

REVIEW OF FUTURE
OPTIONS FOR LOCAL
TRANSPORT PLANNING
IN ENGLAND

Final Report

July 2007




Department for Transport

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In addition, the evidence contained in this report is based on a series of regional workshops and interviews undertaken by Atkins between November 2006 and January 2007 as part of the Long-Term Evaluation of the Local Transport Plan Policy, and a series of regional workshops organised by DfT with local transport practitioners in June 2007. The report also builds on direct discussions with DfT officials and Atkins' overall engagement with local authorities through a range of channels and frameworks since the publication of the Local Government White Paper. We are grateful for the time and the views of those contacted.

However, we stress that the views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not represent official views or policy of the Department for Transport.

Executive Summary

Atkins Transport Planning has been commissioned by the Department for Transport to undertake a study to assess options for the development of its policies for local transport planning in England.

The focus of this study is on the current Local Transport Plan (LTP) framework and is intended to accompany the Department's consultation on the medium-term development of the process. It provides an independent review of the key options for retention or change to the LTP process, and the relative strengths and weaknesses of these options against key criteria.

Are Current Arrangements for Local Transport Planning in England Effective?

The introduction of the LTP process has driven an improvement in the scale and quality of local transport planning and delivery across England, with a range of positive outcomes and numerous examples of programmes and policies making a visible difference to local areas. There is a strong view amongst practitioners that current arrangements are effective and demonstrate value for money. In comparison with the former Transport Policies and Programme (TPP) process, the LTP framework is seen as more inclusive, guided by clear objectives and long term certainty of funding, integrated with wider objectives, and commanding a higher corporate profile within most authorities.

However, there is evidence of some key barriers which prevent the full achievement of desired outcomes and the alignment of transport with wider priorities for developing and shaping local areas. These problems appear to be most acute in metropolitan areas, although there are also opportunities for improved performance in county and unitary authorities.

What is the Case for Change?

The case for change to the LTP model is finely balanced and largely related to the overall objectives which local transport is expected to support. The current process is accepted and supported by a wide range of stakeholders, with few vocal calls for a fundamentally different approach. In addition it seems sufficiently flexible to accommodate new policy initiatives and reforms to Local Government. However, there is a case for at least some incremental changes to provide solutions to the barriers experienced to date, embed local transport within wider corporate and community agendas and reflect emerging opportunities. Furthermore, the wider context within which the process operates is continuing to change.

The national policy agenda is focused on the challenges of economic development and productivity, and balancing these with environmental limits, especially the threat posed by climate change. There is also a focus on sub-regions, including reform of governance arrangements for transport in the metropolitan conurbations and other city regions, as well as new delivery mechanisms through Multi Area Agreements. These agendas need to be balanced with the localism agenda and the role set out in the Local Government White Paper for councils to engage with citizens and communities, shape their areas and innovate to deliver local priorities. This also implies less prescription and intervention from Central Government.

These external policy drivers present major challenges for local transport policy makers and practitioners. The key issue is whether the current LTP framework assists or constrains alignment with the evolving context, and if not, how such alignment can be effectively and practicably brought about.

Which Principles Should Inform Future Policy?

In identifying and assessing future options, it is important to have a consistent and transparent set of standards against which Government, local authorities and other stakeholders can structure the debate, make key decisions and judge the success or otherwise of the reforms put in place. Specifically, proposals should:

- ◆ take account of the key lessons from the first round of LTPs, and the introduction of the second round, retaining and building on the strengths of the existing LTP system. In addition, any new policy should seek to reduce administrative burdens on all tiers of government, be fully integrated with other Government policies, and encourage competence, innovation and continuous improvement;

- ◆ address Central and Local Government objectives. This should clearly articulate the role of local transport in the delivery of national and regional priorities in balance with the development of local solutions for local problems. There should be a strong emphasis on wider outcomes, efficiency and value for money in service delivery, with proportionate and risk-based assessment of performance and tougher intervention where things go wrong; and
- ◆ be practical, affordable and deliverable within the capacity, competence and capability of the relevant stakeholders, and command broad consensus and support. Proposals should set down clear standards for planning and delivery, whilst being sufficiently flexible to reflect local circumstances, be stable over time and seek to avoid unintended and potentially adverse incentives or consequences. They should balance the benefits of reform with the costs and potential disruption involved in change.

The final arrangements enacted after 2011, if they are to continue the perceived success of the LTP process to date, are likely to therefore depend on a balance and “creative tension” between drivers. These considerations may vary by location, the balance of central and local priorities agreed and the level of competence and ambition of different stakeholders over time. This suggests that a range of approaches should be available to authorities rather than a single top down model defined by Central Government.

What are the Key Options for Future Policy?

There are a range of options for how councils might, in future, discharge their statutory duty, defined in the Transport Act 2000, to develop and implement policies for safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services in their areas. These options can be set out in terms of the following inter-related themes: structure; geographical coverage; objectives and priorities; content; timescales; guidance; assessment and funding; and governance and administration.

The options proposed under these headings suggest a number of scenarios for reform, based on packages of options which are internally consistent with each other. The key differences between the scenarios reflect different options for:

- ◆ Structure - (i) a local transport-focused document based on incremental development of LTP2; (ii) a medium term transport strategy, and shorter term implementation plan; and (iii) the removal of the requirement for a separate transport document and integration of policies and plans into wider policy documents, such as Local Area Agreements, Local Development Frameworks and regional or sub-regional transport strategies and plans;
- ◆ Geographical Coverage - (i) based on existing authority boundaries with voluntary cross-boundary planning; (ii) mandatory cross-boundary planning; and (iii) sub-regional planning and delivery;
- ◆ Guidance, Assessment and Performance - (i) no change on LTP2; (ii) lighter DfT guidance/assessment process with or without performance funding; and (iii) no assessment process, minimal DfT guidance, with or without performance funding; and
- ◆ Governance and Administration - (i) no change from the central role of DfT and Government Offices in guiding local transport policies and processes; and (ii) enhanced role for regional stakeholders.

What Are The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Key Options?

The above options are associated with a range of strengths and weaknesses. In this sense, there are no ‘right’ solutions on the way forward, and different areas may seek different approaches depending on their particular local circumstances, levels of competence and ambition, and their governance structures. In identifying the optimal approach for a specific area, the emphasis needs to be placed on identifying a framework which maximises the opportunity for robust transport planning processes to be pursued in accordance with the principles identified above. Relating to the particular options put forward, the following comments can be made:

Modified LTP Model - The safest approach, at least from a practitioner perspective, lies in incremental change on the current LTP2 model. The latter is popular with those responsible for implementing it and has shown it can deliver in most local areas, albeit not without some administrative and financial weaknesses. This option may represent a valid approach for larger county and unitary authorities, as well as smaller authorities involved in joint LTPs, with sufficient skills and resource capacity, and without a strong sub-regional agenda.

Local Transport Strategy/Implementation Plan - A variant of the current model, consisting of a medium-term local transport strategy and a separate shorter term implementation plan, offers greater scope for cross-boundary plans, such as those covering metropolitan conurbations and city regions. This is the model proposed for PTA/PTE areas contained in the draft Local Transport Bill. This approach has benefits in terms of emphasising the importance of longer term strategies aimed at delivering regional and sub-regional spatial aims, economic growth and regeneration, and better implementation planning through prioritisation, risk management, and performance management. However, it offers a less integrated approach in relation to the localist agenda, may encourage a focus on major transport infrastructure compared to local schemes or revenue-based measures, favour short term implementation at the expense of long-term planning, and may be subject to the same cross-boundary issues currently facing metropolitan areas, unless accompanied by strengthened governance, powers and funding at the appropriate level.

This structure also represents a possible mechanism for mandatory cross boundary planning and delivery for those authorities, identified by DfT/GOs as too small to tackle the transport challenges of their areas or where authority boundaries do not reflect travel to work areas. However, while cross-boundary working has been shown to be successful where undertaken on a voluntary basis, there is less evidence to suggest that mandatory cross-boundary working would necessarily be effective without strong additional incentives.

Transport Policies within a Wider Context - Integration of local transport planning into wider policy documents and the removal of the requirement to produce a statutory local transport plan, with the Local Area Agreement becoming the main implementation and performance plan for transport improvements, offers stronger performing authorities the opportunity to embrace their role as strategic leaders and place shapers; deliver cross-service solutions and difficult or challenging schemes supported by the Community Strategy; and strengthen delivery of regional objectives. However, the ability of Community Strategies and LAAs to deliver improved outcomes is as yet unproven and subject to a range of wider concerns from local authorities. Furthermore, for those authorities which have struggled to raise the profile of transport at corporate level, and integrate transport policies with those of other service areas, there is a risk that transport investment may lose its profile, and that the priority given to transport planning may decline with a shift towards short term delivery of LAA targets at the expense of wider transport responsibilities.

The incorporation of transport strategies within Local Development Frameworks is likely to be feasible in single tier authorities, but may be more problematic in two tier authorities. This approach offers greatest scope for strong performing larger unitary authorities and counties with strong two tier integration, with specific transport indicators and targets reported through the LAA.

A variant of this structure based on greater integration with the relevant Regional Strategy may be most appropriate for larger strategic units with cross boundary integration, such as metropolitan conurbations and other identifiable sub-regions; particularly if supported by improved governance arrangements and agreement on common priorities expressed in a Multi Area Agreement.

Objectives and Priorities – Continued prescription over local transport objectives implies a process which focuses on national priorities within a local context, and is more compatible with a structure based around a transport-focused document and formal guidance. In this context, the focus on the Shared Priorities is likely to be augmented by new emphasis on economic development and climate change. Minimal prescription encourages delivery of local objectives within a national context, and is more consistent with a framework where local transport strategies could be subsumed into other policy frameworks.

Content – The current coverage of LTPs is wide ranging and should continue to be encouraged if compatible with the planning and delivery of local priorities. In moving forward, however, we see little benefit of maintaining the statutory requirement to prepare a Bus Strategy, whilst scope for closer integration between local transport policies and plans and Transport Asset Management Plans should be encouraged. The option to include trunk roads and local rail schemes as part of the integrated strategy increases the resource intensiveness of the process, but offers the potential for more joint working between local authorities, the Highways Agency and Network Rail, improved integration of local and strategic priorities as well as more informed decisions about RFA priorities.

Guidance, Assessment and Performance Funding - While there are strong grounds for retaining the performance management element of the current LTP process in terms of maintaining and improving standards, the prescriptive guidance and detailed assessment process required is not consistent with drivers to reduce administrative burdens or promote devolution and local accountability. It also risks stifling

new thinking and innovation from local authorities as well as sharing of best practice. It therefore seems appropriate that some simplification of this element of the process is introduced as a minimum.

The most radical option is the removal of any formal assessment process and associated reward funding. This opens up the possibility for significantly lighter guidance and requires less onerous reporting. It is also the most likely scenario under a structure which integrates transport policies within wider policy frameworks. Auditing, scrutiny and assessment could be carried out through the new Comprehensive Area Assessment, which would include an examination of performance against the 200 national indicators and an assessment of progress against the agreed LAA (and potentially MAA) targets. However, it is currently unclear to what extent transport will be considered separately and will receive priority within the CAA. Hence, there is a risk that the performance-led culture encouraged by the LTP process will be lost or diluted in some authorities, and that the absence of performance scoring and funding will weaken the incentive for authorities to maximise the effectiveness of their delivery.

Governance and Administration – The current stewardship by the Department and Government Offices maintains a national focus on local transport and is accepted and broadly supported by local authority practitioners, although with a desire for greater support for delivery on the ground compared to remote and prescriptive guidance and assessment. There are mixed views from authorities for regional stakeholders to take more governance and administrative responsibilities over local transport planning and funding beyond the current Regional Funding Allocations. This option would align most closely with any structural change which more closely positioned local transport planning with delivery of objectives and priorities defined in the Regional Strategy or sub-regions within it. However, there are concerns over regional stakeholders' capacity, objectivity and democratic accountability, and tensions with the localist agenda. This is despite regional stakeholders' potentially stronger ability to take account of local circumstances in key decisions, and to achieve closer integration between local and regional spatial and transport planning and delivery.

The Way Ahead and Engagement between Central and Local Government

The discussion contained in this report leads to the definition of a future vision for local transport planning which envisages:

- ◆ increasingly confident and autonomous local authorities with the powers, funding and competencies to make a visible difference to the quality of life of communities in their areas;
- ◆ transport recognised as a vital service, not for its own sake, but for the achievement or added value to a range of wider outcomes reflecting agreed local and national priorities;
- ◆ meaningful engagement, partnership and leadership with citizens, communities and stakeholders;
- ◆ planning and delivery adapted to local circumstances, challenges and aspirations within a framework of national minimum standards and, where relevant, strategic priorities across administrative boundaries at regional or sub-regional level;
- ◆ delivery of outcomes and value for money, with a focus on competence and innovation, rather than compliance with prescribed guidance or overly concerned with process; and
- ◆ proportionate and risk-based assessment and scrutiny with flexibilities granted to strong performers, backed up with stronger intervention to prevent or address service failure.

The current LTP framework provides a good starting point for building this vision. In addition, the devolution agenda presented in the Local Government White Paper offers an important opportunity for local transport to become more closely integrated with a range of wider agendas. Looking ahead, there is a case for different approaches being developed in different localities, depending on their circumstances, governance arrangements, ability to integrate service planning and delivery and work across a range of local partners.

The Government should recognise collectively, however, that significant change on current arrangements if introduced too quickly, without adequate research into possible outcomes, and without safeguards against unintended consequences, presents potential risks to recent achievements as well as opportunities.

Given this uncertainty, the Department should therefore develop future policy with caution, consider further engagement with authorities on the likely diversity of impacts of introducing major changes to current arrangements, and seek to trial a range of different approaches with pilot authorities before completing its revised policy and guidance.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Atkins Transport Planning has been commissioned by the Department for Transport (DfT) to undertake a study to assess options for the future development of its policies for local transport planning in England. These options will build on the current Local Transport Plan (LTP) process through which local authorities (outside of London) plan and deliver safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport in their areas.

This report is intended to accompany DfT's forthcoming stakeholder consultation on local transport planning beyond 2011. This is being undertaken in the summer of 2007 as part of the process of developing the Local Transport Bill¹. The study provides an independent review of the options for retention or change to the LTP process, and the strengths and weaknesses of these options against key criteria.

1.2 Context

The current LTP framework has been in place since 2000 with its basis in the 1998 Integrated Transport White Paper and the subsequent Transport Act 2000. Whilst the Department published guidance and a range of updated requirements for the second round of LTPs in 2004, the statutory status and fundamental elements of the process have remained largely unaltered from their original inception.

The LTP process is widely supported by local transport practitioners, stakeholders and the transport planning profession more widely. However, it is not without its flaws, and the effectiveness of plan development and delivery has been constrained by a range of administrative, technical, financial and political barriers. Furthermore, local transport has been subject to a range of changes in the wider policy context since 2000. This seems likely to continue over the next few years with pressures for reform driven by the Local Government White Paper, Lyons Inquiry, Eddington Transport Study and Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration. Other key developments include the next generation of Local Area Agreements within the context of a new national performance management regime, the Audit Commission's development of a new Comprehensive Area Assessment framework and a focus from all tiers of government on the challenge posed by climate change. In addition, local authorities and other public sector agencies face continuous demands to demonstrate efficiency and value for money in all their activities and service delivery.

