

Written evidence submitted by Transport for Greater Manchester (STO0057)

TfGM Response

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is the local government body responsible for delivering Greater Manchester's transport strategy and commitments. TfGM deliver the transport policies set by the Greater Manchester Mayor and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. We also offer advice to Greater Manchester's ten planning authorities, advising them on the best way to improve land use and transport integration through plans and development proposals.

Our response is set out in three main parts below. We would be happy to provide the Select Committee with further detail on the content set out below.

Defining objectives

- 1) *What is your understanding of the Government's strategic transport objectives? Are they the right ones, and if not, how should they be changed?*
- 2) *How well has the Government articulated the outcomes and objectives it seeks from the country's transport network? How could this be improved, and what impact would better-defined objectives have on transport planning and investment?*

While good statements about economic, social and environmental outcomes are made in various HMG documents concerning transport (such as the National Infrastructure Strategy) , there is no clear articulation from government of its strategic transport objectives. What exists spans across a number of policy and strategy documents, including objective setting in the forewords to these documents by Ministers.

There is a clear need for these policies and strategies to be reviewed and for them to come together in a coherent, overarching National Transport Strategy for England, at least once a Parliament. This should set out a clearly devolved approach to transport, that enables integration with strategic road and rail networks.

There is a need to set a clear plan for a single approach to vision-led strategic planning across all transport modes and intended outcomes, and TfGM would ask the select committee to review the considered analysis on the challenges that come from lack of a cohesive, overarching strategy and the benefits that

should an approach would bring by various professional bodies such as CIHTⁱ, ICEⁱⁱ, TPSⁱⁱⁱ, UTG^{iv} and IfG^v.

Using objectives to guide investment

- 3) *How well does the appraisal and decision-making process for new transport investment meet the Government's strategic transport objectives? How should this be improved?*
- 4) *How should wider economic, environmental and social impacts be appraised and valued, including when the gains will largely be felt in policy areas other than transport?*
- 5) *How can longer-term certainty in planning be achieved in order to promote greater private sector investment from a range of sources?*

The DfT's Transport Analysis Guidance is a comprehensive and well documented set of procedures for undertaking appraisal of transport investment. However, it is divorced for the policy objectives that DfT and other departments are promoting and DfT have been slow to embrace the changes set out in the Green Book Review^{vi} particularly in areas of how interventions contribute to:

- the delivery of the government's intended strategic goals (such as levelling up or net zero); and
- place-based impacts.

In the three years since the Green Book Review was published progress towards implementing its reforms has been limited. Departments have publishing PBA guides and appraisal updates, but these are in the context of largely unchanged core methodologies and ways of working, which mean they do not address the impact of projects and programmes on the outcomes that matter for objectives such as levelling up.

For example, when the £96bn Integrated Rail Plan was published in 2022 Government acknowledged that it had not been formally assessed for its impact on levelling up, including not considering levelling up in the decisions to regarding the reductions in scope relative to the original ambitions for both HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail.

Improving coordination and alignment

- 6) *How effectively is strategic transport planning and investment coordinated across and between transport modes, including with reference to achieving modal shift?*
- 7) *How could planning for transport infrastructure across government and coordination of policy (for example, with policy on energy, digital or planning) be made more coherent and streamlined?*
- 8) *How effectively is strategic transport planning and investment coordinated between national, devolved, regional and local government and other public bodies? Do the current division and distribution of powers help or hinder?*

Strategic transport planning and investment is not coordinated across and between transport modes. Separate strategic planning processes are undertaken for national road, national rail and local transport networks, and the hence the corresponding investment decisions, are not coordinated. The quantum of investment the country allocates to each of these three networks is determined via internal DfT / HMT discussions and is not guided by reference to a cohesive, overarching strategy.

As stated above, the development and application of a transport strategy would assist and allow priorities for investment to be aligned to the stated objectives, including levelling up and net zero, and hence further integration with the priorities of other HMG departmental.

