

Panel Question (i)

Does the Regional Transport Strategy provide an appropriate long-term framework for highways and public transport in the region, reflecting other RSS policies and the RES?

1.1 Transport is first and foremost a 'derived' demand – a means to an end not an end in itself; however, it is also a facilitator – it enables people to do things. Hence transport is concerned with moving people, goods and services around, but transport networks have finite capacity to do this. In the UK, we tend to have a North American attitude to car ownership and increasingly, to car use, yet no longer wish to see the infrastructure necessary to support that use (ie the 'predict and provide' approach). Our cultural reliance on the private car is amongst the greatest in the world yet public transport networks, most of which are in the private sector, have suffered from many years of under investment, a trend we are only now beginning to reverse. These networks are also some of the oldest in the world – a legacy of the Industrial Revolution.

1.2 Transport has a significant impact on the economic, environmental and social well-being of the region. An effective transport network is considered to be of fundamental importance to the region's economy, with businesses and people needing good access both internally and to other UK regions, the rest of Europe and beyond by land sea and air. On the other hand, almost 4,000 people were killed or seriously injured on North West roads in 2004, including over 600 children, the highest for any region in the UK¹. Other consequences of increased car use include congestion, noise and air pollution which exacerbate certain illnesses, social exclusion and lack of physical exercise. Access to jobs, education, local services and facilities are also key areas of concern. There are, however, inherent tensions between the transport needs of the economy and other areas of policy which seek to protect the environment, hence transport policy becomes highly politicised and in effect, a "war zone", an example being the abandonment by the Government of the Fuel Price Escalator following the protests of September 2000.

1.3 The Government's 2004 Transport White Paper² acknowledges that, over the next 30 years, the demand for travel will continue to grow. This will, however, have major implications for policies aimed at tackling climate change, to which transport is a significant contributor, particularly CO₂ emissions from aircraft and motor vehicles. The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) does not generate the demand for travel per se; other strategies, in particular, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, will all exert a strong influence. This raises a number of specific challenges, not least how to manage future demand and the impacts it will have on the region's transport networks in the most sustainable way. Managing the demand for travel will need to lie at the heart of the RTS, although a number of respondents³ expressed concern that this is not currently the case. On reflection, and to address the concerns expressed by GONW in its response, Assembly officers suggest that the Panel consider having a separate policy relating to the management of travel demand, rather than it remain within Policy RT2⁴, which covers the management and maintenance of the highway network. It is also suggested that this policy should

¹ Transport Statistics Bulletin – Regional Transport Statistics: 2005, Department for Transport, November 2005

² The Future of Transport: A Network for 2030, Department for Transport, July 2004

³ Notably AGMA (Response 531/1420), Merseyside Policy Unit (Response 536/2719), Merseytravel (Response 208/288)

⁴ Briefing Paper 20 - Suggested Wording Changes to Draft RSS, NWRA, September 2006

appear second in a reordered Chapter 10⁵, even though the policies as originally presented are not hierarchical and should be read as a suite of policies. It is important to emphasise that this proposal does not in any way imply a change of direction for the RTS, merely giving much greater prominence in terms of presentation within RSS to a key component of the overall transport strategy.

1.4 Making best use of existing transport networks remains integral to this approach. Despite perceptions to the contrary, substantial investment over the last 50 years has created a high quality network of transport links across much of the North West and with other regions. Current problems and issues arise from how we are using these networks and the impacts that use has. Many of these, for example, congestion, journey time reliability and environmental impact, occur across the region and tend to be more a question of scale rather than reflecting any spatial distinctiveness. The transport priorities set out in Tables 10.2a-e of Policy RT8 will not deliver any significant increase in transport network capacity before 2015, apart from in Greater Manchester through extensions to the Metrolink system. Hence policies in the RTS need to focus on its twin aims: significantly improving the quality and provision of public transport and promoting a more structured approach to managing and selectively improving the region's highway network. To this end, Policies RT1 to RT5 effectively set out a framework for transport management across the region covering public transport, highways, access to ports and airports and freight, and propose that a similar approach should be adopted at the sub-regional and local level. The approach is based on functionality and requires an acceptance that highway network management is critical, as much of the highway network is used by buses and coaches, cyclists and pedestrians in addition to cars and lorries.

1.5 AGMA⁶ has expressed concern about the lack of an explicit link within the RSS between the Key Diagram and the suite of RTS policies. The Assembly acknowledges these concerns and officers therefore suggest that the Panel consider having an additional policy, 'Integrated Transport Networks in the North West', to link the Key Diagram to the RTS and to set an overall strategic context for transport in the region. Furthermore, many stakeholders were concerned that the Public Transport Framework (Policy RT1 and Diagram RT1.1) is over-complicated. In response, a revision to the Framework is therefore suggested by Assembly officers⁷, together with associated amendments to Policy RT1⁸.

Panel Question (ii)

How will the draft RSS's proposed patterns of development impact on the strategic highway and public transport networks?

2.1 PPS11 states clearly that RSS should not identify specific sites as suitable for development, focusing instead on locational criteria appropriate to regionally or sub-regionally significant housing, business, retail and leisure uses, or to the location of major new investment sites. This makes it difficult to determine potential impacts at specific locations on the strategic highway and public transport networks due to difficulties in determining forecasts for trip generation and distribution, mode choice and assignment. Policy DP1 Regional Development Principles requires all new development to be genuinely accessible by public transport; equally, Policy L4

⁵ These suggested changes are presentational and in light of Para 2.48 of PPS11, it is the view of Assembly officers that they do not represent a major change in the content of draft RSS.

⁶ Response 531/1419

⁷ Briefing Paper 20 - Suggested Wording Changes to Draft RSS, NWRA, September 2006

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Regional Housing Provision requires that local authorities ensure that the transport network can accommodate additional demand generated by new housing. For inter-modal freight terminals, the criteria set out in Appendix RT5.1 require site Travel Plans to be developed,; it is, however, acknowledged that this does not extend to all of the broad locations for regionally significant economic development set out in Table 8.1, and the Panel may therefore wish to address this.

2.2 RSS seeks to concentrate most new development in the region within the regional centres and regional towns and cities identified in the Settlement Hierarchy (Table 7.1). The regional public transport and highway networks set out in Appendices RT1.1 and RT2.1 of the Draft RSS have been designed in part to provide the necessary connectivity between the identified settlements, in particular, transport links between the regional centres of Manchester / Salford and Liverpool and between the regional centres and the regional towns and cities. The transport investment priorities set out in Tables 10.2a-d of Policy RT8 will over the Plan period deliver a change in direction away from highway schemes in favour of rail and public transport schemes, most of which are focused on the public transport networks within and between the three city regions.