The Government has already indicated that current arrangements will need to change if they are to remain relevant and fit for purpose. For example, the draft Local Transport Bill replaces the current requirement for metropolitan areas to prepare an LTP with a duty to prepare an Integrated Transport Strategy and accompanying Implementation Plan. The Department also proposes to consult further on LTPs more widely and revise the final Bill in light of that consultation.

¹ Strengthening Local Delivery: The Draft Local Transport Bill. A Consultation. Department for Transport, May 2007.

This report sets out the key options for how local transport planning policy and practice could change in the medium-term. It should be noted that the analysis has been completed in short-order in June and early July 2007, reflecting the tight timescales for refining the draft Local Transport Bill towards the end of the year. As such, the document is purposefully high-level and discursive, and designed to set out a broad analysis of the key policy drivers and options rather than propose detailed recommendations at this stage. The latter is dependent upon further engagement and discussions between DfT, other Government Departments, local authorities and other stakeholders over the summer.

1.3 Methodology and Evidence Base

The evidence base for this report includes a desktop review of current local transport legislation, regulation and guidance, analysis of governance and delivery arrangements, and a range of reform proposals.

The report also draws heavily on the Final Report for the Long-Term Process and Impact Evaluation of the Local Transport Plan Policy, published in June 2007. As part of this study, workshops and interviews were undertaken with LTP practitioners and national stakeholders between November 2006 and January 2007 and included discussion of future options beyond 2011. In addition, a meeting was undertaken with the Department for Transport to ascertain views on reform options and implications for the Local Transport Bill. The study team also attended three of the eight regional seminars undertaken by the Department in June 2007 to consider future LTP policy and practice. This evidence has been combined with our own professional judgement to inform the analysis in this report.

1.4 Structure of this Report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- ◆ Chapter 2 summarises the Government's current policies for supporting local transport planning and delivery;
- ◆ Chapter 3 sets out the case for retention or change to the current arrangements, based on evidence of local transport delivery, stakeholder views and external policy drivers;
- ◆ Chapter 4 highlights the key principles which DfT, authorities and stakeholders should consider, in discussing and developing future policy and practice;
- ◆ Chapter 5 identifies the key options for future local transport planning, based on those initially specified by the Department at the outset of this study and suggestions emerging during the work programme;
- ◆ Chapter 6 assesses the specified options against the principles adopted, and their overall strengths and weaknesses; and
- ◆ Chapter 7 presents initial conclusions on the overall direction of change which might be considered and how this might be reflected in legislation and guidance.

Appendix A lists our key references and secondary evidence. Appendix B includes a glossary of the various acronyms used throughout the document.

2. Current Policy on Local Transport

2.1 Integrated Transport White Paper and Transport Act 2000

The Transport Act 2000 places a statutory duty on local transport authorities² to:

- ◆ develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services within their area;
- ◆ carry out their functions so as to implement those policies; and
- ◆ prepare a document to be known as the Local Transport Plan containing these policies (*Section 108*).

In addition, a local transport authority must keep their Local Transport Plan under review, and alter it if they consider it appropriate to do so. They must replace the plan not later than five years after the date on which it was made (*Section 109*).

The Act also requires each local authority to prepare a document to be known as the Bus Strategy which must form part of the authority's LTP (*Section 110*) and imposes duties on Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) to carry out all of the above functions jointly with Metropolitan District Councils within the area (*Section 113*).

The introduction of the LTP framework was accompanied by an increase in capital funding available for local transport covering five year settlements for structural maintenance and integrated transport and support for major schemes. LTP allocations are made under the Single Capital Pot which provides flexibility on how capital funds can be allocated between service areas. Through the Prudential Code, local authorities have further flexibility to set their borrowing levels based on their capital need and ability to support the borrowing.

Different frameworks for the planning, funding and delivery of local transport operate in London, Scotland and Wales. In London, for example, the Mayor is required, under the GLA Act 1999, to prepare a Transport Strategy, supported by a framework of Local Implementation Plans prepared by each borough.

2.2 Guidance and Assessment

In developing their LTPs, all local transport authorities must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State concerning:

- ◆ the content of Local Transport Plans (and Bus Strategies);
- ◆ the preparation of such plans (and strategies); and
- ◆ the publication and making available of such plans (and strategies) as originally made and as altered or replaced. (*Section 112*)

The Department of Transport has used this requirement to introduce specific processes and procedures into local transport planning, applicable to all authorities.

² Specifically county councils, unitary authorities in non-metropolitan areas, and Passenger Transport Authorities.

The first Local Transport Plan Guidance, published in 2000³, placed a focus on:

- ◆ planning and delivery of an integrated package of measures;
- ◆ consultation and stakeholder engagement;
- ◆ objectives related to local problems and issues together with appropriate targets;
- ◆ a broad coverage of all modes;
- ◆ a costed implementation programme of specific schemes and initiatives; and
- ◆ production of an Annual Progress Report setting out authorities' delivery against their planned programme, objectives and targets, in line with DfT APR guidance.

The second Local Transport Plan Guidance⁴ maintained the fundamental elements of the process, but shifted emphasis by requiring authorities to:

- ◆ demonstrate the consistency of LTP objectives, targets and programmes with the wider policy and planning context, as well as a number of Shared Priorities⁵;
- ◆ provide sound analytical evidence for proposed strategies, including setting targets and monitoring against a number of mandatory outcome indicators;
- ◆ demonstrate the value to be delivered for a known amount of resource;
- ◆ use accessibility planning techniques to understand and develop solutions for improving the lives of those at risk of social exclusion;
- ◆ outline their approach to the Network Management Duty required by the Traffic Management Act 2004;
- ◆ work towards the introduction of Transport Asset Management Plans (TAMPs) for a strategic approach to maintenance, renewals and enhancements; and
- ◆ incorporate Air Quality Action Plans⁶ and Rights of Way Improvement Plans⁷.

A further statutory requirement to produce an Environmental Report on the likely significant environmental impacts of the measures proposed in the LTP was placed on authorities through the EC directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment⁸.

The Department has also become more systematic in the interpretation of its guidance, as the LTP policy has developed, through the formal assessment of local authority delivery and achievement of outcomes. Through this assessment, it has produced published performance scores for LTP and APR submissions, linking these to adjustments in authorities' capital allocations each year.

2.3 Amendments to the Transport Act

The statutory framework for Local Transport Plans has been subject to two significant actual or proposed amendments since 2000.

³ Guidance on Full Local Transport Plans. First Edition. Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (2000).

⁴ Guidance on Full Local Transport Plans, Second Edition. Department for Transport (July 2004).

⁵ Specifically, congestion, accessibility, road safety and air quality, as well as a number of agendas under a wider quality of life category. These priorities were agreed with the Local Government Association in 2002.

⁶ A statutory requirement under the Environment Act 1995.

⁷ A statutory requirement under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

⁸ EU Directive 2001/42/EC on Assessment of Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment. This came into force in England in July 2004 through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Authorities judged as “excellent”⁹ by the Audit Commission as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) system were exempt from the requirement to produce full Annual Progress Reports in 2004¹⁰, and from submitting a Final LTP2¹¹.

In addition, the draft Local Transport Bill contains specific changes to local transport planning in metropolitan areas, essentially replacing the joint duty on district councils and PTAs to produce an LTP with a duty on PTAs¹² to produce an Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS) and an Implementation Plan, against guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Although the draft Bill includes no statutory period for review, it is envisaged that an ITS would cover a period of 10 to 15 years, and that the accompanying Implementation Plan would cover a period of 3 to 5 years. In addition:

- ◆ Bus Strategies will be absorbed into the ITS in Metropolitan areas;
- ◆ existing local authority "wellbeing" powers will be extended to PTAs;
- ◆ a new duty will be placed on PTAs and Metropolitan District Councils to have regard to Government policy and guidance on climate change in carrying out their functions; and,
- ◆ PTAs will be given powers to participate in the development and implementation of any local road pricing schemes in partnership with local authorities.

These proposals are supported by provisions to require the major cities, and enable other areas, to review and propose their own changes to existing transport governance arrangements. This includes the establishment a Passenger Transport Authority in areas outside the current metropolitan areas. It is proposed that the Secretary of State will be able to implement proposed changes through secondary legislation tailored to the needs of individual areas.

Local Authority Well-being Powers

The Local Government Act 2000 provides councils with significant new powers “to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve” the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area.

These powers effectively change the framework within which authorities act, from a situation where they have no powers to act other than when they are expressly authorised to do so by law, to a presumption that they can act provided this is in the interests of local well-being.

The well-being power is a potentially key tool to enable local authorities to fulfil their roles as community leaders. It allows local authorities to take many actions including: incurring expenditure; giving financial assistance; entering into arrangements/ agreements; co-operating with, or facilitating/coordinating the activities of others; exercising functions on behalf of others; and providing staff, goods, services or accommodation to others. It does not enable councils to: override existing statutory limitations, charge for new services provided under the power, raise money, or extend trading.

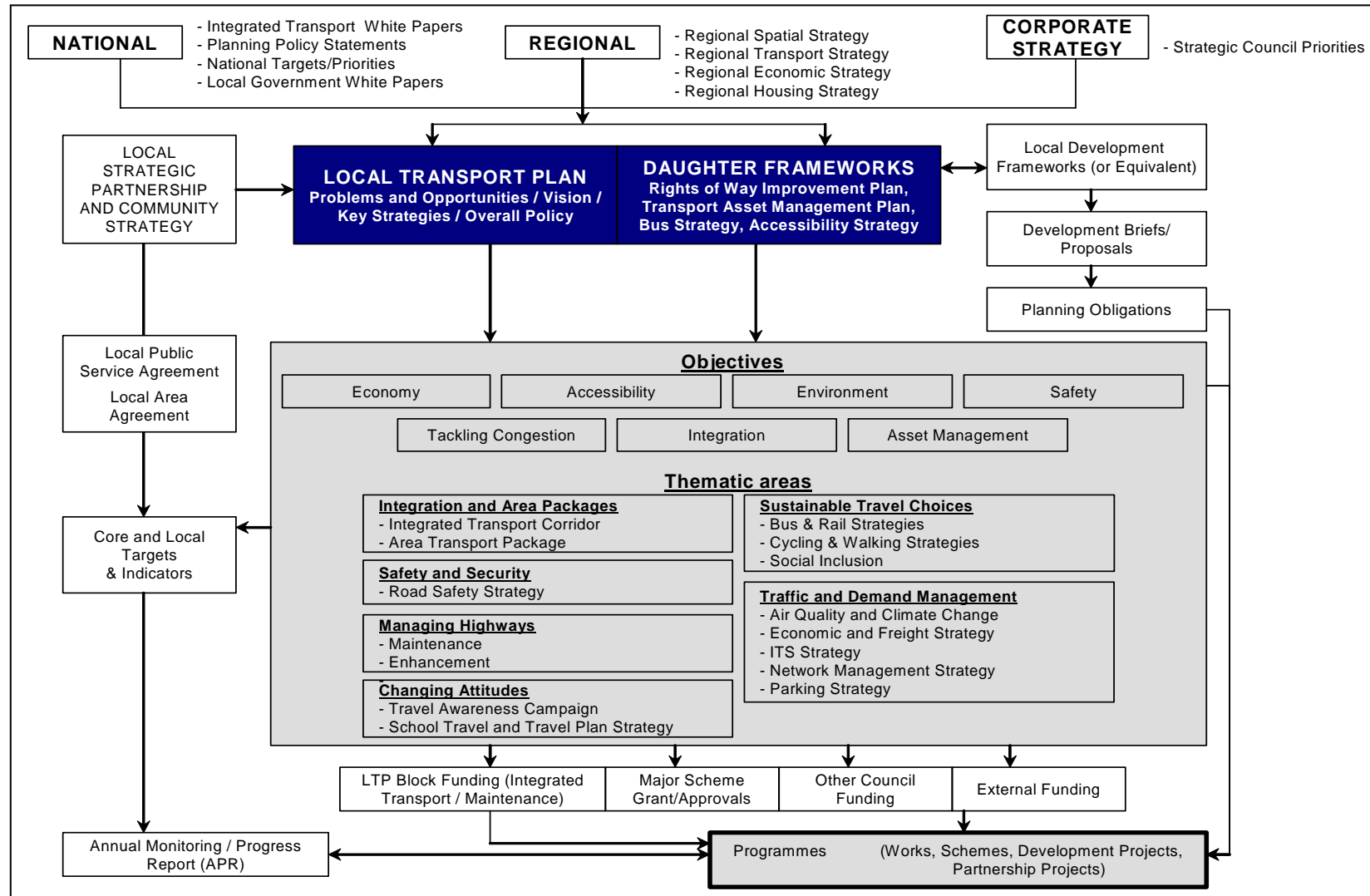
⁹ Now classified as Four Star under the CPA Harder Test.

¹⁰ The simplified model was extended to all authorities submitting their APRs in July 2005.

¹¹ Statutory Instrument No. 157 (The Local Authorities' Plans and Strategies (Disapplication) (England) 2005 Order). In practice, no authority chose not to submit a Full LTP2.

¹² Including any successor bodies following implementation of proposals in a city's governance review.

Figure 2.1 – Generic Local Transport Plan Framework



3. The Case for Change on Current Arrangements

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the case for retaining or changing current LTP arrangements as set out in Chapter 2. This case is based on:

- ◆ the experience of planning and delivery of local transport infrastructure and services in England since 2000;
- ◆ practitioner and stakeholder views on future development of the LTP process;
- ◆ the influence of a range of key external policy drivers at national, regional and local levels; and
- ◆ the Government's own stated intentions for the evolution of local transport planning, as most recently set out in the draft Local Transport Bill and emerging guidance for the next tranche of LTP2 Progress Reports in 2008.

This Chapter briefly addresses each of these in turn, with the intention of bringing the relevant evidence to bear within a single framework.

3.2 The Experience of Local Transport Delivery since 2000

Atkins' Long-Term Process and Impact Evaluation of the Local Transport Plan Policy published its Final Report in June 2007. This report finds that the Department has achieved considerable success with its local transport policies to date, reflected through increasing local expenditure and delivery, contributions to a range of national and local outcomes, and evidence of visible improvements in transport provision for communities and neighbourhoods across England. This outcome represents good value for money compared to alternative policies which might have been put in place.

There is strong support for the LTP process amongst stakeholders. Specifically:

- ◆ around three-quarters of practitioners are satisfied with the LTP1 framework and this is maintained on arrangements for LTP2¹³;
- ◆ elected members and chief officers are also supportive, but within the context of balancing the priority given to transport with other service areas; and,
- ◆ over half of national stakeholders¹⁴ are satisfied with the LTP framework to date, although they are less likely to agree unreservedly that local transport provision has improved since 2000.