An overarching strategy setting the strategic objectives for transport would help remove some of the inconsistencies in current policy making. For example, the Transport decarbonisation plan^{vii} sets out a commitment to “move away from transport planning based on predicting future demand to provide capacity (‘predict and provide’) to planning that sets an outcome communities want to achieve and provides the transport solutions to deliver those outcomes (sometimes referred to as ‘vision and validate’)”, something TfGM would support. This statement is then referred to in the draft National Policy Statement for National Networks^{viii}, but is apparently watered down in para 3.44: “While vision-led approaches to minimise demand on the SRN are essential, there are varying challenges that will be presented by certain sites based on their land use, scale and/or location. In some cases, they will not always offset the need to increase capacity as modal shift does not always mean less road use.”

Taking an avoid, shift and improve message would support policy development, planning of transport infrastructure and services. The approach

has to be multifaceted ensuring national strategic transport planning policies support, for example:

- integrating strategic planning and delivery across land use, energy, digital and transport systems;
- investing in approaches such as the Bee Network and S4A approaches in Greater Manchester being taken to highways and network management; and
- support rapid fleet transition for private and public transport for remaining trips as well as engagement with communities and businesses on how they can support the transition to a decarbonised and integrated transport system.

Manchester Northwest Quadrant Study (MNWQS)^{ix} is a potential case study that highlights where planning for transport infrastructure could be better integrated to deliver more coherent proposals in a streamlined way with improved coordination across public bodies. MNWQS was one of six national strategic studies sponsored by DfT's strategic roads team (commencing in 2013) to explore options to address some of the biggest challenges facing the SRN.

The initial study recommended a major package of highways-focused interventions on and close to the SRN. It also recommended a number of rail and bus enhancements and improved park and ride provision. Highways England (now National Highways) progressed the development of the SRN interventions, through their Project Control Framework (PCF) stages 1 and 2 (option identification and section); whilst TfN and TfGM jointly commissioned consultants to do further work on the Multi-Modal study on behalf of DfT, in 2019.

Given different agencies processes and funding sources for development and delivery there has not been true collaboration and integrated planning and does not foster open and transparent working. This has continued as National Highways continue to develop the MNWQ proposals. We would be pleased to provide further information on this case study to the Select Committee.

Finally, strategic transport objectives can only be realised with the right levels of capital and revenue funding, that have longer term certainty and can therefore sustain private sector investment. This equally needs to be coupled with powers in place for public bodies to be more agile in delivering for people and places.

Annex 1: Call for Evidence

<https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3175>

We welcome submissions of written evidence that address any or all of the following themes. We are also interested in receiving submissions that draw on international comparisons to address these questions.

Defining objectives

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- 2. How well has the Government articulated the outcomes and objectives it seeks from the country's transport network? How could this be improved, and what impact would better-defined objectives have on transport planning and investment?*

Using objectives to guide investment

- 3. How well does the appraisal and decision-making process for new transport investment meet the Government's strategic transport objectives? How should this be improved?*
- 4. How should wider economic, environmental and social impacts be appraised and valued, including when the gains will largely be felt in policy areas other than transport?*
- 5. How can longer-term certainty in planning be achieved in order to promote greater private sector investment from a range of sources?*

Improving coordination and alignment

- 6. How effectively is strategic transport planning and investment coordinated across and between transport modes, including with reference to achieving modal shift?*
- 7. How could planning for transport infrastructure across government and coordination of policy (for example, with policy on energy, digital or planning) be made more coherent and streamlined?*
- 8. How effectively is strategic transport planning and investment coordinated between national, devolved, regional and local government and other public bodies? Do the current division and distribution of powers help or hinder?*

August 2023

Endnotes

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- i <https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/17901/transport-select-committee-future-of-transport.pdf>
<https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/17421/may-2023-ciht-response-to-the-ice-consultation-on-national-transport-strategy.pdf>
- ii <https://www.ice.org.uk/news-insight/policy-and-advocacy/policy-engagement/policy-position-national-transport-strat-england>
- iii <https://tps.org.uk/tps-policy/state-of-the-nations-update-2022>
<https://tps.org.uk/public/downloads/zzQtC/TPS%20NNNPS%20response%20June%202023.pdf>
- iv <https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/resources/types/report/decarbonising-urban-vehicles-challenges-and-opportunities-city-region-public>
- v <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/evidence-transport-policy.pdf>
- vi <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/final-report-of-the-2020-green-book-review>
- vii <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-decarbonisation-plan>
- viii <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-revised-national-networks-national-policy-statement>
- ix [Manchester North West Quadrant - National Highways](#)