

SUSTAINABLE ROAD TRANSPORT – KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The Government is committed to achieving sustainable development, including sustainable transport. Key Government policies to ensure road transport is sustainable are shown below. The wording is based on the Government quotes and decisions also shown below.

The solution to traffic growth and congestion

There are financial, physical and environmental limits to how much new road space we can build. The roadbuilding we can achieve, plus the Government's other measures to reduce congestion – better traffic management, better spatial planning, soft measures and improving the non-car modes – will only slow the increase in congestion. This is not acceptable. The solution is to manage the demand for road travel through road pricing. So the Government will incentivise local authorities to introduce local road pricing schemes, and develop a practical national road pricing scheme and lead the debate on introducing a national scheme

Alternatives to roadbuilding

Roadbuilding is expensive, can make congestion worse and harm the environment. So all plausible alternatives will be thoroughly investigated first, including traffic management, demand management, soft measures and improving the non-car modes

Locking in the benefits of roadbuilding

Roadbuilding will be accompanied by measures to lock in the benefits, ie prevent new traffic from filling up the new road space

Allowing for the possibility of road pricing

A national road user charging scheme may be introduced in the future. To avoid the impacts of providing more road space than would be necessary with such a scheme, road schemes will be designed on the basis that road user charging will be introduced

Road schemes and the environment

There will be a strong presumption against transport schemes which would significantly harm environmentally sensitive areas or sites, or important species, habitats, landscapes or cultural heritage assets. Environmentally sensitive areas and sites include national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest but this policy does not only apply to designated areas and sites

SUSTAINABLE ROAD TRANSPORT – KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES

THE SOLUTION TO TRAFFIC GROWTH AND CONGESTION

There are financial, physical and environmental limits to how much new road space we can build. The roadbuilding we can achieve, plus the Government's other measures to reduce congestion – better traffic management, better spatial planning, soft measures and improving the non-car modes – will only slow the increase in congestion. This is not acceptable. The solution is to manage the demand for road travel through road pricing. So the Government will incentivise local authorities to introduce local road pricing schemes, and develop a practical national road pricing scheme and lead the debate on introducing a national scheme

The wording above is based on the following Government quotes:

1998 transport white paper (July 1998)

'Simply building more and more roads is not the answer to traffic growth. 'Predict and provide' didn't work.' (para 1.4)

'We want to see greener, cleaner vehicles that have less impact on our environment. We want to see better public transport and we will make it easier to walk and cycle. But these alone will not be sufficient to tackle the congestion and pollution that is caused by road traffic: we need to reduce the rate of traffic growth. We also want to see an absolute reduction in traffic in those places and streets where its environmental damage is worst.' (para 1.35)

Transport 10-year plan (July 2000)

'There are physical and environmental, as well as financial, limits to the amount of extra road space we can build. Whilst providing extra capacity can provide real and immediate benefits, it may also free up suppressed demand and even generate new demand. Most people now accept that we cannot rely on roadbuilding as a sustainable long-term solution to the problems of traffic growth and congestion. Simply building more and bigger roads is not the answer: we need a more strategic approach.' (para 6.26)

Managing Our Roads (July 2003)

'Land use policies now in place will make a difference [to road congestion] over the longer term but they cannot alone solve today's problems.' (executive summary)

'There is limited scope for reducing urban congestion through additional [road] capacity, partly because of the layout of our towns and cities. Instead the Government is promoting alternatives to car travel, better network management, and demand management. On the inter-urban network, additional capacity can make a difference. ... But continued roadbuilding is not the long-term answer to inter-urban congestion. And the amount required, if this was the only lever to tackle congestion, would be

very expensive, environmentally damaging and in any event, difficult to deliver.’ (executive summary)

‘Even with more [road] construction where it is needed, the best management of the [road] network and the vigorous promotion of alternatives [to car travel], we can only slow the increase in congestion. To prevent increasing pressure on the roads, we need to find the right balance between pressure on existing capacity, the extent to which we sanction new capacity, the extent to which we price the use of roads, and the method for doing so.’ (executive summary)

‘It is clear from [the multi-modal studies’] analysis that public transport by itself cannot solve the current and projected problems of congestion.’ (para 29)