The House of Commons Transport Committee¹⁵ also confirmed its support for the LTP process in their Inquiry in 2006. Whilst the Committee recognised the considerable resource requirements from local authorities into developing and delivering LTP strategies and programmes, it did not consider this to be excessive and regarded the work as necessary to deliver a core responsibility of Local

¹³ Local Authority Survey. Atkins. January 2007.

¹⁴ National Workshop Questionnaire. Atkins. January 2007.

¹⁵ Local Transport Planning and Funding. Twelfth Report of Session 2006-2007. House of Commons Transport Committee. October 2006.

Government.

LTPs are seen as adding value in a number of areas that would not have been delivered under the former Transport Policies and Programme (TPP) process. Specifically, the LTP framework is seen as more inclusive, guided by clear objectives and long term certainty of funding, integrated with national, regional and wider objectives, and has a higher corporate profile within most authorities. The strengths of the process are generally seen as outweighing the weaknesses, and many of the latter relate to administration, funding and assessment of plan preparation and delivery, rather than fundamental principles of the process itself.

Specific areas of concern include:

- ◆ the resource intensity of the plan development and reporting process, linked to staff and skills capacity issues in many, especially smaller, authorities;
- ◆ a “one size fits all” approach which requires, and broadly assesses, the same response from all authorities irrespective of local circumstances;
- ◆ unresolved tensions within the LTP process between local delivery of a national policy agenda and the articulation of genuinely local priorities;
- ◆ lack of an explicit link between LTP capital allocations and revenue funding and perceptions of an increasing capital-revenue imbalance;
- ◆ greater difficulties experienced by metropolitan areas in demonstrating effective delivery and strong performance under DfT’s assessments, compared to country and larger unitary authorities;
- ◆ difficulties in integrating LTP development and delivery with ongoing change in other policy areas governing local public services;
- ◆ lack of direct control over key transport providers and stakeholders, especially bus and local rail operators;
- ◆ ineffective consultation and engagement, with resulting limited influence of local public and stakeholder views on policy, programme and scheme decisions;
- ◆ continued inconsistency and difficulties in setting and monitoring performance indicators and targets, and demonstrating value for money in use of resources;
- ◆ guidance and assessment processes which are seen as measuring compliance rather than competence, focusing on a narrow range of prescribed outcomes, stifling local innovation and being inflexible to local circumstances; and
- ◆ limited sharing of good practice, further constrained, by the “competitive” nature of the assessment and scoring process.

3.3 Stakeholder Views on the Future Development of LTPs

There is strong support for the LTP process to remain as a statutory duty on authorities and to continue into a third round, with only limited change to reflect evolving policy drivers and technical developments (Table 3.1). Only a small minority of practitioners and stakeholders believe there is a case for fundamental change in approach.

Table 3.1 – Practitioner and Stakeholder Attitudes to Future Development of the LTP Process

	Practitioner Views (2006)	Stakeholder Views (2006)
The current process seems about right and only minimum changes should be made to keep it up to date	12%	5%
A few changes are likely to be needed to reflect emerging policy changes	57%	57%
The LTP process is likely to require more substantive change in some key areas of process	24%	24%
A fundamental change of approach will be needed.	7%	14%

Source: Regional Workshop Questionnaire (2006). N = 144. National Workshop Questionnaire (2007). N=21

Where authorities do perceive a need for change, the following issues arise:

- ◆ slimming the process down in terms of prescription, resource intensity, reporting burden and the detail of the assessment process;
- ◆ allowing requirements to vary for different geographical areas or authority types;
- ◆ achieving a better balance between capital and revenue resources;
- ◆ placing greater emphasis on supporting economic development and regeneration, and contributing to climate change, as additional priorities;
- ◆ pursuing closer integration with spatial and community planning processes, for example Local Development Frameworks and Local Area Agreements; and
- ◆ greater levels of support from Government Offices “on the ground” rather than remote paper-based assessment of performance.

3.4 Key Policy Drivers of Change

While many of the principles underlying the LTP process remain valid since its inception, the wider context within which it is operating has changed considerably. Some of these changes are reflected in LTP2 Guidance and the second round plans themselves. Others are still evolving and can be expected to influence delivery in the second round and the development of arrangements beyond 2011.

There are essentially four major areas of change which have influenced, and will continue to influence, local transport planning in the medium term:

The **national policy agenda** is increasingly emphasising the role of transport in supporting economic development and regeneration, as balancing this against environmental limits, especially the challenge of climate change. Building on the existing Shared Priorities, the Department is also seeking to encourage leadership and innovation from councils in demand management and behavioural change, including the development of local road pricing schemes through the Transport Innovation Fund.

The Comprehensive Spending Review 2007, and future updates of the Department’s own Business Plan, will reaffirm the Government’s national priorities for transport,

and will inform the proposed set of national cross-service indicators against which local authorities and named partners will be required to set targets, monitor and report, as part of their Local Area Agreements.

The **regional agenda** has also strengthened since LTPs were introduced, with the introduction of statutory Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS), Regional Transport Strategies and Local Development Documents. In future¹⁶ the Government intends that RSS will be integrated with Regional Economic Strategies into a single integrated Regional Strategy, produced by the Regional Development Agencies working with local authorities and their partners. It also proposes increasing influence of regional stakeholders in terms of prioritising expenditure on transport, housing and economic development through an expanded Regional Funding Allocation process.

Looking ahead, there is an increasing focus on **sub-regions**, including reform of governance and delivery arrangements for transport in metropolitan conurbations, city regions and other areas as appropriate. Multi-Area Agreements, or equivalent structures, may offer the potential for councils and a range of partners to agree and deliver on cross-boundary priorities, and might support possible governance model in the metropolitan areas and city regions which do not currently have Passenger Transport Authorities.

These agendas need to be balanced with a stronger emphasis on **localism** and the stronger role set out in the Local Government White Paper for councils to engage with citizens and communities, shape their areas and innovate in response to local priorities, with freedom from central prescription, inspection and reporting. Future transport planning processes will need to take account of the statutory duty on upper-tier and unitary authorities to prepare Local Area Agreements in consultation with named partners by June 2008, the new national performance framework and the role of Comprehensive Area Assessment in examining cross-service performance.

Finally future policy will need to reflect continued constraints on public sector **funding**, new funding¹⁷ mechanisms, the drive for more **efficient use of resources**, and the targeting of delivery to achieve and demonstrate **value for money**.

Figure 3.1 illustrates how each of these areas of change are impacting on the future planning and funding of local transport.

3.5 The Government's Current Proposals for Local Transport Planning

However strong the case for or against change in LTP policy and practice, the Government has already accepted that there is a need for a measure of reform to deal with recognised problems and respond to changing policy drivers.

The proposals in the draft Local Transport Bill are relevant for consideration of future options for local transport planning nationally across England. Specifically, the Bill:

- ◆ accepts that local transport planning and delivery structures will vary according to local circumstances, essentially moving away from the LTP process as a “one size fits all” approach applicable to the whole of England;

¹⁶ Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (HM Treasury, July 2007).

¹⁷ Such as supplementary business rates or Business Improvement Districts, proposed in by Lyons or the Sub-National Review.

- ◆ seeks to strengthen transport governance and delivery in the metropolitan conurbations, and potentially other city regions, through review of the structure, powers and funding of Passenger Transport Authorities and Executives;
- ◆ in this context, introduces a local transport model for metropolitan areas, and potentially other city regions, which may be different from the LTP approach;
- ◆ replaces explicit references to Local Transport Plans and Bus Strategies in the Transport Act 2000 with broader reference to local transport policies, reflecting the fact that different arrangements may apply in different areas.

In addition, the development of less prescriptive draft guidance for the 2008 LTP2 Progress Reports, the removal of a formal assessment and scoring process, the focus on opportunities and risks to future delivery as well as past performance, and emphasis on local engagement, provides some measure of the Government's thinking on the way forward.

3.6 Interim Conclusions on the Case for Change

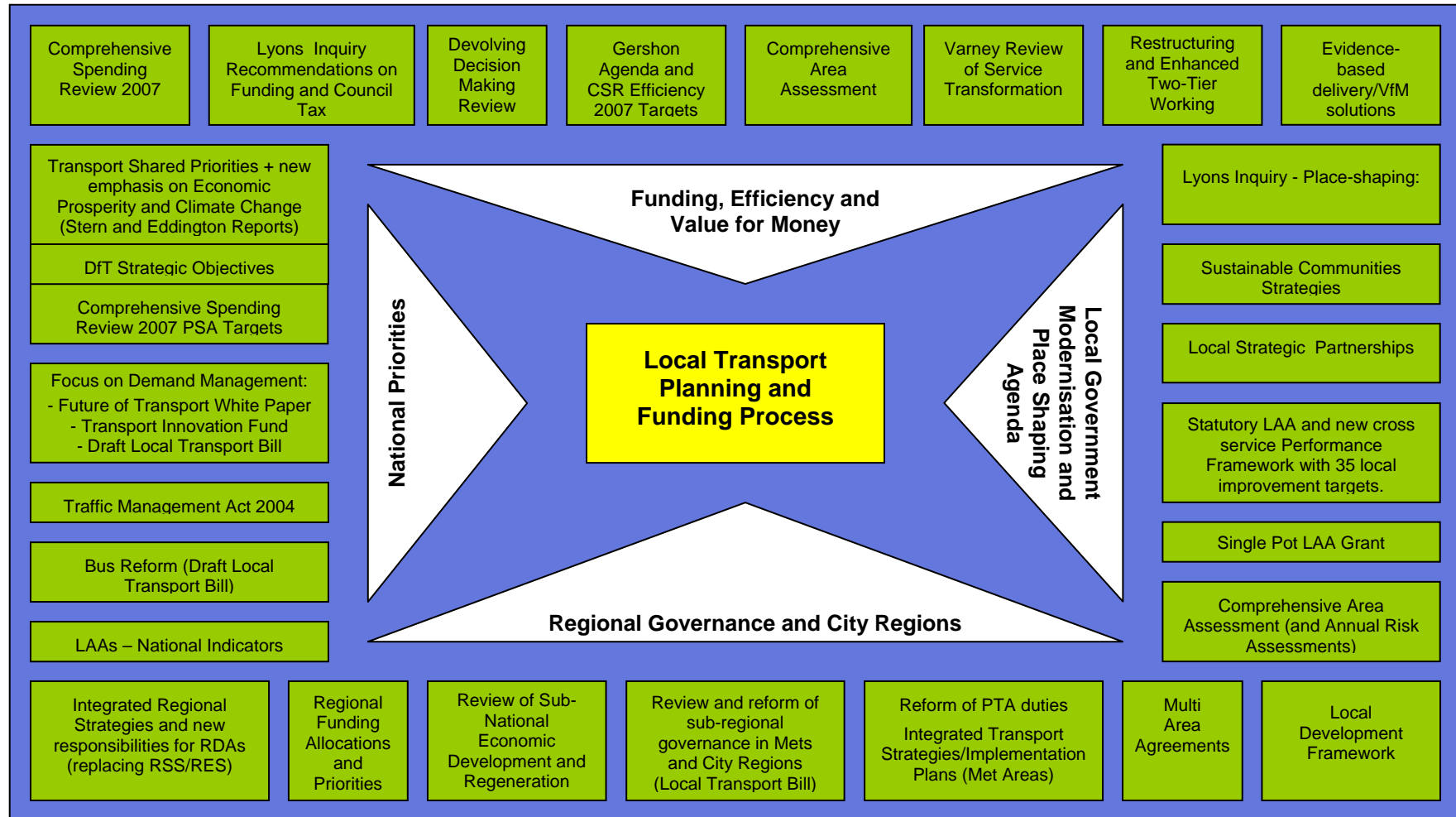
Our view, on the basis of the available evidence, is that the case for substantial reform to current LTP arrangements is finely balanced and is critically related to the overall objectives and agendas which local transport is expected to support, as well as being variable between different types of area and transport authority.

The introduction of the LTP process has driven a clear improvement in the scale and quality of local transport planning and delivery across England and is widely supported. The process is not without its weaknesses, however, and there is evidence of some key barriers which prevent the full delivery of desired outcomes. These problems appear most acute in metropolitan areas, but are not just confined to these localities. The current arrangements are also seen by many as overly-prescriptive and supporting a dependency by local authorities on central guidance, rather than promoting overall competence, flexibility to local circumstances and innovation. There is a case for at least some incremental changes to provide effective solutions to these issues.

In addition, the external policy environment continues to develop rapidly at national, regional and local levels, with the Local Government White Paper and Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration being especially significant. These external policy drivers present major challenges for local transport policy makers and practitioners. The key issue is whether the LTP framework, as currently formulated, assists or constrains alignment with the evolving context, and if not, how such alignment can be most effectively and practicably brought about.

With this in mind, the Government itself has indicated a commitment to reform in the metropolitan conurbations and potentially other areas. In the development of future policy, it will be important to retain the benefits enabled by the LTP process over the past seven years, whilst addressing problems encountered and rising to the challenges of the wider policy agenda. It will also be important for the Department to minimise any period of uncertainty for practitioners and stakeholders, and ensure that key messages for reform are coherent and clearly articulated. Within this context, care will need to be taken to avoid unnecessary disruption or initiate a new period of learning for authorities where the effectiveness of current delivery mechanisms may be put at risk.

Figure 3.1 - Key Policy Drivers of Change



4. Principles Governing Change

4.1 Introduction

In identifying and assessing options for the future development of local transport planning in England, it is important to have a consistent and transparent set of standards against which Government, local authorities and other stakeholders can structure the debate, make key decisions and judge the success or otherwise of the reforms put in place.

In discussing future options, we believe that relevant proposals should:

- ◆ take into account the key lessons from the LTP process to date, both for the Department and local authorities; and,
- ◆ consider the key objectives and priorities for Central and Local Government, as currently articulated.

Each factor is discussed in turn below.

4.2 Key Lessons from the First Round

Chapter 3 summarises some of the key experiences from the delivery of LTP1 and development of LTP2, with further details set out in our Long-Term Evaluation Study.

