



Chartered
Institute of
Environmental
Health

Response to the Northern Ireland Regional Transportation Strategy Review

18 December 2009

The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

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As a **knowledge centre**, we provide information, evidence and policy advice to local and national government, environmental and public health practitioners, industry and other stakeholders. We publish books and magazines, run educational events and commission research.

As an **awarding body**, we provide qualifications, events, and trainer and candidate support materials on topics relevant to health, wellbeing and safety to develop workplace skills and best practice in volunteers, employees, business managers and business owners.

As a **campaigning organisation**, we work to push environmental health further up the public agenda and to promote improvements in environmental and public health policy.

We are a **registered charity** with over 10,500 members across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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1.0 Summary

- 1.1 CIEH welcomes this review of the Northern Ireland Regional transportation strategy (RTS) which has the potential to either positively or negatively affect and shape the future depending on what decisions are taken during 2010.
- 1.2 These decisions **absolutely must** be considered in the widest possible sense, and in particular the profound impact that they will potentially have on health, equality and social justice for people in Northern Ireland (NI). It is for these reasons that the Chartered Institute is interested in and gravely concerned about the Departments current proposals.
- 1.3 Current and recent science has overwhelmingly demonstrated that the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere is the primary cause of the current climate change crisis. Climate change has been identified as one of the biggest public health issues of the 21st Century. Levels of greenhouse gases attributed to transport need to be reduced. The health impacts of climate change include floods, infectious and foodborne diseases and an increase in temperature change impacting on mortality levels. Regional transportation systems and behaviours have a major role to play in addressing climate change. For more detailed analysis of health impacts visit http://www.cieh.org/uploadedFiles/Core/Policy/Publications_and_information_services/Policy_publications/Publications/Climate_Change_Public_Health_Health_Inequalities.pdf
- 1.4 Northern Ireland's per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of 12.83 tonnes per annum compares badly with the UK average of 10.48 tonnes. While the UK as a whole has achieved a greenhouse gas emissions decrease of 15.7% since 1990, Northern Ireland's total has decreased by only 5.8% despite major expansion of the use of natural gas. Much of the difference between the UK and Northern Ireland averages is due to our transport emissions (agricultural emissions are also high in Northern Ireland).
- 1.5 The transport sector in NI accounts for 25% of NI greenhouse gas emissions. The domestic transport sector in NI has increased by a staggering 51% between 1990 and 2006 compared with just 9% in the UK. These figures bear testament to the over reliance upon and entirely unsustainable use of the private car in NI which in turn is primarily due to the underinvestment in more sustainable, affordable alternatives.
- 1.5 The 2002 Regional Transportation Strategy acknowledged that Northern Ireland has suffered decades of underinvestment in public transport. **Despite this, it allocated two-thirds of its investment to roads infrastructure while just one-third was allocated to improving Northern Ireland's public transport.** The RTS aimed for a modal shift from car-use to public transport-use, walking and cycling. Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, this aim is unlikely to be realised. In fact, *Travel Survey* and emissions figures suggest we are heading in the opposite direction.
- 1.6 Research by the Consumer Council suggests that only three in ten people here use bus services regularly, and fewer than one in ten uses train services.

The Survey suggested that cost, frequency, choice, safety and reliability should be the priorities for public transport here.

- 1.7 The PricewaterhouseCoopers *Bridging the Gap* report confirms that investment in public transport on a per capita basis in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland **is at least twice** that of Northern Ireland.
- 1.8 There are important social equity issues around transport. There are now 900,000 vehicles registered in Northern Ireland for a population of 1.7 million yet 50% of households in areas of Belfast and 20.5% of rural residents do not have access to a motor vehicle. 39% of women in Northern Ireland do not have a full driving licence.
- 1.9 Urban areas are affected by vehicle-related air pollution which can contribute to respiratory disease, especially amongst vulnerable groups such as the elderly. Disadvantaged urban areas tend to be characterised by high traffic volume, with residents at increased risk of road traffic accidents.
- 1.10 A new rural transport policy is needed which ensures that the problems of the immobile and socially excluded are not analysed or tackled in isolation from the mobile and included within a wider canvass of growing sustainable rural communities that balances environmental, social and economic sustainability and which encourages rural dwellers to use viable alternatives to the car.
- 1.11 The continuation of recent NI transport policies is not sustainable. Unless tackled, our over-reliance on the private car will, even leaving aside the potentially disastrous impacts of runaway climate change, have a continuing and worsening impact on Northern Ireland's economic, societal and environmental wellbeing. The policies require revolution, not evolution.
- 1.12 **Therefore we call on government to not only significantly improve the RTS but also to review indicative spending priorities for transport and to reassess major road infrastructure projects which have not yet been fully commissioned**
- 1.13 The indicative spend figures for transport modes should be urgently revised to **ensure that at least 50% of Government investment goes to sustainable transport measures**. It is vital that such investment would be seen as such. The central message of the Stern Report is that reducing emissions today will make us better off in the future: one model predicts benefits of up to \$2.5 trillion each year if the world shifts to a low carbon path.
- 1.14 A move away from hydrocarbon fuelled private cars may soon become an economic necessity. In July 2008 a barrel of oil cost nearly \$150, a price that was passed on to the disgruntled consumers at the pumps. The price has reduced since, but it is only a matter of time before this price level becomes the norm. The International Energy Agency has predicted that oil will cost \$200 per barrel by 2030.

