

# Economic Development & Transport Committee

**EDT(2)-05-06(p.6)**

**Date: 16 March 2006**

**Time: 9.00am to 12.20pm**

**Venue: Committee Room 3, Senedd, Cardiff Bay**

**Title: Update on Wales Transport Strategy**

## **Purpose**

To inform the Committee of the current position on the development of the Wales Transport Strategy (Connecting Wales) and seek their views on the draft proposals.

## **Summary**

2. The report sets out the proposed timing and process for preparing the Wales Transport Strategy. It explains the draft structure of the document and lists the principal outcomes which it is expected to achieve.

## **Timing**

3. It is planned to issue a draft of the Wales Transport Strategy for public consultation in May 2006. The consultation draft is being developed via an iterative process with the main stakeholders. The Regional Transport Plans (RTPs) which will be produced by the 4 regional transport consortia in 2008 will take their main outcomes from Connecting Wales.

## **Background**

4. The preparation of a Transport Strategy for Wales is one of the requirements of the Wales Transport Act. The Strategy will replace the Transport Framework –published in 2001 and set the context for Assembly Transport policies and programmes and the new Regional Transport Plans.

5. Transport is not an end in itself. The Strategy is about improving access to services and therefore themes such as using technology to replace physical journeys and using the land use planning system to reduce the need for people to travel by private car are considered alongside more traditional topics such as improving road and rail networks.

6 Connecting Wales therefore focuses on the role that transport can play in delivering our wider policy

objectives in areas such as spatial planning, economic development, education, health, social services, environment and tourism. It takes its main objectives from the Wales Spatial Plan and A Better Wales. It has a long time horizon (2030) and therefore needs to be flexible enough to respond to the challenges and opportunities which will arise over that time but still provide strong guiding principles for detailed action plans for the Welsh Assembly Government, Local Government and providers of infrastructure and services. The first stage of developing the Strategy therefore focuses on what ‘outcomes’ we are trying to achieve. These are set out in paragraph 11 below.

## **Process**

7. The Wales Transport Strategy is being developed by co-operative working with the main stakeholders inside and outside the Welsh Assembly Government. These include the Welsh Local Government Association and the four Regional Transport Consortia. It is expected that this dialogue will continue until the publication of the Draft Strategy for formal public consultation in May this year.

8. Much work has been done on particular transport topics since the publication of the Transport Framework in 2001. In particular I reviewed the spending programme and announced my commitments for the next 15 years in December 2004. We have also developed strategies for Walking and Cycling, Road Safety, Community Transport, Information Technology and several other topic areas. These documents will form part of the commitments which go into the Strategy and their contribution to achieving the desired outcomes will be included in the Appraisal of the Strategy – see paragraph 12 below.

9. Some more detailed studies are being done on particular aspects alongside Connecting Wales and will form ‘daughter documents’ to the main Strategy. These include:

- Wales Freight Strategy. We are working with the Freight Transport Association, Regional Groups, Operators such as road and railfreight hauliers and academics to produce a more detailed strategy for freight. The group is being chaired by Callum Couper of ABP ports.
- Wales Rail Planning Assessment. This work is being done jointly with the Department for Transport and Network Rail. It is a long term (20 year) look at forecast demand and options for accommodating the demand on the rail network. It will be one of a series of such studies in the UK.
- Smarter Choices. A guide to best practice in promoting more sustainable transport such as car sharing, travel planning, and walking and cycling.

## **Structure of the Document**

10. The main structure of the document is set out in the draft Summary at Annex 1. It sets out the main outcomes which the Strategy will be designed to achieve. It then looks at the trends affecting transport in Wales. Three main themes

- reducing the need to travel and the amount of travel
- achieving greater use of the more sustainable forms of travel and
- achieving a more effective and efficient transport system

are developed throughout the document. There is also a strong regional section which is intended to set the main themes for the development of Regional Transport Plans. We have worked closely with both the Spatial Plan team and regional groups on this. The RTPs will be the delivery mechanism for much of the area actions promised by the Spatial Plan. The final section of the Strategy will be concerned with delivery and the development of indicators by which we will measure the effectiveness of the strategy. At the moment much of this section is still to be developed.

## **Outcomes**

11. Achieving the outcomes is the basis of the whole strategy. It is therefore worth setting them out in full. They are grouped under social, economic and environmental headings as follows:

### **Social**

- Improving access to healthcare
- Improving access to education and life-long learning
- Improving access to employment opportunities
- Improving access to key tourist sites
- Improving access to shopping and leisure facilities
- Improving opportunities that encourage healthy lifestyles

### **Economic**

- Improving connectivity within Wales and internationally
- Improving the efficient and reliable movement of people
- Maintaining the fabric of Wales' transport assets
- Accommodating freight
- Improving the actual and perceived safety of travel

### **Environmental**

- Reducing the impact of transport on air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions
- Reducing the impact of transport on noise and vibration
- Reducing the impact of transport on water, flood risk and land contamination
- Reducing the impact of transport on biodiversity
- Respect, conserve and enhance Wales' distinctiveness, historic environment, landscape and townscape, and reduce community severance and light pollution