Key lessons for the Department in its role as principal facilitator and regulator of local transport policy include:

- ◆ with the possible exception of metropolitan areas, there is limited evidence to suggest that the LTP process is failing in terms of its original objectives and capacity to support improved delivery and outcomes. Future policy beyond 2011 should therefore build on this solid legacy rather than seek radical change for its own sake unless there are overwhelming external drivers in this direction;
- ◆ key strengths which should be retained in future arrangements include the improvement in transport's corporate profile, the inclusive approach to strategy development and programme delivery, the objective-led approach across all modes integrated with wider policies, the longer-term certainty of funding, and the gradual emergence of a performance management culture;
- ◆ the introduction of new local transport policies or major changes to existing policies should be carefully managed with a clear appreciation of the timescales, processes and levers required, a clear vision of the ultimate endpoint and understanding of potential problems;
- ◆ the development of local transport should be integrated with other Government policies affecting councils and public services. Care should be taken to articulate and disseminate the key messages in a coherent manner. Policy initiatives which are in conflict or difficult to reconcile easily at the local level should be avoided or mitigated as far as possible;
- ◆ significant efforts should be made to maintain the profile of transport as a vital enabler for efficient, inclusive and accessible public services and community

wellbeing. This includes aligning transport within the wider place shaping agenda as the new role for local authorities;

- ◆ there should be a clear and consistent articulation of the dual role of transport planning as the local delivery of the national policy agenda and development of local solutions to local problems and priorities. Key decisions on assessment and funding should make the balance between these two roles transparent;
- ◆ assessment and inspection, although undoubtedly driving improvements in local transport planning, can run the risk of being seen as overly-prescriptive, inflexible to local circumstances and stifling of innovation. A lighter, more flexible approach, more closely related to council competence and risk assessment may more appropriate and more closely matched to the resources available;
- ◆ change within local authorities is driven by a range of motivating factors, not just those related to formal policy guidance and assessment from Government. Other formal and informal drivers may be important, and these should be identified and utilised where relevant and useful;
- ◆ where formal guidance is published or updated in order to influence policy delivery, it should be available in good time, take account of the resource implications of compliance for all parties involved, and avoid frequent, unnecessary or unexpected changes;
- ◆ efforts should be focused on reducing administrative burdens on authorities in terms of strategy development, progress reporting and document production. The Department should target inspection and intervention on those areas or authorities shown to be failing; and
- ◆ in some areas, poor delivery and contribution to targets has been at least partially due to fragmentation of key decisions for planning and implementation across different authorities, agencies and stakeholders. Whilst the Government has already acknowledged a range of issues in this area and sought to propose solutions in the draft Local Transport Bill, it may wish to consider whether future reforms should go further than those already announced.

The following key lessons for Local Government as the principal convenor and delivery agent of local transport policies and funding, should also be considered:

- ◆ the profile of transport needs to be raised and maintained as a vital contributor to wider corporate and community goals rather than an end in itself, in order to secure support and resources from members, chief officers and external stakeholders;
- ◆ it is vital to focus on the processes, systems, skills and staff capacity for effective delivery beyond the completion of the LTP as a document;
- ◆ authorities need to shift attention from expenditure and programme delivery for its own sake to achievement of outcome-orientated targets, and a strong understanding of the key steps needed to deliver this through comprehensive monitoring and performance management;
- ◆ there is a need for a clearer understanding of how to make consultation and engagement of partners effective in informing decision making, winning support for the strategy and programme, and securing active contributions from those local stakeholders which are essential to delivery;

- ◆ greater efforts should be put into transferable best practice and promotion of continuous improvement; and
- ◆ in light of the changing policy context, especially that presented by the Local Government White Paper, local authorities should take advantage of greater potential freedom from Central Government prescription by developing and demonstrating competence, confidence and innovation in place of dependency on guidance and other forms of central control.

4.3 Government Objectives

As well as learning from past lessons, future local transport policy should reflect the objectives and agendas of Central and Local Government. These include:

- ◆ clarification of national priorities with a clear mechanism for translating these into locally-relevant targets;
- ◆ the desire for a more mature and equal relationship between Central and Local Government which favours a stronger emphasis on localism, engaging with citizens and communities and relaxation of central prescription, inspection and reporting burdens;
- ◆ greater emphasis on effective policy outcomes, rather than excessive focus on process, together with strengthening engagement, reporting and accountability to communities and partners;
- ◆ practicality, affordability and deliverability within the capacity, competence and capability of stakeholders, including local authorities, Government Offices, the Department itself and other bodies such as Local Strategic Partnerships;
- ◆ proportionate and risk-based scrutiny and assessment of performance which is also constructive and forward looking;
- ◆ a stronger focus on efficiency, delivery and value for money with tougher intervention where this is lacking;
- ◆ a greater focus on national economic development and regeneration, productivity and climate change as national priorities for the Department and Government more widely;
- ◆ a greater focus on enabling regional and sub-regional decision-making, including new structures and governance arrangements where this makes sense. This will allow more strategic planning, investment and delivery across administrative boundaries, closer fit between delivery and functional geography, and offering potential for greater efficiency and service transformation;
- ◆ the commitment already made by Government to strengthen local transport delivery in such areas as bus services, local road pricing and transport governance in metropolitan areas and city regions; and
- ◆ a requirement for reforms to be stable over time and to avoid unintended and potentially perverse incentives and consequences.

There are some outstanding questions and unresolved tensions between these objectives and considerable work ahead in turning them into effective, integrated and responsive policy and practice. Therefore, some trade-offs will need to be made in developing a coherent way forward which is comprehensible and acceptable to all stakeholders.

In particular, there is a need to reconcile the strengthening of national transport priorities with the localist agenda for greater devolution, local authorities' role as strategic leaders in place shaping, and with pressures for greater alignment of decision making at the regional and sub-regional level. In this respect, there is a need for agreement and clarity about the respective roles of Central, Regional and Local Government, identifying where each add most value, as well as maintaining the commitment to pursue a much smaller number of nationally set central priorities, leaving space for local choice.

4.4 Application of Principles

The criteria presented above are not exhaustive or definitive, but do suggest some fundamental issues for policy makers, local authorities and stakeholders to consider. Different stakeholders will inevitably regard some criteria as more or less important depending on their own objectives, recent and present experiences, competencies and resources. The final arrangements enacted after 2011, if they are to continue the perceived success of the LTP process to date, are likely to therefore depend on a balance and "creative tension" between a range of drivers. These considerations may also vary by location, the precise balance of central and local priorities prevailing, and the level of competence and ambition of different stakeholders and agencies over time. This suggests promotion of a range of approaches rather than a single model or top down prescription from Government.

It is also by no means necessary that future arrangements falling within these principles need to be defined in detail within the Local Transport Bill when it is finalised later in the year. Detailed aspects can be left to secondary legislation and associated guidance or approval in due course. This is especially if future policy accepts the devolution case and acknowledges the need for local flexibility in different locations. The Government has effectively taken this approach in its current proposals for transport planning and delivery in metropolitan conurbations. There is no reason why a similar approach could not apply to transport planning in other localities.

5. Options for Future Local Transport Planning

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 identifies the key principles which need to be considered when developing and assessing options for the future development of local transport planning. Within this context, options can be expressed in terms of the following six inter-related themes of change:

- ◆ structure and geographical coverage;
- ◆ objectives and priorities;
- ◆ content;
- ◆ timescale;
- ◆ guidance, assessment and performance funding; and
- ◆ governance and administration of the process.

Table 5.1 considers each of these themes in more detail and identifies the range of realistic options within each theme, taking the existing LTP process as the starting point. Section 5.2 develops more focused scenarios for reform which combine a number of specific changes into internally consistent packages.

Some of the options considered would require legislative change, while others could be implemented through guidance and/or secondary legislation.

Table 5.1 – Options for Future Local Transport Planning

Structure - Three broad options reflecting different levels of integration with wider policies:	
No or limited change	Retention of LTP model consisting of a five year integrated transport and maintenance strategy, implementation plan, and performance management framework. Statutory status retained with requirement to integrate transport policies with wider corporate and community priorities and other service areas. The Plan would set out the local strategy for delivery of objectives set out in the Community Strategy (including LAA targets) and the Integrated Regional Strategy. The document would remain the basis for allocating transport-related capital funding to authorities.
Integrated Transport Strategy / Implementation Plan	Local transport-focused document consisting of a longer term (e.g. 10 - 20 year) Integrated Transport Strategy and a separate shorter term (e.g. 3 year) Implementation Plan. This could be either a statutory or non-statutory document and is essentially the model proposed in the draft Local Transport Bill for metropolitan and potentially other city region areas. This model would be expected to be accompanied by new or reformed governance arrangements, including the creation of new or strengthened Passenger Transport Authorities.
No Local Transport Plan (Local Transport Policies set within a Wider Context)	Removal of statutory requirement for local transport authorities to produce a separate Local Transport Plan to a set specification. Local transport policies and plans would be incorporated into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local (or Multi-) Area Agreement; – an enhanced transport section in the Local Development Framework; and – the relevant Integrated Regional Strategy (and Sub-Regional Transport Strategy, where applicable). Major schemes proposed within the region would be identified in the Regional Strategy.

Table 5.1 – Options for Future Local Transport Planning (Continued)

Structure (continued)	
No Local Transport Plan (Cont'd)	The following variants to this option could also be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a separate mandatory integrated local authority capital strategy; – broad guidance from DfT on the transport-related objectives, priorities and strategies which authorities should be reflecting in their Community Strategies, Local Area Agreements and Local Development Frameworks; – stronger guidance from DfT on local objectives and strategies to be reflected in Regional Strategies; and – local authority-based appendices to the Regional Strategy, summarising implementation of the Strategy by each local authority or local authority grouping.
Geographical Coverage	
No or limited change	Transport policies and plans primarily focused on individual local authorities, as present, within the context of regional and sub-regional policy drivers. Scope for Joint LTPs, where relevant, which cover more than one local authority area or sub-area, on a voluntary basis.
Mandatory cross-boundary planning and delivery	As above, but Joint LTPs or Local Transport Strategies/Implementation Plans might be required or strongly encouraged for local authorities identified as being too small or having insufficient capacity to tackle the transport challenges of their areas, or where local authority boundaries do not reflect travel-to-work areas, city region boundaries or other functional areas. Under DfT's proposals in the draft Local Transport Bill, such an approach would also apply to city regions seeking to adopt a Passenger Transport Authority and associated powers.
Sub-regional planning and delivery	Change in focus from local authority-based policies and plans, to sub-regional policies and plans, produced and implemented by groups of authorities. All authorities would therefore be involved in joint plans covering defined functional sub-regions, travel-to-work areas, or city regions. Authority groupings and geographical coverage of plans could be approved or directed by DfT (or the equivalent policy administrator). <p>Variants of this option could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a sub-regional strategy supported by individual authority-based strategies focused on more local issues; and – individual authority-based implementation plans with a joint or sub-regional transport plan.
Objectives and Priorities	
No or limited change	Current range of prescribed objectives – Local transport planning retains focus on the agreed Shared Priorities for transport (congestion, accessibility, air quality, road safety and quality of life).
Limited change	Broader range of prescribed objectives – Shared priorities for transport (congestion, accessibility, air quality, road safety and quality of life) to be supplemented with additional objectives reflecting emerging national priorities such as climate change and economic growth, and new duties placed on local authorities ¹⁸ .
No guidance on prescribed objectives	No objectives or priorities to be prescribed in guidance, providing greater flexibility for local authorities (or the relevant bodies) to identify locally relevant objectives within the broad requirement to reflect national and regional objectives. <p>One possible variant of the latter option is for guidance to set out a menu of possible objectives and priorities from which authorities might be required or strongly encouraged to select or negotiate a sub-set most closely reflecting their local circumstances and aspirations. This is broadly the equivalent of the approach proposed for the negotiation of targets to be included in the next round of Local Area Agreements.</p>

¹⁸ The draft Local Transport Plan Bill proposes to place an additional duty on PTAs (and individual district councils) to have regard to government policies and guidance on climate change, in developing their policies and carrying out their functions. The Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration Review proposes placing a new statutory duty on local authorities to assess their economic circumstances and promote economic development of their areas with their partners. The 2005 Disability Discrimination Act introduced a Disability Equality Duty to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

Table 5.1 – Options for Future Local Transport Planning (Continued))

Content	
No or limited change	<p>Inclusion of following elements: a clear set of objectives, an analysis of problems and opportunities, a coherent and comprehensive transport strategy, an implementation programme, and a performance management framework containing targets and indicators. Statutory documents (Air Quality Action Plans, Rights of Way Improvement Plans, and Bus Strategies) and other documentation (such as Transport Asset Management Plans, accessibility strategies, and other objective-based or mode-based strategies) to form essential elements of the Plan. These documents would be reported wholly within the Plan (or similar) or as separate sub-documents (but still strongly reflected in the main document).</p> <p>Variants of this option include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the removal of the statutory requirement to prepare a Bus Strategy; and – the statutory requirement to include a Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP) as a key element of the LTP, either as a stand alone section or integral within the document.
Separate Strategy and Implementation documents	A separate transport strategy covering the appropriate geographical area, potentially published in a format which is accessible to the general public and other stakeholders. Separate Implementation Plan produced jointly or individually by the transport authority(ies) concerned, supported by a (joint) performance management framework. Scope for the strategy and implementation documents to cover different timescales.
Statements from partners	Supporting implementation statements from partners – Implementation plan to be supported by Implementation Statements from key partners and stakeholders, particularly those involved in delivering LAA targets.
Inclusion of trunk roads and local rail schemes	<p>Including improvements and activities of Highways Agency, Network Rail and Community Rail Partnerships. This could be by the possible extension of the Regional Funding Allocations to cover local rail schemes. Guidance could also be extended to require local authorities to demonstrate how their local policies are integrated with trunk road and rail proposals, and how these schemes contribute to targets and objectives. One option could involve the Highways Agency, Network Rail and local Train Operating Companies being given a duty to co-operate with local authorities (or relevant bodies) in developing local transport policies and plans.</p> <p>This option may be more compatible with strengthened governance arrangements for transport at the sub-regional and regional level.</p>
Timescales	
No change	Retention of a five year plan, to be updated by a date specified by the DfT (or equivalent body).
Medium term strategy	Ten to twenty year strategy, to be updated by a date specified by the DfT (or equivalent body), potentially with a shorter-term implementation plan as set out above.
Flexible timescale	Authorities are given flexibility to update their plans in line with their own circumstances, with or without the requirement for timescales to be confirmed with DfT or the equivalent body.
Guidance, Assessment and Performance Funding ¹⁹	
No change: Strong intervention	<p>Prescriptive guidance and assessment process linked to performance funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – detailed, prescriptive guidance with progress reporting in 2011 and during the third round; – detailed assessment and classification of local transport planning and delivery at the end of LTP2, and during the third round, undertaken by the DfT/GOs or other administering bodies; and – transport specific performance funding based on performance classification, with or without an optional needs-based formula funding element.

¹⁹ The range of possible options relating to the prescriptiveness of local transport planning guidance, and associated assessment process, is influenced by the way in which transport-related funding is allocated to authorities, and hence the relative need for a robust assessment process based on prescriptive guidance.

