

**Panel Question (i)**

**Does the draft RSS provide clear and sufficient guidance on what is meant by demand management and when and where such measures might be used?**

1.1 Congestion on the highway network tends to arise where travel demand is in excess of capacity. The motorway network in Greater Manchester and north Cheshire already experiences heavy peak and occasional non-peak congestion; this has major implications not only for delivery of the RSS but also the Regional Economic Strategy. As discussed in Matter 5A, it is essential that the RTS sets out a clear framework for managing travel demand. The key question is how.

1.2 In attempting to answer this question and to subsequently provide sufficient guidance within the RTS, it is worth considering what is actually meant by the phrase 'demand management'. Transport network operators effectively supply the means by which the demand for travel is met, a supply which is finite and practically incapable of being increased significantly in the short term due to financial and engineering constraints. Since publication of the 1998 Transport White Paper<sup>1</sup>, the focus has primarily been on 'persuade and convince' (ie try to influence the choices people make about how, when and if they travel) through a variety of policy instruments now known collectively as 'Smart Choices'<sup>2</sup>. It could be argued that this approach has failed: traffic has continued to grow, with Government forecasts predicting growth of between 20% and 25% by 2010 from a 2003 base<sup>3</sup>. The debate has now moved towards consideration of 'restrict and restrain' (ie limit demand to available capacity), with the introduction of national road user charging suggested as a potential solution. However, it is still not clear nationally whether the ultimate outcome sought is merely a change in travel behaviour or more radically, an overall reduction in personal travel. In the East of England Panel Report<sup>4</sup>, the Panel arrived at a clear and unambiguous conclusion: "a large part of the answer to worsening congestion, to growth and future movement needs, and to the challenge of climate change must be that people will have to use cars less in future."

1.3 The Assembly officers' suggested approach, set out in the revised policy 'A Regional Framework for Managing Travel Demand', provides clear guidance as to where attention should be focused, but recognises that a regional "one size fits all" solution is not the most appropriate. It will be for local authorities to develop integrated strategies specific to the nature and scale of the problems faced, within the broad framework set out in the RTS; what may be suitable for Greater Manchester may not be so for a regional city such as Carlisle or in rural areas. This requires a thorough understanding of local congestion-related problems and issues, and in the North West, the evidence points strongly to journeys by private car to and from work and educational establishments, the dispersed patterns of development that have emerged in recent years contributing to an increase in both the number and length of journeys undertaken. It is, however, important not to ignore the fact that wider issues such as economic development / regeneration, social inclusion and rural accessibility and the impact of transport emissions on climate change will also significantly influence the debate.

1.4 Effective strategies for managing travel demand will need to have clear objectives, set out what is being proposed, why it is necessary and what its impacts

<sup>1</sup> "A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone", DETR, 1998

<sup>2</sup> Examples include travel plans, travel awareness campaigns, real time information, and integrated ticketing

<sup>3</sup> 'Managing Our Roads', DfT, 2003

<sup>4</sup> East of England Plan Examination in Public, Report of the Panel, June 2006, Page 137

will be. This may also help overcome any potential opposition to more radical elements. A wide range of transport policy and highway and traffic engineering measures will need to be considered, including parking charges and enforcement, integrated public transport provision and effective bus priority, management of traffic and the 'street-scene' and potentially, road user charging. The latter could range from work-place parking charges and charging for the use of certain roads to area-wide congestion charging as in London.

1.5 A related issue to demand management is reducing the need to travel; this is primarily about effective spatial planning: assisting people to meet their needs locally and therefore potentially avoiding the need for travel other than on foot or by cycle. Transport policy alone cannot reduce the need to travel, but it can contribute towards reducing the need to travel by car, in other words, reducing car dependency; this is one of the objectives of the RTS. Reducing the need to travel forms part of the RSS Regional Development Principles set out in Policy DP1 (part of the RTS), and this policy is considered sufficient in transport terms by ensuring that all new development is located where it is genuinely accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.