



# RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

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Dear Sir,

## **RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PAPER: Future of Urban Transport Discussion Document**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) represents over 22,000 spatial planners, existing to advance the science and art of town planning for the benefit of the public.

This document responds to the *Future of Urban Transport Discussion Document*. It has been formed drawing on the expertise of members including the RTPI-TPS Transport Planning Network Advisory Group and Planning for Sustainable Travel Interest Group, and the Historic Environment Group of the RTPI Urban Design Network.

One of the RTPI's campaigns for 2010 is to promote better integration between transport and land-use planning as it had been recognised that there has been missed opportunities where better coordination could enhance connectivity, access and more sustainable transport solutions.

The measures proposed for the fund are broadly welcomed by the RTPI. Following the report by the former Prime Minister's Strategy Unit on Urban Transport published late last year, which concluded some of the best transport improvements can be achieved inexpensively and efficiently, emphasis on integration and innovation makes much more sense. We agree that initiatives such as Cycling Demonstration Towns have clearly shown that relatively low-cost solutions can deliver real change when these are targeted at prioritising travel by more sustainable modes. We believe the low costs and wide range of benefits of such measures amply justify continued government support even in a challenging financial climate. The Sustainable Travel Towns pilot studies showed reductions in traffic and improvements to the environment can be delivered much more cheaply than by simply providing more and bigger infrastructure.

It is recognised however that such measures were focused on urban rather than inter-urban travel. The RTPI would wish to see the continued trend of maximising use of current capacities commensurate with the need to reduce carbon emissions. However we would strongly support the

building of inter-urban rapid transit using European technology linked in a planned manner with the growth of tram/light rail and guided bus systems.

Although the UCF was proposed by the previous government, we note that the proposal was to some extent mirrored by a commitment in the Conservative Party Manifesto to a Transport Carbon Reduction Fund for 'green' travel initiatives, and signalled changes in transport governance by empowering local authorities to deal with issues such as traffic target resolution and the regulation of local bus services set out in the Liberal Democrats' Manifesto. We therefore anticipate that a new source of funds aimed at encouraging local authorities to adopt more integrated and environmentally-friendly transport policies will be a feature of the new coalition Government's agenda.

With several wider objectives to consider, UCF will require a real change in the way local authorities plan and deliver transport strategies. In particular, they will have to be fully integrated with spatial planning policies to reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable travel choices through the new place-shaping agenda. Pilot City Regions (i.e. Leeds and Manchester) will have much greater local influence over key decisions on strategic highway and rail improvements than previously, and this is an important step in giving local authorities the tools to do the job. They also show the potential of what UCF could achieve.

Nevertheless there remain issues that require further consideration. Whilst the urban challenge fund (UCF) may make a small impact on the economic, social and environmental issues within urban areas, there is a wider urban policy agenda. The RTPPI consider that the discussion paper is written from the standpoint that 'transport' is a separate entity from the city it serves. In reality, there is a symbiosis between cities and their transport systems. Consequently, the indirect effects of transport are generally externalities. It is also true to say that many transport problems may be addressed by non-transport means and through measures focused on behavioural change. This is demonstrated by the Birmingham Integrated Transport Study (which was based upon these principles) the original inspiration for Local Transport Plans (LTPs) and a study that regrettably seems to have been forgotten.

Given this, we suggest that in section 9 of the document, the bullet point 'reduced congestion and increased journey time reliability' should be replaced with 'reallocation of road space leading to improved journey time reliability by more sustainable modes, and effective management of congestion'.

## **General comments**

The manner in which the bids for UCF are determined needs further consideration. As we have seen with the Regional Funding Allocations, making the strategic case for investment in transport is not enough to secure funds, and the detailed scrutiny of business cases for individual schemes by the Department for Transport (DfT) is a very effective brake on local expenditure, being an expensive and time-consuming process in its own right. Increased delegation under the localism agenda should be explored.

We believe that the DfT appraisal process can often be an obstacle to strategic priorities in urban transport. While it is recognised that appraisal takes into account many different issues, not just their economic justification, the high value placed on modelled time-savings favours large capital schemes at the expense of schemes which involve reallocating road space away from motor vehicles and prioritising more sustainable modes.

There is a need to develop integrated approaches to planning and appraisal. For example, we believe funding applications should illustrate not just how the proposals lever funds and support from Primary Care Trusts and integrate with wider policies, but explicitly state how they help to address meet the needs of the young and elderly, obesity, health inequalities, adaptation to climate change and meet the needs of the rural communities.

The scheme should recognise bids in which existing local funding streams such as capital

maintenance are used to support the aims of the bid, e.g. resurfacing the edge of a carriageway before its designation as a bus lane or bike lane.

We suggest that some measures currently captured under several of the headings would work better if they were more uniquely defined. For example, improvements in street design or facilities for cyclists, walkers or indeed users of mobility scooters could be captured in Sustainable Travel and in Traffic Management.

As a final point, we think that the document should consider visual improvements to townscapes. Removing traffic from urban places by modal shift and traffic management can greatly improve their ambience and thus their liveability and economic performance, particularly in historic areas which often had little capacity for the traffic they are expected to accommodate. Furthermore, historic buildings can be adversely affected structurally by the impact of heavy traffic. Paragraph 9 of the document seems the most appropriate location for this point.

If you require further assistance, have any queries relating to the enclosed or require clarification of any points made, please contact Matt Thomson, Head of Policy and Practice on 0207 929 9494 or email [matt.thomson@rtpi.org.uk](mailto:matt.thomson@rtpi.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Thomson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Thomson  
**Head of Policy and Practice**