Table 5.1 – Options for Future Local Transport Planning (Continued)

Guidance, Assessment and Performance Funding (continued)	
Medium intervention (With performance funding)	Lighter guidance/assessment process linked to performance funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – less prescriptive guidance with sufficient flexibility to reflect different authority types, groupings and local objectives and priorities. Progress reporting in 2011, and optionally during LTP3; – lighter assessment of performance based on progress against specific transport targets, and identification of risks. This process would be supported by constructive dialogue with DfT, the Government Office or other administering bodies to address weaknesses, and broad categorisation of performance; and – transport specific performance funding based on performance classification, with or without and optional needs-based formula funding element.
Medium intervention (Without performance funding)	Lighter guidance/assessment process without performance funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – concise, flexible and non-prescriptive guidance able to reflect different authority types, groupings and local objectives and priorities. No requirement for progress reporting beyond that required for the LAA or MAA process; – lighter assessment of performance based on progress against transport targets, and identification of risks. This process would be supported by constructive dialogue with DfT, the Government Office or other administering bodies to address weaknesses. No categorisation of performance; and – wholly needs-based formula funding (or similar) with no performance funding. This model is similar to the approach adopted in the draft guidance for the 2008 LTP2 Progress Reports. Assessments will take the form of self assessment, accompanied by a formal meeting with the Government Office. There will be no funding adjustments related to the 2008 reporting process.
Light intervention	Minimal guidance, without formal assessment and with or without performance funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – concise, flexible and non-prescriptive guidance able to reflect different authority types, groupings and local objectives and priorities. No requirement for progress reporting beyond that required for the LAA or MAA process; – no formal assessment or classification of performance. Auditing, scrutiny, and assessment would be through LAA transport-related targets and the wider Comprehensive Area Assessment, and internally through the involvement of Members and the Local Strategic Partnership; and – needs-based formula funding (or equivalent) with or without performance funding, the latter based on core (and local) LAA transport target performance.
Governance and Administration of the Process	
No or limited change	Retention of the role of DfT as sponsor, regulator and administrator of the process, supported by the Government Offices, in producing guidance, assessing performance, determining funding allocations and providing other support to local authorities.
Enhanced role for regional stakeholders ²⁰	Potential options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Regions advise Ministers on LTP block funding allocations, in addition to their current role in providing advice on major schemes to be progressed through the Regional Funding Allocation. – Regions set guidance, scrutinise and/or assess Local Transport Plans or Integrated Transport Strategies/Implementation Plans within their region. – Regions approve and monitor delivery of Local Transport Plans, in terms of their role as implementation plans for the Regional Strategy.

²⁰ Under the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration, regional leadership is proposed to shift to Regional Development Agencies with Regional Assemblies unlikely to continue in their current form.

5.2 Options for Future Local Transport Planning

Table 5.2 shows how the various options might combine together into packages. Four broad options are presented, primarily reflecting different structural, geographical coverage, and governance arrangements:

- ◆ **Option 1: Retain Local Transport Plan Model** – Retention of a local transport-focused document, with linkages to wider policies and planning frameworks, consisting of a five year integrated transport and maintenance strategy, implementation plan, and performance management framework. In essence, this is a third round of the Local Transport Plan process with some incremental changes from current arrangements. It is compatible with the current local authority framework for transport governance, as set out in Figure 2.1.
- ◆ **Option 2: Integrated Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan** – As set out in the draft Local Transport Bill or extended from these proposed arrangements. This implies the strengthening of cross boundary transport governance in metropolitan and major city areas, such as modifications to the membership, responsibilities, and geographical coverage of existing PTA/Es, or creation of new PTA/PTEs. A model based on sub-regional Integrated Transport Strategies/Implementation Plans could imply statutory or non-statutory sub-regional partnerships, potentially linked to a Multi-Area Agreement. This structure is set out in Figure 5.1.
- ◆ **Option 3: Local Transport Policies within a Wider Context** – Local transport policies and plans subsumed into the Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement (or MAA where applicable), the Local Development Framework, and/or the Integrated Regional Strategy. This model is compatible with the current local authority framework, but may require strengthened sub-regional governance in some instances, for example with development of Multi-Area Agreements. This structure is set out in Figure 5.2.
- ◆ **Option 4: Enhanced Role for Regional Stakeholders in Administering the Process** – Potential options include setting or advising on local guidance, advising on LTP block funding allocation, scrutinising and/or assessing transport plans and policies, and approving and monitoring delivery of transport plans and policies.

The first two options, relating to a potential third round of LTPs (Option 1) and an Integrated Transport Strategy/Implementation Plan (Option 2) are sufficiently flexible to be broadly compatible with nearly all of the options identified under the themes covering geographical coverage, objectives and priorities, content, timescale, guidance and assessment, and governance and administration of the process.

Option 3, where a centrally-defined local transport planning process is replaced by a range of locally defined approaches is compatible with fewer options on the other criteria, and implies a specific combination of options shifting key decisions to local authorities themselves, with much more limited prescription and assessment from DfT.

Option 4 is compatible with each of the above options, although with key decisions on those options potentially made by regional bodies rather than by Central Government.

Table 5.2 - Matrix of Future Options for Local Transport Planning

Scenario	Structure	Geography	Objectives	Content	Timescales	Guidance, Assessment
Option 1: Retain Local Transport Plan Model: Modified LTP Process – Limited Change (with or without performance funding) – Administered by DfT / GO.	No Change – Local transport-focused document based on incremental development of LTP2.	No Change – Primarily focused on local authority boundaries. Voluntary Joint LTPs.	Focus on Shared Priorities (congestion, safety, accessibility, air quality and QoL)	No Change – Broadly as LTP2. With optional inclusion of: - supporting implementation statements from partners; - trunk roads and rail schemes.	No Change – Updated every 5 years.	Lighter guidance /assessment process, with or without performance funding (medium intervention).
		Mandatory cross boundary planning and delivery for some authorities, identified by DfT/GOs on grounds of size, capacity and strategic fit.	Broader range of prescribed objectives (Shared priorities plus economy and climate change).		Medium Term Strategy – 10 to 20 years.	Minimum guidance, no transport-specific assessment, with or without performance funding (light intervention).
			No Guidance on prescribed objectives.		Flexible Timescale.	
Option 2a: Integrated Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan: Integrated Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan (with or without performance funding) in Met Areas, optionally in City Regions, and in sub-regions identified by DfT/GO – Administered by DfT/GO.	Medium term transport strategy, and shorter term implementation plan.	In Metropolitan areas, and City Regions.	Broader range of prescribed objectives (Shared priorities plus objectives relating to the economy and climate change).	Separate strategy and implementation plan. With optional inclusion of: - supporting implementation statements from partners; - trunk roads and rail schemes.	Medium Term Strategy – 10 to 20 years.	Lighter guidance /assessment process, with or without performance funding (medium intervention).
		Mandatory cross boundary planning and delivery for some authorities, identified by DfT/GOs as too small to tackle the transport challenges of their areas or where authority boundaries do not reflect travel-to-work areas.	No Guidance on objectives.		Flexible Timescale.	Minimum guidance, no transport-specific assessment, with or without performance funding (light intervention).
			Sub-regional planning and delivery, for all authorities, based on joint working.		Broader range of prescribed objectives (Shared priorities plus objectives relating to the economy and climate change).	Medium Term Strategy – 10 to 20 years.
Option 2b: Integrated Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan: Sub-Regional Integrated Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan – Administered by DfT/GO.	Medium term transport strategy, and shorter term implementation plan for (i) the cross-boundary area, or (ii) for each individual authority.		No Guidance on objectives.	Separate strategy and implementation plan. With optional inclusion of: - supporting implementation statements from partners; - trunk roads and rail schemes.	Flexible Timescale.	Minimum guidance, no transport-specific assessment, with or without performance funding (light intervention).

Table 5.2 – Matrix of Future Options for Local Transport Planning (Continued)

Scenario	Structure	Geography	Objectives	Content	Timescales	Guidance, Assessment
Option 3: Local Transport Policies within a Wider Context: No local transport document – Transport plans and policies integrated into wider policy documents. Limited role for DfT/GOs in administering the process.	No local transport document. Policies and plans incorporated into Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement (or MAA), Local Development Framework, or the Regional Transport Strategy.	Consistent with geographical coverage of each policy document: - the Community Strategy, LAA, and LDF would cover individual local authority boundaries; - an Multi-Area Agreement (if adopted) would cover more than one authority; - the RTS would cover the region.	High level guidance from DfT on the transport-related objectives authorities should be reflecting in their Community Strategies, and subsequently Local Development Framework; and stronger Guidance from DfT on the objectives to be reflected in integrated Regional Strategies.	Transport policies incorporated into Community Strategy and LAA (or MAA), Local Development Framework and Regional Transport Strategy. Supporting transport-focused implementation plan produced by local authority(ies) or relevant body(ies). Optional inclusion of: - supporting implementation statements from partners	Individual strategies updated in accordance with their own timescales.	Minimum guidance, no transport-specific assessment, with or without performance funding (light intervention). Auditing, scrutiny and assessment would be through LAA transport-related targets and the wider Comprehensive Area Assessment process, and internally through the involvement of Members and the LSP.
			No Guidance on objectives.			
Option 4a: Governance and Administration of the Process: Enhanced role for Regional Stakeholders in administering the process – Regions advise about LTP block funding and optionally, scrutinise and assess performance.	No Change – Local transport-focused document based on LTP2, <u>or</u> , Medium term transport strategy, and shorter term implementation plan, <u>or</u> , No local transport document.	Compatible with any level of geographical coverage, but most relevant under a policy which encourages cross-boundary or sub-regional working.	Broader range of prescribed objectives (Shared priorities plus objectives relating to the economy and climate change), plus potential RTS objectives.	Compatible with an LTP2 type document, or a model based on Integrated Transport Strategies and Implementation Plans.	Compatible with any of the options identified.	Lighter guidance /assessment process, with or without performance funding (medium intervention).
			No Guidance on objectives, but alignment to Regional Strategy.			
Option 4b: Governance and Administration of the Process: Enhanced role for Regional Stakeholders in administering the process – Regions approve and monitor delivery of transport policies and plans in their role as implementation plans for the Regional Strategy.	Medium term transport strategy, and shorter term implementation plan.	Compatible with any level of geographical coverage, but most relevant under a policy which encourages cross-boundary or sub-regional working.	Broader range of prescribed objectives (Shared priorities plus objectives relating to the economy and climate change). No Guidance on objectives.	Separate strategy and implementation plan. With optional inclusion of: - supporting implementation statements from partners; - trunk roads and rail schemes.	Medium Term Strategy – 10 to 20 years.	Lighter guidance /assessment process, with or without performance funding (medium intervention).
			Flexible Timescale.			

Figure 5.1 – Possible Model Based on an Integrated Transport Strategy / Implementation Plan

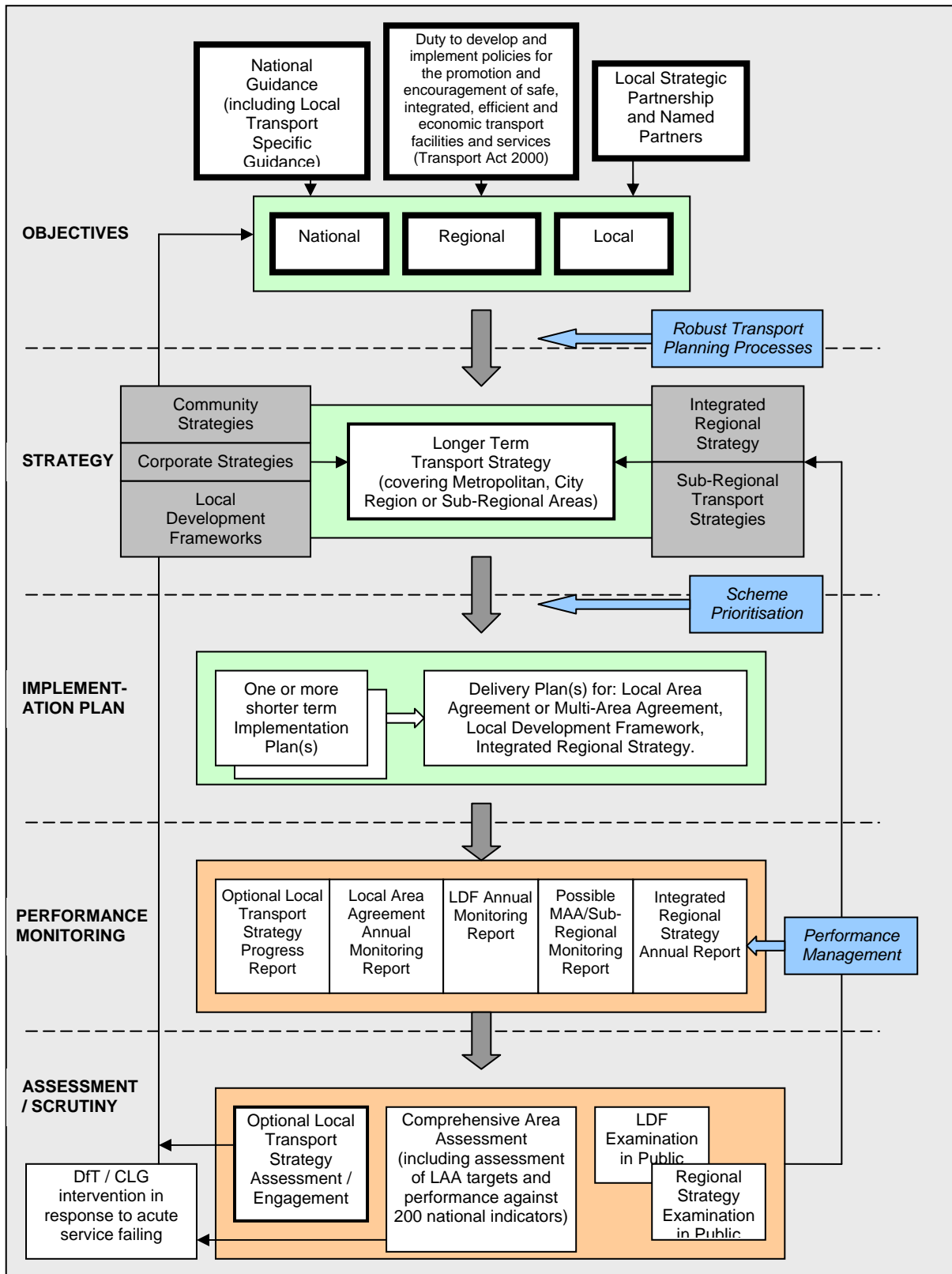
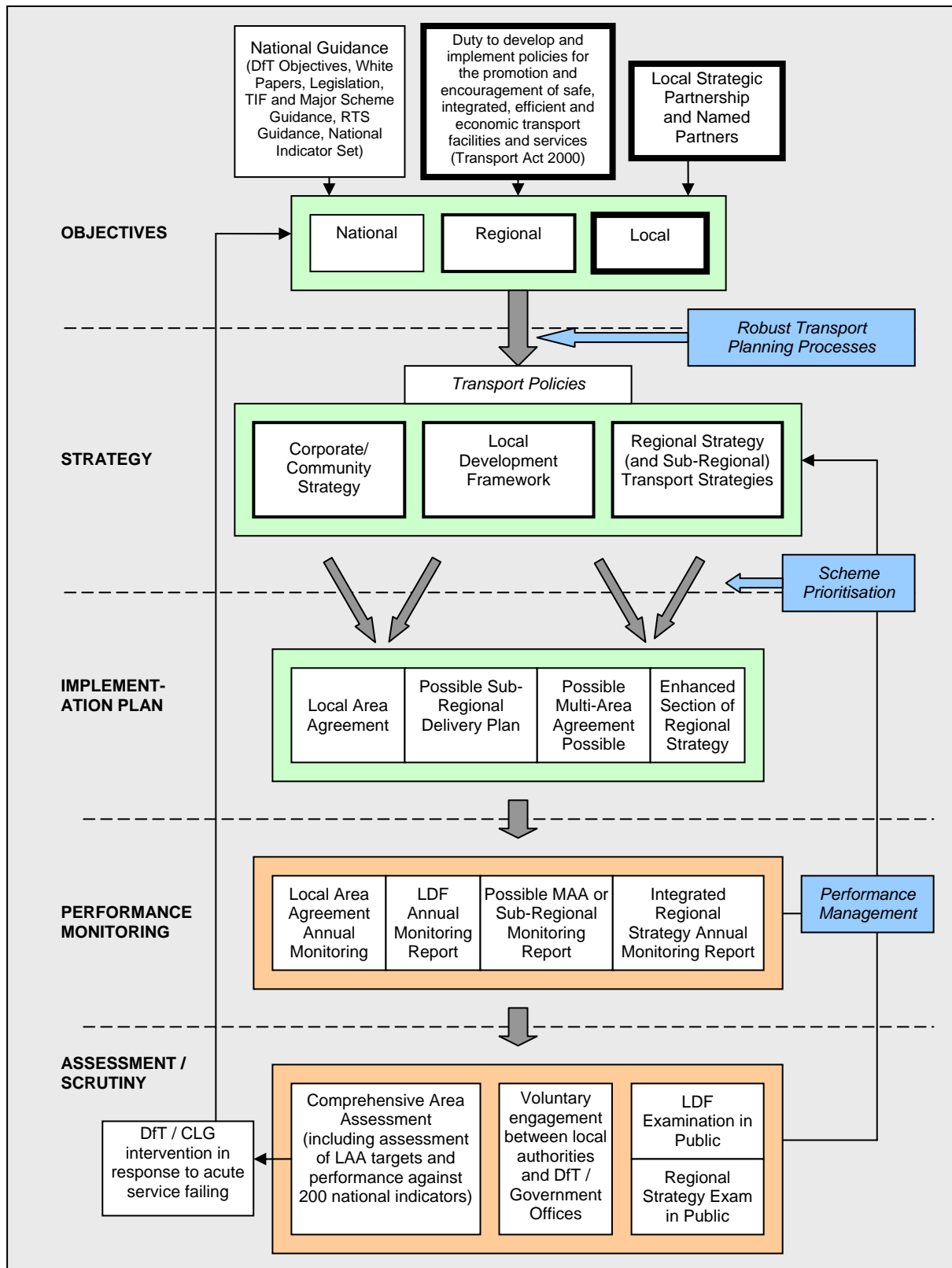