## **Appraisal and Evaluation**

12. Connecting Wales will be subject to several assessment and appraisal processes. A Strategic Environmental Assessment is required under the SEA Regulations for Wales. This stipulates a requirement to assess the likely significant effects on the environment of certain plans and programmes and their reasonable alternatives. A scoping report which sets out the proposed methodology for doing this has been prepared by independent consultants TRL and has been sent to the Statutory Environmental Bodies in Wales (CCW, Environment Agency Wales and CADW) for comment. An electronic copy of the scoping report and its Appendices is attached to this report for Committee Members information. (NB these are 66 and 47 pages respectively). Copies of the scoping report and appendices are available to anyone interested from the Contact officer named at the end of this report. An Environmental Report (again prepared by TRL) will be published alongside the draft Transport Strategy. This will set out their view of the environmental consequences of the Transport Strategy. Connecting Wales will also be appraised for the social and economic effects of the Strategy. This will be done during the consultation period and will inform the final version of the Strategy.

13. Connecting Wales will also be subject to the Assembly's Policy Gateway process. We have carried out the first stage of this and have involved TRL, the Environment Agency, the Welsh Local Government Association and Regional Transport Consortia as well as internal Assembly Departments. It will also have Equality and Diversity Assessments for the effects on Race Equality, Gender and Disability.

## **Financial Implications**

14. Finance for preparing the Strategy is included in the Transport Wales budget. The financial consequences of the Strategy itself will be considered as part of the appraisal process.

## **Compliance**

15. Preparation of the Wales Transport Strategy is required under the Transport Wales Act 2006.

## **Action for the Economic Development and Transport Committee**

16. To consider this report and offer comments.

**Andrew Davies**  
**Minister for Economic Development and Transport**

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## **Annex 1**

# The Wales Transport Strategy – Summary

What is the purpose of the Wales Transport Strategy?

Transport plays a role in many aspects of daily life. It creates opportunities for people to access jobs, services, education, health, leisure and social activities, and connects businesses and products to markets. Transport is not an end in itself; it provides a means of getting to something or somewhere. Thus, improving transport provision is an important way of delivering economic, social and environmental objectives and enhancing quality of life.

This Strategy focuses on the role transport can play in delivering the wider national policy agenda in areas such as spatial planning, economic development, education, health, social services, environment and tourism. A series of outcomes for this Strategy have been identified from an examination of Welsh Assembly policies. The role of this Strategy is to maximise the contribution transport can make to these outcomes and ultimately to contribute to the delivery of the Strategic Agenda.

## The Wales Transport Strategy Outcomes

The outcomes have been grouped as social, economic or environmental:

### Social

- Improving access to healthcare
- Improving access to education and life-long learning
- Improving access to employment opportunities
- Improving access to key tourist sites
- Improving access to shopping and leisure facilities
- Improving opportunities that encourage healthy lifestyles

### Economic

- Improving connectivity within Wales and internationally
- Improving the efficient and reliable movement of people
- Maintaining the fabric of Wales' transport assets
- Accommodating freight
- Improving the actual and perceived safety of travel

### Environmental

- Reducing the impact of transport on air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions
- Reducing the impact of transport on noise and vibration
- Reducing the impact of transport on water, flood risk and land contamination

- Reducing the impact of transport on biodiversity
- Respect, conserve and enhance Wales' distinctiveness, historic environment, landscape and townscape, and reduce community severance and light pollution

This Strategy replaces the existing 'Transport Framework for Wales' (2001).

The Wales Transport Strategy is the 'stepping stone' between the Strategic Agenda for Wales and the delivery of transport schemes. It has a horizon date of 2030, and seeks to be flexible enough to respond to the challenges and opportunities that will arise as strategies and plans are developed in other areas over the coming years. This Strategy has four parts:

- Part 1: Meeting the Challenge, including policy context, trends and theme identification;
- Part 2: Delivering the Outcomes, comprising of chapters on Improving Accessibility, Supporting the Economy, Valuing the Environment, Accommodating Freight and Improving Safety.
- Part 3: Regional Context, containing a chapter on the transport context of each Regional Transport Consortia; and
- Part 4: Delivery and Monitoring, including tools for delivery and a monitoring framework.

### Current Transport Trends in Wales

Wales exhibits many of the transport characteristics and problems found generally in Great Britain, but it also has a number of distinctive features. The sometimes difficult terrain and relative absence of large cities means providing cost effective public transport services, especially in the remoter lightly populated areas, presents a particular challenge. Car travel in Wales is generally higher than the average for Great Britain as a whole and this is particularly marked for journeys to and from work.

As the cost of owning and running a private car falls compared to the cost of using public transport, car ownership levels are constantly increasing. Increasing car ownership has afforded benefits to many people, giving them greater flexibility in the way that they live their lives. They are able to choose where and when they travel, whether as an individual or with friends and family. Better, faster transport links mean that people are able to live further away from work and services, and to live in more spacious surroundings. The globalised nature of society is also increasing the distance that goods travel to markets.

