 20 consultation events preceded the publication of the written consultation paper on the future strategy and informed its content. Meetings with the business community were also held. A national transport conference took place in May 2006.

The Consultation

The consultation on "*Scotland's National Transport Strategy*" was live between 20 April 2006 and 13 July 2006. Over 600 copies of the consultation paper were distributed to a wide range of organisations and individuals with an interest in national transport policy. In addition, over 500 copies of a summary consultation booklet were also distributed.

The consultation paper contained 65 questions which invited views on:

- Where we are now in terms of existing transport policy;
- What we are trying to achieve;
- The proposed action we will take;
- How we will implement and monitor the strategy.

314 responses were received from a wide range of professional organisations and individuals.

Aims

The aims of the research were to interpret and analyse the comments contained in written responses to the consultation on Scotland's National Transport Strategy, exploring the range and depth of views submitted; and to present the findings of the analysis in a comprehensive report and summary document.

Methodology

Responses to the consultation were sent to the Scottish Executive consultation team either in hard copy or via e-mail. The consultation team sent copies of each response to The Research Shop for analysis. The consultation attracted a sizeable volume of responses from a broad range of stakeholders. Members of the public constituted the largest category of respondent with 26% of submissions from this sector. 17% of responses were submitted by representative groups such as community groups, tourist bodies and lobby organisations. All but one Scottish local authority responded to the consultation.

An electronic Excel database was used to store and assist analysis of the responses. Most of the analysis was qualitative in nature although where limited scope for quantitative analysis existed, this was exploited.

Where we are now

There was much support for the proposed transport goals set out in the consultation document. Of the 8 listed, those most commonly welcomed by consultees were: to promote accessibility; to facilitate economic growth; and to promote modal shift. Whilst expressing their support, respondents requested greater clarity on how the goals fitted with the aims and objectives of the National Transport Strategy.

What we are trying to Achieve

The existing aim, vision and objectives of the National Transport Strategy were generally welcomed. A common theme was that respondents wished to see these linking more explicitly with wider related policies and the strategies of other organisations such as Community Planning Partnerships. Many consultees remarked on what they saw as the compatibility of the consultation paper with the health improvement agenda.

Measures to Facilitate Economic Growth

It was widely agreed that the National Transport Strategy should provide direction to the forthcoming Strategic Projects Review, giving it a framework of priority objectives and action programmes, including key transport corridors, against which investment could be mapped.

Many respondents argued in favour of shifting the balance of future funding in favour of the maintenance of existing transport infrastructure rather than investing in new infrastructure. The majority view was that too much funding was directed to roads compared with other modes of transport.

One-third of those who expressed a view recommended that more funding should go towards transport in rural areas.

Further development of international air connectivity was an issue which split respondents into those favouring further advances in order to develop economic opportunities and tourism, and those arguing against air development on environmental grounds.

Much support was expressed for improving cross-border connectivity by rail and road, with a large majority (89%) in favour of developing a faster Scotland to London rail service to compete with flying.

38% of those who commented recommended ring-fencing local authority Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) allocations for local roads. However, most local authority consultees argued that GAE spend should be left to the discretion of local authorities.

A common view was that the developing Freight Action Plan and the National Transport Strategy should be closely aligned. There was much support for encouraging a shift of freight from road to rail.

All of those who expressed a view considered that the Strategy was well placed to support tourism.

Measures to Promote Accessibility

Many consultees documented their support for the development of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), although they highlighted barriers, largely operational, as curtailing future development.

The vast majority (97%) of those providing a view thought that accessibility planning should be considered for local or regional transport strategies. Respondents were split, however, on whether or not accessibility planning should be made compulsory.

It was considered that transport could be made more accessible to disabled people by extending concessionary fares to this sector, designing more accessible vehicles, and further development of DRT. The Rural Community Transport Initiative attracted much praise as helping to tackle social exclusion in rural areas.

A common sentiment was that lifeline air and ferry networks were vital and that the consultation document should have set out more explicitly what were seen as the clear links between these services and their role in promoting tourism and the related economies.

A recurring theme was that closer integration of transport and land-use planning would help to address and reduce the problems which exist in relation to transport connections from outlying estates to towns and cities. Several respondents considered that developers should take more responsibility for transport provision with some arguing for making this a condition of permission to develop.

It was generally agreed that there were many problems with accessing cultural activities using public transport, particularly in the evenings or at weekends. Those living in rural communities were cited as most disadvantaged in this respect.

Measures to Promote Change and Raise Awareness of Need for Change

Many respondents considered that travel plans should be required of all larger employers. It was envisaged that the Scottish Executive should provide overarching guidance on travel planning, with roles identified for Regional Transport Partnerships and local authorities in advising local employers, schools and communities on how to develop their plans and in promoting best practice.

It was recommended that the Scottish Executive should promote the concept of “smart measures”, largely by running national campaigns. Around three-quarters (73%) of those who commented considered that there was a need for a single national travel awareness brand.

Measures to Promote Modal Shift

A common view was that walking and cycling should receive a much higher profile within the National Transport Strategy, with a recommendation that investment in walking and cycling promotion be increased, sustained and ring-fenced. Respondents also thought that more attention should be paid to health issues within the Strategy with greater promotion of a partnership approach between transport and health bodies.