- 1.15 Spatial planning plays a particularly important role in shaping individuals' behaviour with regard to travel and transport. **It is, therefore, imperative that a co-ordinated approach be taken when considering land-use and transport.**
- 1.16 **Equally relevant are the connections between health and transport policy**, and in particular the clear health benefits that are derived from increased physical activity that activities such as walking and cycling can bring. Whilst current substantive transport policy is not the only impediment to a greater uptake of these modes of personal transport nonetheless it is arguably contributing.
- 1.17 We would therefore support and encourage the Department in introducing future policies that reduce even further the speed limits in residential and built up areas and that actively support and encourage increased pedestrianisation and cycling as opposed to the private car. Such policies have other clear health benefits such as reduced noise and better local air quality.
- 1.18 We would encourage the Department to take these and other similar views on board. Appendix 1 provides a summary of measures that we believe should be incorporated in a revised strategy. We would also commend and support the more detailed response provided by Northern Ireland Environment Link of which CIEH is a member. We trust that the Department and the minister will avoid decisions now that have potentially serious longer term consequences for and will be to the detriment of people and communities in NI.

Appendix 1. Measures for inclusion in a revised Strategy

	Short term; practical; inexpensive 2010	Medium term	Long term; ideal; visionary – 2030
Strategic Planning and Costings	<p>Develop new costing and policy programmes designed to deliver sustainable transport for long term</p> <p>Devise new cost/benefit analysis based on carbon reduction and plan to halt fossil fuel use for transport by 2030</p> <p>Prioritise measures at disadvantaged areas first</p> <p>Major campaign to enforce speed limits (reducing carbon as well as improving safety)</p> <p>Government should take a lead in promoting public and active transport for its employees</p>	<p>Reduce speed limits across road network</p> <p>Support research and development of alternative and new technologies which incorporate climate change, safety and health as key drivers</p> <p>Develop taxation schemes that encourage active and public transport and discourage (incrementally more so) use of private cars, and those less efficient proportionately more so</p>	<p>No fossil fuels used for transport</p> <p>The infrastructure should be in place so all journeys can be made by active and/or public transport</p>
Active Transport – walking & cycling	<p>Link up all cycle ways to provide connected web around Belfast</p> <p>PR campaign to promote active transport, health etc.</p> <p>Increase the safety of active transport through driver and cyclist education</p> <p>Promote Safe Routes to School</p>	<p>Expand active transport network to make it the focus and priority of all transport, not cars</p> <p>Majority of journeys to school not by private car</p>	<p>Most journeys < 5 km by active transport</p> <p>Infrastructure fully in place to allow this</p>
Public Transport	<p>Bus (and taxi) priority lanes and signalling in all major towns and cities 100% of time</p> <p>Continuing upgrading the fleet to make public</p>	<p>Public transport vehicles of a variety of sizes extend accessibility beyond major cities (rural post buses, large taxis on scheduled runs, etc.)</p>	<p>Public transport available for all journeys over 5 km</p> <p>'Nodes' linked by fast, frequent, accessible and</p>

	<p>transport affordable, regular and reliable</p> <p>Enforcement measures to ensure compliance and clear flow</p> <p>Expanded 'Park & Ride' and 'Park & Share' systems, improving the service to make them preferable to driving for all long journeys</p>	<p>Public transport to be seen as the preferred method of travel.</p>	<p>affordable public transport</p> <p>All public transport fuelled by renewable energy</p>
Vehicles	<p>PR campaign on energy efficient and safe driving</p> <p>Develop standards for vehicle efficiency</p> <p>Promotion of non-petrol based fuel for public & fleet vehicles</p> <p>Alternative systems such as pool cars for 'at work' journeys</p> <p>Promotion of 'teleconferencing' and similar to avoid journeys</p>	<p>All vehicles sized, powered as required and driven efficiently</p> <p>Provide necessary infrastructure for electric (or other) vehicles for public transport</p>	<p>Private transport rarely needed; alternatives in place for all but minority of journeys and 'socially unacceptable' to drive.</p> <p>All vehicles powered by renewables</p> <p>'Guided Intelligent' vehicles and roadways</p>
Freight	<p>Restrictions on parking/blocking public transport and cycle lanes (deliveries restricted to specific times to clear lanes for transport)</p> <p>Encourage shift to smaller, electric freight vehicles</p>	<p>Much more locally produced goods and services reducing need to drive</p> <p>'Rail' freight for major distances</p> <p>Electric distribution by smaller vehicles in town</p>	<p>System in place which minimises transport and fuel used for distribution.</p>
Planning/ Settlement pattern	<p>All new developments to include public transport, active transport facilities and their promotion</p>	<p>Plans in place to change settlement patterns and design all new developments around minimising transport needs</p>	<p>Settlements designed around sustainable transport; local services, etc.</p>

Avoiding Travel	Promotion of teleconferencing, working from home, local goods and services	Reorganisation of public sector to allow more people to work near their homes Local food production, goods and services locally available	Technical solutions avoid need for most business travel
Long Distance Travel	Promotion of teleconferencing and local holidays	Support decrease in plane use through taxation and other costing mechanisms Encourage development of alternative fuels and more efficient planes	Northern Ireland with 'appropriate' links to GB network designed to eliminate local flights through fast trains