As a result of these factors, Wales is experiencing:

- The increasing dominance of car use for all journey purposes;
- The downward trend in the use of more sustainable and healthy modes of transport, particularly bus, walking and cycling; and
- The increasing distances travelled.

The challenge transport has to face is how to support a strong economy and quality of life for all, while

ensuring that development does not happen in an unsustainable way that harms Wales for future generations.

What do these trends mean?

We need a transport system that enables our society to function effectively. In order to maintain and improve overall quality of life in Wales, the current transport trends in Wales need to be addressed. To address these trends, this Strategy focuses on three key themes that underpin its delivery:

### **Theme 1: To achieve a reduction in overall travel**

This will include both seeking a reduction in the number of journeys made (for example by encouraging greater use of teleconferencing and home-working), and seeking to reduce the average length of journeys (for example through land-use planning). The focus will be on motorised travel, as higher levels of walking and cycling will not be discouraged.

### **Theme 2: To achieve greater use of the more sustainable and healthy forms of travel**

Specifically, a reduction in single-occupancy car use will be sought, by promoting greater use of car sharing, buses, trains, walking and cycling. This will reduce the environmental impacts of travel and help to improve opportunities for those without access to a car.

### **Theme 3: To achieve a more effective and efficient transport system**

Greater efficiency in terms of vehicle technology, as well as seeking more efficient use of available infrastructure (for example achieving higher capacity on existing routes) will be promoted. In some cases, provision of new infrastructure will also be required, if the effectiveness of the system is to be ensured. We will also seek more efficient use of resources, such as local authority vehicle fleets, and promote more co-ordinated decision making across different policy areas.

### **Meeting the outcomes**

The social, economic and environmental outcomes have been considered under five headings – Improving Accessibility, Supporting the Economy, Valuing the Environment, Improving Safety and Accommodating Freight.

Discussion takes place under each outcome about the types of measures and interventions that may contribute towards the outcome achievement. It is not intended that these lists include everything that could be done to achieve an outcome. The Strategy seeks that a balance of interventions and measures from all themes are considered under each outcome to contribute to its achievement.

For each of the five headings a set of key messages has been identified. These are aimed at guiding the

Regional Transport Consortia and those responsible for transport operation and delivery in the identification of interventions and measures to ensure that they contribute to the Strategic Agenda for Wales. In addition to this, key Welsh Assembly Government commitments have been identified to set out to the Regional Transport Consortia, transport operators and providers the role the Assembly have in maximising the contribution transport has to the Strategic Agenda.

The Strategy draws on examples of current best practice from Wales and across Europe. Best practice needs to be shared across Wales, and innovation is encouraged, particularly where benefits will contribute to improving the quality of life of people in Wales and towards achieving the Strategic Agenda.

## Regional Context

This Strategy identifies a toolkit of measures and interventions that can be used to address transport problems and issues. One intervention or measure is likely to contribute to the achievement of more than one outcome, and hence the most appropriate interventions and measures to achieve individual outcomes are set out but not prescribed. Regional and indeed local variations across the Country are significant and hence the balance of interventions and measures required will vary significantly. Therefore, each area of Wales will need its own distinctive response to delivering this Transport Strategy.

It is particularly recognised that:

- Sewta contains almost half of the population of Wales and slightly over half of the country's economic activity. Despite having a predominantly urban population, it has a substantial rural population in the valleys. The concentration of facilities, transport links and prosperity vary significantly across the region.
- SWWITCH encompasses major employment centres, extensive coastline and rural hinterlands, which rely on the main towns for access to everyday facilities. The region relies strongly on both industry and tourism, hence requiring transport provision for different purposes.
- TraCC is a large and diverse area comprising 40% of the total land area of Wales but only 10% of the Country's population. Much of the population live in small dispersed settlements. There are a large number of important small market towns, but much of the population look out of the region, or often Wales, for services.
- Taith experiences significant contrasts across the region, with more dense population and industry in the east and close to the border with England, and coastal resorts, mountainous areas and tourism being more important in the west. The region encompasses extensive rural hinterland with a sparse population.

## Delivery

The Regional Transport Consortia, through their Regional Transport Plans, have the responsibility of identifying transport problems and issues in their region that need addressing. The identification and



implementation of transport schemes and measures to address the problems and issues will contribute to the reversal of the negative impact transport can have on society, the economy and the environment and enable each specific outcome to be met.

The Strategy considers the tools to aid and maximise the impact of delivery, in terms of achieving an improved quality of life for the people in Wales and contributing to the Strategic Agenda, to be:

- Partnership working;
- Planning;
- Funding;
- Importance of detailed design;
- Understanding the market and targeting accordingly;
- Public acceptability; and
- WelTAG (the Welsh Transport Appraisal System).

## Monitoring

Indicators will be developed for each of the outcomes and a monitoring regime put in place to track changes. This work will be developed as part of the consultation on the draft Strategy.