Many respondents advocated adopting Quality Partnerships and Quality Contracts with bus operators, with some consultees calling for national standards for quality to be introduced for bus transport. It was considered that the bus market worked relatively well in urban areas but shortcomings were identified in rural areas, resulting in pockets of poor service.

A recurring theme was that the pricing structure for rail fares should be simplified. Many respondents identified the need to tackle capacity issues on some train services. Upgrades in station premises were recommended along with increasing facilities for car parking and cycle storage at stations.

Despite much support for the use of new technologies to provide travel information, many consultees urged that these be introduced *in conjunction with* traditional paper timetables and face-to face presentation of information, rather than replacing them. There was much support for the development of Real Time Information systems.

The relative cost of public transport fares was seen as a potential barrier to increasing modal shift. To tackle this, calls were made for making drivers pay the true cost of motoring and for making people more aware of discounted fare deals.

Much support was expressed for the promotion of integrated ticketing between different transport operators, although some respondents considered that this would need to be legislated for.

A multi-agency approach to tackling personal safety on public transport was recommended by consultees.

Measures to Promote Technologies and Cleaner Fuels

There was much support for the future promotion of the uptake of biofuels. Respondents requested that biofuels be made more widely available at an affordable cost.

Many consultees recommended that public bodies should lead the way and convert their fleets of vehicles to receive biofuels in order to stimulate the market. Calls were made for initial financial underpinning from the Government to support businesses which developed and distributed biofuels.

Some respondents identified potential gains to be had from the development of new transport technology in Scotland. These included international prestige, new employment opportunities and a cleaner environment.

Measures to Manage Demand

In relation to parking policy, many consultees argued that the Scottish Executive should set overarching guidance to form a base from which regional/local parking strategies could develop. A common theme was that existing parking regulations should be better enforced. A need was identified for increasing the capacity of Park and Ride schemes.

There were mixed views on whether new approaches to demand management, such as bus priority measures, should be piloted. Some respondents considered that pilots were not needed in the face of what they saw as existing evidence of effectiveness of such measures. A common concern was that the particular needs of rural areas should be taken into account in developing any demand management measures.

Of those who provided a clear view, 78% were in favour of some form of national and/or local road pricing. However, a recurring comment was that prior to the introduction of road pricing, high quality alternative transport options should be in place. A wide range of candidates for exemption from road pricing was proffered and included disabled drivers, community transport operators and service providers. Concerns were expressed that road pricing could disadvantage rural drivers who may have restricted choice of other modes of travel and already had higher fuel bills to contend with. It was recommended that the Scottish Executive had a key role in tackling what was seen as the poor image attached to road pricing.

Of the relatively few respondents who commented on future carbon emissions trading mechanisms, around half stated clearly that they supported in principle the inclusion of surface transport in this.

Measures to Reduce the Need for Travel

A recurring theme was that transport should be considered from the planning stages of new developments, perhaps as a condition of planning consent.

It was commonly acknowledged that broadband and flexible working practices had the potential to reduce the need for people to travel and that the Scottish Executive and other public bodies should lead the way on this by example.

Measures to Promote Road Safety

Four key themes emerged: the need to educate on road safety issues; the need for tighter law enforcement of existing road safety measures; the need to publicise road safety issues; and the need to find ways to reduce the speed of motor traffic in some locations.

It was considered that reducing speed limits and improving street design could contribute to making streets safer and more pleasant places to be.

Implementation

A common theme was that consideration should be given to how the National Transport Strategy fits with development planning and structure and local plans, with the need identified to reflect the National Transport Strategy in the strategies of the regional transport partnerships.

Many respondents urged that an appropriate evaluation framework be established to enable regular monitoring and assessment of the effectiveness of the strategy. It was recommended that the Strategy be “equality proofed” and “rural proofed”.

Monitoring: Proposals for Indicators

Views were almost evenly split between those favouring the adoption of “traffic intensity” as an overall indicator of success and those against this proposal. Those against it perceived the indicator to be difficult to understand and to measure.

General recurring comments made about the proposed indicators outlined for each transport goal included the recommendation that an equality dimension be mainstreamed into the indicators, and that separate indicators should be devised for rural and urban locations.

Existing and Future Targets

There were mixed views on whether the target of quadrupling cycle use should be retained. Those in favour of retention advocated renewed effort to try to achieve this. Those against considered the target to be over-ambitious and arbitrary.

Likewise, respondents expressed mixed views on the target to stabilise road traffic volumes at 2001 levels by 2021. Whilst some considered that the target should remain, others recommended replacing it with targets focusing on environmental issues and congestion. Others questioned whether such a measure was appropriate as a target in rural areas.

The majority view (71%) was in favour of a move to regional road traffic reduction targets, although a common view was that these should be *in addition to* a national target, rather than replace this. The majority view (64%) favoured the instigation of milestones towards the delivery of the national traffic stabilisation target.

Most of those who commented (79%) supported the proposal to set a level of contribution for reductions in Scotland’s CO₂ carbon emissions.

A common response was to agree to the proposal set out in the consultation to subject the National Transport Strategy to a review every 4 years. Respondents urged that the Strategy review cycle be aligned with the respective reviews of the regional transport strategies and other related strategies such as the National Planning Framework.

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