Figure 5.2 – Possible Model Based on Integration of Local Transport Policies within a Wider Policy Context



6. Assessment of Options

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 presented a range of options for future local transport planning, expressed in terms of six inter-related themes. This chapter assesses each of the options in turn, in terms of their overall feasibility, possible impacts and the broad principles set out in Chapter 4.

The assessment is based on the individual options for the six themes, rather than specifically considering packages of options, due to the multiple combinations which may be possible and to aid clarity of reporting. However, it is essential that any future scenarios are based on a coherent package of options, and are internally consistent in terms of their structure, geographical coverage, objectives, content and timescales.

The intention of this chapter is not to make specific or final recommendations on future local transport planning processes and reporting mechanisms, but to indicate in broad terms which options seem to us to be more realistic and effective within the principles set out in Chapter 4. In this sense, there is no “right” solution, and indeed different areas may seek variable approaches depending on their particular local circumstances, levels of competence and ambition and governance structures.

In terms of the options set out in Chapter 5, the safest approach, at least from a practitioner perspective, lies in incremental change on the current LTP model. The latter is popular with practitioners and has shown it can deliver in most local areas, albeit not without administrative, financial or political problems. However, this approach risks being increasingly out of touch with wider devolution and localism agenda, stifling new thinking and innovation, and preventing a step change in integrated planning and delivery which might come from new approaches.

However, radical change such as incorporating local transport policies and implementation plans into Local Area Agreements and wider policy agendas, whilst enabling local authorities to pursue their own agendas more freely and innovatively, also presents significant risks, especially if new approaches are untested or authorities and their partners are challenged with a new learning curve within a rapid timescale. This suggests that where new approaches are adopted, there would be sense in carrying out pilots or trials with a small number of areas, learning the practical lessons from these, prior to rolling out new policies and practice more widely.

These points confirm the view that the final Local Transport Bill should be broad brush and enabling, providing relatively little detail or prescription for local transport arrangements post-2011. This will leave DfT considerable scope to confirm final approaches in subsequent secondary legislation or guidance in due course. However, the Department should also be quite clear on the retention of local authorities' statutory duties to develop and implement policies for safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport in their areas²¹, even if the precise processes and mechanisms through which these will be demonstrated remain undecided.

²¹ Essentially, Sections 108, subsections 1 and 2 of the Transport Act 2000.

The remainder of this Chapter considers the case for and against the key options. An overall summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of the key options is set out in Table 6.1 at the end of this chapter.

6.2 Structure and Geographical Coverage

Chapter 5 set out a range of options for the structure of future transport planning policy, which could be applied within different authority types, groups of authorities, and over different geographical areas. While the options are expressed in terms of documentation formats, the important issues relate to the transport planning processes which the different documentation structures encourage.

Specific strengths and weaknesses of each structure are summarised in Table 6.1.

6.2.1 Modified Local Transport Plan Model

There are strong grounds for retaining a transport-focused document based on the current LTP model in larger county and unitary authorities and small authorities involved in joint LTPs on a voluntary basis, which are not covered by current or future PTA/PTE arrangements, although with some changes to accommodate new policy drivers.

The existing model is widely supported, has been shown to represent good value for money, is sufficiently flexible to accommodate or integrate closely with emerging policy initiatives, and presents limited risks in terms of potential disruption to current delivery plans and mechanisms. The strengths of the process lie in the framework it provides for integrating transport strategies and policies against a common set of objectives. This provides a statutory document for informing other corporate policies, helps transport to maintain a corporate profile, ensures transport areas not represented in LAA/MAA targets are still given sufficient attention in terms of planning and budgetary allocations, and encourages robust planning procedures.

However, this model has the potential to encourage 'silo' working at the expense of cross-service solutions, and can result in duplication of effort across different policy documents. Furthermore, the new role of LAAs as the only place where targets on outcomes are agreed between Central and Local Government effectively replaces the role of LTPs as a targetry and performance management mechanism²².

6.2.2 Local Transport Strategy and Implementation Plan

This represents a variant of the current LTP model, and may be more applicable to metropolitan, city region and sub-regional areas. It is also essentially the approach set out in the draft Local Transport Bill. A local transport strategy and implementation are already key elements of the existing LTP in any case, but their more explicit separation offers greater scope for cross-boundary plans covering sub-regions, city regions and neighbouring authorities. This structure also gives greater priority to the development of longer term transport strategies²³, and encourages better

²² Although there is no reason the LTP could not effectively be presented as the sector delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy and LAA targets and indicators.

²³ Identified by Eddington as being important for delivering economic growth, and likely to provide greater scope for addressing regional objectives, particularly if linked to sub-regional coverage.

implementation planning linked to risk management, performance monitoring and robust prioritisation processes.

However, this structure offers a less streamlined approach for integration with the Local Area Agreement framework, and there may be potential for local issues to be squeezed out due to a focus on strategic issues unless carefully managed²⁴. It may also be associated with the same cross-boundary problems currently facing metropolitan areas, unless accompanied by strengthened governance, powers and funding at a more sub-regional level, based on reforms set out in the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration.

6.2.3 Local Transport Policies within a Wider Context

Removal of the requirement to produce a statutory local transport plan document and integration of transport policies and plans into other local and regional policy documents, provides a mechanism for stronger integration of transport policies with wider local and regional policies. Under this approach, the Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement would become the primary local framework containing transport-related objectives, performance indicators and targets.

For those authorities, with strong corporate support for transport, and who have developed good relationships with partners and other service areas, this model offers the potential for them to embrace their role as strategic leaders and place shapers, and deliver cross-service and cross-sector solutions. Stronger links with the Local Strategic Partnership may also make it easier to deliver difficult or potentially unpopular schemes, if links to wider policies are set out in the context of the Community Strategy and if a wide range of stakeholders (with a duty to co-operate) are involved in the decision-making process from the start. Furthermore, encouragement of cross-service integrated solutions may aid authorities in securing a broader range of funding and in delivering efficiency savings.

However, the removal of the requirement to produce a statutory transport-focused document, supported by prescriptive guidance and a performance management regime, may be seen as more of a risk for those authorities which have struggled to raise the priority of transport internally and to integrate transport policies with those of other service areas, and where local transport practitioners have failed to appreciate the significant changes set out in the Local Government White Paper.

This more flexible approach requires robust leadership and advocacy for transport as a vital public service at member, chief officer and manager level, the presence of a clear and focused strategy and programme, a willingness to engage with and win support from a range of internal and external partners, and the ability to recognise and action the role that transport plays in contributing to wider corporate and community goals.

Without a mandatory requirement for a specific plan, there is a risk that the attention given to developing and implementing a transport strategy may fall in priority in some authorities, and there may be a loss in quality or breadth of transport delivery. Supporting transport statutory and non-statutory documents such as mode or policy-

²⁴ Such arguments have been put on the Mayor's Transport Strategy and Local Implementation Plans within London where the pursuit of TfL's investment programme is seen by some as doing little to reflect local priorities in each borough.

based strategies, Transport Asset Management Plans, and Rights of Way Improvement Plans may also weaken in their relationship to an integrated transport strategy and likewise fall in the priority and resources devoted to them.

In addition, the ability of Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships to deliver transport improvements, and integrate transport concerns into Local Area Agreements, is unproven. Linkages between Community Strategies and LTPs are currently weak²⁵ and there is evidence that Local Area Agreements have had only a marginal impact on local transport planning to date, and that the involvement of key transport partners has been variable²⁶. There are also concerns from those advocating Local Area Agreements directly, about their effectiveness²⁷ in terms of bureaucracy, lack of central flexibility, LSP capacity and competence and confusion over objectives between Whitehall and Local Government.

The Case for Retaining a Statutory Local Transport Plan Process

There are a number of arguments for retaining Local Transport Plans as a statutory document, required to be produced under legislation and associated DfT guidance:

- ◆ practitioners say that the statutory nature of the current process gives more priority to transport at the corporate level;
- ◆ the statutory nature of the process and the accompanying guidance provides a strong framework for local authorities to pursue certain priorities;
- ◆ the statutory nature of the process provides external partners (e.g. developers) with greater certainty about the commitment of the local authority to delivering transport improvements, thereby encouraging greater external support and partnership working;
- ◆ the statutory nature of the process means that the LTP has a clear status as evidence within the planning process and at public inquiries or examinations.

However, there is a question over the extent to which the additional funding which accompanied the introduction of the LTP process, and the inclusion of LTP performance in CPA, has been responsible for the raised profile of transport corporately rather than, the statutory nature of the process per se.

Nevertheless, practitioners raise concerns that the status of transport may fall within local authorities were the statutory nature of the process to be removed.

Section 108 of the Transport Act 2000 currently identifies three statutory duties for local transport authorities in terms of planning and delivering local transport. Specifically, local authorities must:

- (i) develop policies for the promotion and encouragement of safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services to, from and within their area;
- (ii) carry out their functions so as to implement those policies; and,
- (iii) prepare a document to be known as the local transport plan containing their policies.

The removal of the statutory requirement to produce an LTP does not remove the underlying requirement to plan and implement transport policies. It would however, provide authorities with greater flexibility to report on their policies and plans in other formats, and pursue those policies and plans in their own way. DfT could in reality also choose to retain a range of levers (e.g. performance funding, national performance indicators, negotiations over LAA targets, and one-to-one engagement) to encourage good quality planning and best practice.

²⁵ Local Strategic Partnerships, Transport and Accessibility – Issues Paper, Chatterjee et al., June 2004; Long-Term Process and Impact Evaluation of the Local Transport Plan Policy. Atkins et al. June 2007. Local Authority Survey. Atkins. January 2007.

²⁶ Local Area Agreements Road Shows Report, Communities and Local Government, June 2007.

²⁷ A Very English Revolution: Delivering Bolder and Better Local Area Agreements. Local Government Association, May (2007)

6.2.4 Geographical Coverage

Chapter 5 proposes a range of geographical units for the planning and delivery of local transport, including individual local authorities, groups of local authorities (on a mandatory or voluntary basis), and sub-regional groupings.

Evidence from our LTP Evaluation Study suggests that:

- ◆ individual authority-based planning and delivery has been successful within larger county and unitary authorities, but many smaller authorities have struggled to develop the capacity and capabilities required to effectively deliver their Local Transport Plans;
- ◆ cross-boundary working in the form of joint LTPs or joint strategies has been successful where undertaken on a voluntary basis, but requires strong commitment from the officers and members, and has not necessarily delivered the reduction in administrative burden envisaged. This approach may offer the best way forward for developing stronger sub-regional alliances of authorities, particularly if accompanied by supportive governance structures based on Multi-Area Agreements; and
- ◆ where Joint LTPs have been a mandatory requirement, principally in metropolitan areas, the process has been less successful, due in part to the large number of partners involved and fragmentation of planning and delivery responsibilities. Again, stronger and more supportive governance arrangements may be a key success factor for this approach to work.

Potential advantages and risks associated with the options for spatial coverage are set out in Table 6.1.

6.3 Objectives and Priorities

The options for the objectives and priorities authorities should be seeking to deliver through their local transport strategies vary in terms of the level of prescription on the type and number which DfT imposes. Greater prescription implies a process which seeks to deliver national priorities within a local context, and is more compatible with a structure based around a separate transport document. Minimal prescription encourages delivery of local objectives within a national context, and is more consistent with a framework where local transport strategies and plans could be subsumed into other policy documents.

However, the requirement for all authorities to report performance against a set of 200 national indicators as part of Local Area Agreements, with assessment through CAA and subsequent action encouraged to address areas of under-performance, together with statutory duties in such areas as network management, economic development, disability equality and climate change, ought to ensure a minimum level of adherence to national priorities across all authorities.

6.4 Content

Chapter 5 sets out a range of options for the content of local transport plan documentation. The options reflect, in part the options for the structure of the documentation, and are most relevant to a structure based on a separate transport

focused document, supported by guidance. Potential advantages and risks associated with these options are set out in Table 6.1.

6.5 Timescales

The Second Local Transport Plan Guidance required authorities to develop their local transport strategies within the context of the long term vision for the area, with reference to longer-term objectives and timescales set out in Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Transport Strategies, and with regard to any available modelling of long term changes in local and regional transport patterns. They were also required to co-ordinate their longer-term strategies with those of their neighbours, particularly in joint LTP areas or areas identified as transport sub-regions within the RSS/RTS.

Although our Evaluation Study did not specifically look at the extent to which authorities have developed long term strategies for transport as part of their LTPs, our experience in working with authorities and examining plans suggests that performance has been variable against this requirement, and that many strategies focus primarily on the five year period covered by the implementation plan.

6.6 Guidance, Assessment and Performance Funding

One of the main factors determining the shape of future local transport policy is whether or not performance funding is retained. This, along with the categorisation of authority performance, has been an important feature of the LTP framework to date. It has been a strong driver for changing local transport planning within authorities, raising standards and increasing the profile of transport at the corporate level²⁸.

While there are strong grounds for retaining the performance management element of the process, in terms of maintaining and improving standards, the prescriptive guidance and detailed assessment process required is not consistent with drivers to reduce the administrative burden on Local Government, or encourage devolution of responsibility and greater local accountability. It therefore seems appropriate that some simplification of this element of the process is introduced, as a minimum.

One significant constraint on retaining a performance-led process specifically for transport, is the fact that from April 2008, the Local Area Agreements will be the only channel through which Central Government will agree targets with Local Government. There is therefore little scope for DfT to negotiate and enforce local transport targets which are part of a LTP but are not part of a LAA.

Further strengths and weaknesses of the current process are summarised in Table 6.1.

A crucial question is whether there is a need to continue to assess performance in order to drive improvement. The thinking behind the proposals for Comprehensive Area Assessment reflects the significant corporate and service improvements achieved in recent years, and the need for a more mature, risk-based, process. In a similar vein, it could be argued that there has been a substantial increase in the quality of local transport planning and delivery, since 2000. While there would be

²⁸ Long Term Process and Impact Evaluation of the Local Transport Plan Policy - Final Report (Atkins, June 2007).

benefits in a risk-focused assessment process accompanied by constructive dialogue between authorities and Government Offices, there may no longer be a need for categorising and rewarding performance in order to drive further improvement.

6.7 Governance and Administration of the Process

The retention of DfT as the principal sponsor of local transport planning and funding, albeit against less prescriptive guidance and assessment requirements, would help maintain the profile of the sector within Central Government and also within local authorities in carrying out their statutory and non-statutory duties. The Department also has the ability to provide a basic minimum set of national standards, provide or procure additional capacity and technical expertise in support, and take key decisions on national investment of taxpayers' money such that it is properly spent and accounted for on a consistent basis. DfT ministers and officials remain accountable to Parliament for local transport funding decisions.

The provision of guidance, assessment and engagement by DfT, in tandem with Government Offices, is seen as one of the key factors driving improved transport planning and delivery since 2000 and the Department's stewardship of the process is viewed by practitioners in a positive light. Furthermore, evidence from the recent Local Area Agreement Road Shows, undertaken by DCLG, highlights the central role that Government Offices are expected to play in the LAA process, thus strengthening their current role in administering local transport planning and delivery. Hence, there seems little appetite for dramatically changing the current sponsorship of local transport planning.

Arguments for and against regional stakeholders, principally the Regional Development Agencies, taking more governance and administrative responsibilities over local transport planning and funding are set out in Table 6.1. This option would align most closely with any structural change which more closely positioned local transport planning and funding with delivery of objectives and priorities defined in the Integrated Regional Strategy and any sub-regions defined within it. This is the case in London, for example.

Arguments in favour of regional stakeholders taking more influence on local transport decisions include a potentially stronger ability to take account of and reflect regional and local problems, priorities and circumstances in key decisions; closer integration between local and regional transport planning and delivery; and consistency with recent Government policy on devolving an increasing strategic or advisory role to regional bodies. However, these issues must be balanced against the concerns about the ability of the Regional Development Agencies to effectively take on this enhanced role, and their ability to fulfil the aims of localism and community engagement as well as delivering the regional strategic agenda. There are also issues of democratic accountability, although the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration contains a number of proposals which go some way to address these. These include the appointment of a Government Minister for each region, giving elected local authorities greater rights of scrutiny, and enhancing the Parliamentary scrutiny of regional institutions.

Table 6.1 – Key Strengths and Weaknesses of Future Options

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments
Structure			
Modified LTP Model – Transport-focused strategy, implementation plan and performance framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong satisfaction with the LTP framework to date, and evidence that it provides good value for money. Provides a strong framework for integrating all transport strategies and plans against a common set of objectives, encourages robust transport planning processes with adequate consideration of both local and strategic issues and sharing of best practice, and ensures transport areas not represented in LAA/MAA targets are still given sufficient attention. Builds on the strengths of the process to date, including the emergence of a performance management culture. Ensures transport maintains a corporate profile. Provides a statutory document to inform other policies and to engage with other stakeholders. Framework sufficiently flexible to reflect new policy developments, and presents limited risk in terms of potential disruption to current delivery plans and mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages ‘silo’ working and potentially distracts from pursuit of more effective planning and delivery process, including consideration of cross-service solutions. Has not been linked to strong performance in metropolitan areas. Duplication of strategies across different policy documents, and resource intensive. New LAA process will effectively replace the role of LTPs as a targetry and performance management mechanism for local transport. <p><i>Many of the weaknesses of the LTP Model relate to other themes, including the prescriptiveness and inflexibility of the guidance and assessment, rather than the structure of the documentation.</i></p>	More than 60% of practitioners support the continuation of the LTP process into the third round with only minimal or limited change.
Local Transport Strategy / Implementation Plan – transport focused documentation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater scope for cross-boundary plans, consisting of a common strategy and either a common implementation plan or separate implementation plans covering individual delivery bodies. Greater emphasis on the importance of long term strategies (to deliver regional objectives and economic growth); and on better implementation planning through prioritisation, risk management, and performance management. Enables clarity between investment and management in networks and activities which are strategic and cross-boundary, such as rail, principal roads, sustainable distribution and major schemes, and those which are more locally important. <p><i>Some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Modified LTP Model also apply.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for local issues to be overlooked due to focus on strategic issues. Offers a less streamlined approach for integration with the LAA framework (which is focused on individual local authorities), and may need to be supported by a MAA, associated with its own strengths and weaknesses. Likely to be constrained by the same cross-boundary issues facing metropolitan areas, unless accompanied by strengthened governance at a more sub-regional level. 	Cross-boundary focus may require authorities to enter into Multi-Area Agreements covering some or all of the LAA targets. Has some precedent in terms of current arrangements in London and for some authorities involved in joint LTPs.

Table 6.1 – Key Strengths and Weaknesses of Future Options (Continued)

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments
Structure			
Local Transport Policies within a Wider Context – Removal of statutory requirement to produce a specific local transport plan document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with the Local Government Modernisation Agenda on reducing centrally imposed burdens and the role of local authorities as strategic leaders and place shapers. LAAs have significant backing and investment from Central Government. Encourages delivery of cross-service solutions, and partnership working (a fundamental element of the new LAA process and an area of mixed performance for LTPs since 2000) through the involvement of the LSP and other partners, and may help delivery of more unpopular solutions. May aide delivery of efficiency savings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The attention given to developing a transport strategy and implementation plan may become a lower priority and the quality of transport planning undertaken may decline. Planning, delivery and performance management may be skewed towards LAA targets, to the detriment of other important aspects of local transport. The LAA framework may encourage short termism with insufficient attention given to the long term vision or strategy. The ability of Community Strategies, LSPs and LAAs to deliver transport improvements is as yet unproven. 	Strong evidence to suggest that many authorities would continue to produce a transport plan containing overall strategy and implementation plan.
Local Transport Policies within a Wider Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility for authorities to plan and deliver transport entirely according to their local circumstances, priorities, structures and capacities. Reduced reporting burden to Whitehall. Encourages greater integration of transport policy into LAAs, LDFs, and regional or sub-regional strategies. May strengthen transport/land use integration in strategy terms, less so in implementation terms as LDFs do not have implementation plans. Strengthened delivery of regional objectives, including difficult policies relating to parking, road pricing and other areas where localist policies may act as a barrier to implementation, as all authorities fully aligned with Regional Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport planning and delivery is likely to be subject to less comprehensive assessment through the CAA and LDF process. Policy areas not covered by LAA targets (or indicators) may not be subject to performance management. Unclear how a focus on transport policies within an LDF would work effectively in two-tier areas and metropolitan conurbations where statutory transport and planning responsibilities are split between authorities and cross-boundary arrangements would be necessary. Disaggregation of plans and policies over different documents, spatial areas and timescales. Integration of regional and local transport strategies may be weakened, as Community Strategies are unlikely to cover regional policy in any great detail. Greater emphasis on the Regional Strategy may sideline local and rural priorities in favour of regional objectives and have implications for democratic accountability. 	Greater emphasis on the Regional Strategy is most attractive under a scenario which ensures greater regional accountability and channelling of funding through the RDAs.
Geographical Coverage			
No change (Local authority based and voluntary cross-boundary working)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful to date within larger county and unitary authorities. Cross boundary working has been successful when undertaken on a voluntary basis, and supported by strong commitment from officers and members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller authorities have struggled to develop the capacity and capabilities required to deliver local transport in their areas. Political differences across authorities continues to constrain cross-boundary working in some instances. 	Voluntary cross-boundary working may be encouraged through other processes, such as Transport Innovation Fund.

Table 6.1 – Key Strengths and Weaknesses of Future Options (Continued)

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments
Geographical Coverage			
Mandatory cross-boundary working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smaller authorities have struggled to develop the capacity and capabilities required to deliver local transport in their areas. Benefits for efficiency and service transformation agendas. Approach being taken in Scotland and Wales through statutory Regional Transport Partnerships/Consortia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross boundary working has been less successful when undertaken on a mandatory basis (i.e. in metropolitan areas) due in part to the large number of partners involved and fragmentation of planning and delivery responsibilities. Evidence from Scotland and Wales on mandatory, as opposed to voluntary, regional groupings is still emerging and some evidence of resistance from unitary authorities to central prescription of imposing cross-boundary working. 	
Sub-regional planning and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater potential to deliver regional objectives, objectives linked to economic prosperity, and mode share objectives (including TIF schemes) due to geographical units reflecting travel-to-work areas and sub-regional economic geographies. More appropriate level to make decisions about the RFA process. Better integration of transport and land-use policies, through links down to the LDF and up to the RTS/RSS. Greater in-house capacity and resources to deliver major schemes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weaker linkages with the Community Strategy and the LAA framework, which are both duties of individual local authority-based implementation plans. Adoption of options which are the most acceptable to all authorities involved rather than the option most beneficial to the area as a whole. Difficulties in delivering cross-service solutions due to the number of bodies involved. Likely to be constrained by the same cross-boundary issues facing metropolitan areas, unless accompanied by strengthened governance at a more sub-regional level. 	Cross-boundary focus may require authorities to enter into Multi-Area Agreements covering some or all of the LAA targets.
Objectives and Priorities			
No change – Current shared priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focuses local strategies on delivering objectives identified as being of importance to both central and local government. Ensures delivery of national agenda at the local level. Shared priorities continue to provide a relevant framework for authorities to work towards. In particular the Quality of Life objective reflects the focus that the Local Government White Paper has placed on community satisfaction and place shaping. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constrains ability of local authorities to address their local objectives (a view endorsed by the House of Commons Transport Committee, Twelfth Report of Session, 2005-2006). Not consistent with LGMA aim of greater decentralisation of power and responsibility to local authorities. 	Broader objectives covering climate change, economic prosperity and regeneration objectives may be better addressed through LAAs.
Limited change - Broader range of prescribed objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures local authorities promote, and give sufficient attention to, national priorities and new duties relating to climate change, economic growth and equality of opportunity for disabled people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above. 	

Table 6.1 – Key Strengths and Weaknesses of Future Options (Continued)

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments
Objectives and Priorities			
No guidance on objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with the Local Government Modernisation Agenda and the role of local authorities as strategic leaders and place shapers. • Provides authorities with total freedom to reflect local priorities. • Minimum standards in terms of performance on national priorities will be ensured through the CAA process which will examine performance data for the 200 national indicators and highlight areas of weakness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No guarantee that local objectives will be aligned with national and regional objectives. • Authorities may focus on more populist objectives, rather than those identified through robust analysis. Evidence from our Local Authority Survey suggests that authorities have a strong vision for transport, and have the political will to deliver measures to improve road safety, highway condition, public transport, and measures to improve accessibility to jobs and services. However, they are less likely to have the political will to deliver measures to increase cycling, tackle congestion, improve air quality and in particular combat climate change. • Major / TIF schemes will be assessed against national priorities through NATA process, but local schemes will be assessed against local objectives. 	
Content			
No change (as LTP2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All transport policies and strategies integrated in a single document, against a common set of objectives and with an emphasis on robust planning processes. • More likely to encourage greater integration of Transport Asset Management Plans into local transport planning and delivery. Parallel research carried out by Atkins on development of TAMPs and their integration with wider policy, planning and delivery frameworks, shows that progress to date has been mixed and may remain so unless more closely integrated into local transport planning and delivery processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places emphasis on transport solutions rather than cross-service solutions against wider priorities. 	Seems sensible for all authorities to be removed from statutory requirement to produce bus strategy. Current requirement is inconsistent with growing emphasis on cross-sector services.
Separate transport strategy and implementation documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater emphasis on the importance of long term strategies (to deliver regional objectives and economic growth). • Greater emphasis on better implementation planning through prioritisation, risk management, and performance management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places emphasis on transport solutions rather than cross-service solutions against wider priorities. 	
Supporting implementation statements from partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with the Local Government White Paper, which introduces a duty for local authorities and other local partners to co-operate to agree and deliver priorities in the new LAAs. • Emphasises the importance of joined up thinking and partnership working, within the context of local government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis of statements would be on commitment, with no guarantee that this would be translated into delivery. • Legal basis and accountability of statements unclear. 	

Table 6.1 – Key Strengths and Weaknesses of Future Options (Continued)

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments
Content			
Inclusion of Trunk Roads and Local Rail Schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers the potential for more joint working between local authorities, the Highways Agency, and Network Rail. Improved integration of local and strategic priorities. More informed decisions about Regional Funding Allocation priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the resource intensiveness of the process. Potential duplication with strategies produced by Highways Agency and Network Rail. 	
Timescales			
No change (as LTP2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five years accepted as the basis for planning and delivery in LTP1 and LTP2 and provides a balance between long-term strategic outlook and practicalities of delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed performance across authorities in terms of developing long term strategies in LTP2 (based on professional experience). Timescale does not match three year time horizon of Comprehensive Spending Reviews. 	
Medium term strategy / shorter term implementation plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater emphasis on developing longer term strategies (to deliver regional objectives and economic growth), consistent with the vision for the area, planned growth and the long term strategies of neighbouring authorities. A three year implementation plan would be aligned with the three year revenue support grants and capital maintenance allocations which will cover 2008/09 - 2010/11. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shorter term implementation plan may result in a tendency for more short term planning. Timeframe of implementation plan may not be consistent with that of Local Area Agreements. 	
Flexible timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater flexibility for authorities to align local transport plan timeframes with those of related documents such as the Regional Strategy, LDF, and Community Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on longer term strategies may be lost. May result in tendency for short term implementation planning. Variable timescales may impact on the ability of DfT and others to track progress of delivery and outcomes over time. 	<p>A necessary requirement of a framework which integrates local transport policies within wider policy documents. Transport-related policies in LAAs would be updated every three years, those in Community Strategies may be refined on an on-going basis, and those in regional/sub-regional strategies would be reviewed periodically.</p>

Table 6.1 – Key Strengths and Weaknesses of Future Options (Continued)

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments
Guidance, Assessment and Performance Funding			
No change (as LTP2) (strong intervention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual assessment of authorities' LTP documentation by DfT, and DfT's written guidance and advice, have both been strong drivers for changing local transport planning within authorities, raising standards, and increasing the profile of transport at the corporate level. Encourages a performance-led culture. Ensures authorities attain a minimum standard in undertaking local transport planning processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The assessment process has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> required considerable resources within Government to administer the process and within authorities to adhere to the guidance; resulted in similar strategies being developed across authorities reflecting strong adherence to the guidance; resulted in dispersion of resources across a wide range of schemes and areas rather than highly targeted solutions; limited sharing of good practice; created a risk adverse culture with limited examples of innovation; and encouraged a focus on authority wide monitoring rather than good quality before and after monitoring. Detailed guidance, progress reporting and assessment are not consistent with the aims of the Local Government Modernisation Agenda for greater decentralisation of responsibility and initiatives to reduce the reporting and administration burden across Local Government. 	Rewarding funding according to performance requires progress reporting (if reward funding is to reflect delivery as well as plan quality) and a robust assessment process to 'score' authorities, which in turn requires prescriptive guidance.
Lighter guidance/ assessment process, with/without performance funding (medium intervention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighter assessment approach, linked to council competence and risk assessment, requires less prescriptive guidance and is more closely matched to capacity within government. Greater flexibility for authorities to pursue local objectives. Absence of performance funding removes requirement for detailed reporting of delivery in accordance with guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of above weaknesses may still apply to varying degrees. Potential loss of performance-led culture in some authorities. Absence of performance funding removes incentive for authorities to improve performance. Reduces Central Government's ability to ensure authorities attain a minimum standard in planning and implementing local transport solutions. Reduces Central Government's ability to ensure delivery of national priorities. 	From April 2008, the LAA will be the only place central Government will agree targets with local government.
No assessment process, minimal guidance, with/without performance funding (light intervention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with the aims of the LGMA for greater decentralisation of responsibility, the role of local authorities as strategic leaders and place shapers, and other initiatives to reduce the reporting and administration burden across government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above. No specific assessment of transport performance beyond that undertaken as part of the CAA process. Currently unclear to what extent transport will be considered separately and receive sufficient priority within the CAA process. Limited scope for Central Government to ensure authorities attain a minimum standard of performance or to ensure delivery of national priorities. 	From April 2008, the LAA will be the only place central Government will agree targets with local government.

Table 6.1 – Key Strengths and Weaknesses of Future Options (Continued)

Option	Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments
Governance and Administration of the Process			
No change (as LTP2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention of DfT as principal sponsor maintains the profile of the sector within Central Government and local authorities. Little appetite amongst practitioners for dramatically changing the current sponsorship of local transport planning to other organisations. DfT has the ability to procure, appropriate capacity and technical expertise to respond to this task. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department can be seen as remote and out of touch with locally-important issues (although involvement of Government Offices is intended to counter this). Tendency for a 'one size fits all' approach across the country. Limited scope to drive the delivery of regional or sub-regional objectives. Focus of policy making and guidance on a small number of officials in DfT can create resource bottlenecks (e.g. on timely issue of guidance). 	Local Authority Survey shows that 70% of practitioners are satisfied with DfT advice and guidance on LTP1/2 with higher levels of satisfaction with Government Office support.
Enhanced Role for Regional Stakeholders (principally the Regional Development Agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger ability to take account of and reflect regional and local problems, priorities and circumstances. Closer link between local transport planning and delivery of the Integrated Regional Strategy objectives, and aligning all forms of transport investment with wider agendas such as spatial planning, economic development, housing and sustainability. Consistency with the recent policy from Government in devolving an increasing strategic or advisory role to regional bodies, which include not only elected councillors, but other stakeholders such as business and voluntary sector, although with Central Government often retaining the final decision. Potentially greater realism between local authority aspirations and the resources available for investment. RDAs given duty to support local authorities and sub-regions in delivery of sustainable economic development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The role of RDAs in influencing transport policy has been limited to date. Levels of satisfaction with the roles played by regional stakeholders have been mixed, and there is no clear evidence supporting the greater involvement of regional bodies in the local transport planning process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed views from LTP practitioners on whether the ability of regional bodies to have a greater influence on local transport advice and funding should be strengthened further. Within our surveys, some 42% agree (and 43% disagree) that future LTP guidance, priorities, and funding should be determined more at a regional level in support of the regional strategy. ⁺ Mixed levels of support for the concept of strengthened regional bodies, with elected members being more strongly opposed than Chief Executives. Low levels of satisfaction relating to the co-ordination activities and effectiveness of Regional Assemblies and Regional Development Agencies, compared to Government Offices. ^{* +} A sense that leadership at regional level is weak, with limited inability to make key decisions, engage with all stakeholders, and provide coherence, stability and accountability (although to some extent, the relative success of the first round of RFA advice to Government shows that effective decisions can be made). ^{* +} Possibility of tensions arising between delivering the regional strategic agenda and fulfilling the aims of localism and community engagement. <p><small>* Submission to the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration. Audit Commission (March 2007). Audit Commission Regional Governance Survey 2005. Final Topline Findings (March 2006). Based on research with local authority Chief Executives and Leaders.</small></p> <p><small>+ These views were expressed prior to the announcement that Regional Assemblies will cease to exist and that RDAs will become responsible for producing the Integrated Regional Strategy and will have a strengthened outcome-based performance management framework and a responsibility to seek to achieve economic growth.</small></p>	This option would align most closely with any structural change which more closely positioned local transport planning and funding with delivery of objectives and priorities defined in the Regional Spatial Strategy and Transport Strategy.

7. Emerging Conclusions

7.1 The Challenge Facing Local Transport Planning

The evidence shows that since 2000, local authorities in England have made real progress in raising the pace, profile, scope and inclusivity of transport planning and delivery. There are numerous examples of local transport improvements making a visible difference to local areas. The LTP process, through which this has been accomplished, demonstrates value for money and a range of positive outcomes.

There is a case, however, for considering reforms to the current arrangements. The LTP system has a number of undesirable outcomes, including its resource intensity, significant central prescription and a “one size fits all” approach to problems and issues which are inherently local in nature. Furthermore, many authorities have not adopted key principles, such as community engagement, partnership working and integration with wider priorities, to the extent required to truly embed transport at the heart of their corporate priorities, or those of their local citizens and stakeholders. Finally, the Department’s administration and governance of the LTP framework, despite strong practitioner support, is increasingly at odds with the devolution agenda emerging from the Local Government White Paper, as well as the Government’s vision for strong leadership and alignment of delivery across strategically and functionally-orientated regions and sub-regions.

Local transport planning needs to respond to these issues if it is to remain effective and relevant in addressing the needs and aspirations of local areas. With councils under pressure to improve their performance, pursue localist agendas and develop new and innovative ways of working, it may be increasingly difficult to argue that a model of local transport planning based on the current LTP arrangements can continue largely unaltered into a third round beyond 2011.

7.2 Objectives for Future Policy

The discussion contained in this report suggests a future vision for local transport planning and delivery which envisages:

- ◆ increasingly confident and autonomous local authorities with the powers, funding and competencies to understand, act on and make a visible difference to the quality of life of citizens and communities in their area;
- ◆ transport embedded as a vital public service, not for its own sake but for the achievement or added value to a range of wider social, economic and environmental outcomes reflecting agreed local and national priorities;
- ◆ meaningful engagement and leadership of local communities and stakeholders;
- ◆ planning and delivery adapted to local circumstances within a framework of national minimum standards and, where relevant, strategic cross-boundary priorities at regional or sub-regional level;
- ◆ a focus on effective delivery of outcomes and achieving the best value for money from the resources available, with assessment geared towards competence,

efficiency, and innovation, rather than compliance with rigid and centrally prescribed guidance; and

- ◆ proportionate and risk-based assessment and scrutiny with far greater flexibilities granted to strong performers, backed up with stronger intervention and support to prevent or address service failure where it occurs.

The current system provides a sound starting point for building this vision; indeed many of the principles cited above were set out in the 1998 Integrated Transport White Paper. It is important that the key achievements to date are protected and built upon, whilst moving planning and delivery to the next stage. In this context, the agenda presented in the Local Government White Paper offers an important opportunity for local transport to become more closely integrated with a range of wider partners and agendas, and support the Lyons' view of councils as place shapers for their areas. This will potentially lead to different approaches being developed in different localities, depending on their circumstances, governance arrangements, ability and ambition to integrate service planning and delivery, and to work across a range of stakeholders and local partners.

Should this agenda be adopted, the role of the Department itself and Government Offices is also likely to change, moving away from prescribing and assessing council performance against formal guidance applicable across the whole of England. Instead, the Government can expect to develop a more flexible and enabling approach, offering support to authorities on an individual basis, with intervention only in response to acute service failure. Managing this more mature relationship will present a range of challenges in ensuring that legitimate national priorities are recognised and adopted locally and that best practice processes for planning and delivery are shared. The process of preparing and engaging with authorities on the forthcoming 2008 Progress Reports is likely to represent the first application of this new approach and a test of whether local authorities are able to demonstrate effective planning and reporting of transport delivery without the centrally-imposed incentives of performance categorisation and reward funding.

7.3 Options for Achieving the Objectives

There are a range of options for how councils might, in future, discharge their statutory duty, defined in the Transport Act 2000, to develop and implement policies for safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services in their areas. These options have been set out in this report in terms of the inter-related themes covering structure, geographical coverage, objectives, content, timescales, guidance and administration.

Each of the options is associated with a range of strengths and weaknesses. However, there are no 'right' solutions in terms of the way forward, and we re-iterate that different areas may seek different approaches depending on their particular local circumstances, levels of competence and ambition and governance structures. In identifying the optimal approach for a given area, emphasis needs to be placed on identifying a framework which maximises the opportunity for robust transport planning processes and practices, but increasingly achieves a balance of delivery of agreed national priorities, articulation of local objectives, and closer engagement with citizens and communities.

7.4 Managing Risks

The vision above suggests an ambitious and exciting future for local transport planning and delivery if DfT, Government Officers and local practitioners succeed in setting their activities, and making their case to senior officials and elected politicians, within the broader policy context. The Government should recognise collectively, however, that significant change on current arrangements presents some significant risks, if introduced too quickly, without further research into potential impacts and without some safeguards against unintended consequences.

Our experience suggests that local transport practitioners' awareness of the broader agenda contained in the Local Government White Paper is variable, with limited understanding in some key areas. Furthermore, many of the Government's proposals, for example relating to Local or Multi Area Agreements, is as yet unproven in terms of their ability to generate genuine community engagement, balance national and local agendas, and deliver real outcomes on the ground. In areas where transport remains a low priority for politicians and local partners, or where funding pressures are acute, there is also a significant risk of local transport falling off the agenda and, as a result, the extent and breadth of delivery being compromised.

Given these risks, the Department needs to develop policy carefully and should undertake further in-depth engagement with authorities on the likely diversity of impacts of approaches different from those centred on the current LTP model.

7.5 Next Steps

The Department intends to consult on the future of Local Transport Plans over the summer. In parallel with this report, this provides an opportunity for further engagement with local authorities and stakeholders on the feasibility, acceptability and likely impacts of a range of potential approaches.

Our view is that the Local Transport Bill should confine itself to high-level changes in the existing LTP legislation, enabling, but not prescribing, a range of applicable approaches, and leaving detailed arrangements to secondary legislation or guidance. The statutory duty to develop and implement policies for safe, integrated, efficient and economic transport facilities and services should be strongly re-affirmed, however, and the Department should seek to publish final advice to authorities no later than the summer of 2009.

We also recommend that advice on the integration of local transport planning within the context of new Local Area Agreements and Comprehensive Area Assessment should be published, with the intention of providing certainty on these key aspects of local transport as quickly as possible. This will allow practitioners to engage with local authority colleagues and external partners developing the Sustainable Community Strategies and LAAs (as well as other frameworks as appropriate) and provide a fixed reference point for the continued and uninterrupted implementation of LTP2. The advice should also confirm the national performance indicators, transport measures included, against which authorities will need to report and set targets as part of their LAAs, and which are expected to be confirmed in the Comprehensive Spending Review.

In developing future policy, guidance and other support to authorities in detail, the Department should support pilot exercises for a range of alternative options where significant changes from current LTP arrangements are proposed. These exercises can also learn from the experience of the 2008 Progress Reports which will give some indication of local application of planning and delivery processes in the absence of prescriptive guidance and assessment from Central Government.

In the meantime, the Department should aim to raise awareness, and sponsor relevant training and exchange of good practice amongst local transport practitioners on the localist and sub-regional agendas and the new governance frameworks which are now emerging. It should also promote strongly the integration of transport into the wider policy context at local, sub-regional and national level. The regional seminars conducted by the Department and Government Offices in June 2007 have started this process, but more will need to be done if transport is to make its case confidently and convincingly.

Finally, DfT, along with Government Offices, should continue to act as a “champion” for local transport planning in the national policy debate, promoting its full consideration and integration into developing proposals and operational plans for Local Area Agreements, Multi-Area Agreements, Comprehensive Area Assessment and proposals emerging from the Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration.

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Appendix B – Glossary

APR – Annual Progress Report

BVPI – Best Value Performance Indicator

CAA – Comprehensive Area Assessment

CfIT – Commission for Integrated Transport

CIF – Community Infrastructure Fund

CPA – Comprehensive Performance Assessment

DCLG (CLG) – Department of Communities and Local Government

DED – Disability Equality Duty (Disability Discrimination Act)

DEFRA – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

DfT – Department for Transport

GO – Government Office

LAA – Local Area Agreement

LGA – Local Government Association

LGMA – Local Government Modernisation Agenda

LIP – Local Implementation Plan (London)

LPSA – Local Public Service Agreement

LTA – Local Transport Authority

LTP – Local Transport Plan

LTS – Local Transport Strategy (Scotland)

LSP – Local Strategic Partnership

MAA – Multi-Area Agreement

PSA – Public Service Agreement

PTA/PTE – Passenger Transport Authority/Passenger Transport Executive

PTEG – Passenger Transport Executive Group

QoL – Quality of Life

RDA – Regional Development Agency

RES – Regional Economic Strategy

RFA – Regional Funding Allocation

ROWIP – Rights of Way Improvement Plan

RSG – Revenue Support Grant

RSS – Regional Spatial Strategy

RTP – Regional Transport Partnership

RTS – Regional Transport Strategy

TAMP – Transport Asset Management Plan

TfL – Transport for London

TIF – Transport Innovation Fund

TPP – Transport Policies and Programmes

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