2004 transport white paper (July 2004)

‘We must manage the growing demand for transport. While additional infrastructure will be necessary, simply providing ever more capacity on our roads and railways, ports and airports is not the answer in the long term. The damage to our environment, landscape, towns and cities and our quality of life would be unacceptable.’ (executive summary, para 8)

‘The long-term trends in travel are evident to all. We cannot build our way out of the problems we face on our road networks. And doing nothing is not an option. So Government will lead the debate on road pricing.’ (executive summary, para 10)

‘We need ... to promote [smarter travel] choices by ensuring that new ways of paying for road use are developed so they become practical options.’ (para 3.5)

‘Policies to promote smarter [travel] choices and better [road] network management, together with well-targeted additional capacity, will make a difference. But looking further ahead, they will not be enough on their own to prevent congestion spreading to longer periods each day, and to more roads ... The projected increase [in congestion] is unacceptable. ... If we are to make a step change in the quality of service provided to road users, we need – in addition to the policies already in place – to revisit the way we pay for using the road network. ... Looking ahead, the key strategic choice for road users is between service levels which continue to deteriorate (since we cannot build our way out of congestion), and new ways of paying for road use, which incentivise smarter individual choices about when and how we travel. ... There is a need for a mature discussion as to which approach we take. The Government view is that the costs of inaction or unrestricted roadbuilding are too high for society. The time has come seriously to consider the role that could be played by some form of road pricing policy.’ (paras 3.20 to 3.23)

The Government will ‘undertake the further research recommended [by the road pricing feasibility study], so that people can engage with a clear proposition, not just an abstract concept’ (para 3.31)

‘Resources from the new Transport Innovation Fund will be available [to local authorities] to support packages which combine road pricing, modal shift, and better bus services’ (para 3.31)

Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans (December 2004)

‘Demand management measures are central to the Government's transport strategy’ (Part 2, para 41)

SUSTAINABLE ROAD TRANSPORT – KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES

ALTERNATIVES TO ROADBUILDING

Roadbuilding is expensive, can make congestion worse and harm the environment. So all plausible alternatives will be thoroughly investigated first, including traffic management, demand management, soft measures and improving the non-car modes

The wording above is based on the following Government quotes:

1998 transport white paper (July 1998)

‘This White Paper sets a new course for roads policy. The days of ‘predict and provide’ are over – we will give top priority to improving the maintenance and management of existing roads before building new ones.’ (para 3.123)

‘Since new roads can lead to more traffic, adding to the problem not reducing it, all plausible options need to be considered before a new road is built.’ (para 3.126)

A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England (July 1998)

‘Because of the potential environmental impacts of major construction projects, alternatives will be thoroughly investigated first.’ (page 28)

‘Building new roads is no longer the first option for dealing with congestion. Our first priority will be to use other options such as: traffic management tools; improving the flow of traffic by changes to road layout and minor works; providing information to assist travellers to make informed choices about forms of transport, route and time of travel; in the longer term, road user charging to encourage those who do not need to travel at peak times or by busy routes to adjust their travel patterns or switch to alternative means.’ (section 5.4)

‘New roads are expensive. They can also impose substantial environmental costs. It therefore makes sense to ask whether problems can be solved by making better use of the existing network before consideration is given to adding additional infrastructure – either by widening roads or building new ones. We use the term ‘making better use’ to mean any action on the trunk road network, short of significant additions to the infrastructure, which delivers our objectives.’ (page 41)

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13: Transport (March 2001)

‘In planning for local infrastructure, including roads, local authorities should ensure that their approach is compatible with the new approach to appraisal (NATA). Particular emphasis should be given to the need to explore a full range of alternative solutions to problems, including solutions other than road enhancements.’ (Annex C, para 4)

Transport Analysis Guidance Unit 1.4: Major Schemes in Local Transport Plans (April 2004)

‘The appraisal [of the LTP major scheme] must include a detailed assessment of the scheme against alternative options that would, as far as possible, broadly meet the same objectives. ... For highway schemes there should be consideration of different link/junction standards and other alternatives to address the problems in the area, such as public transport provision, demand management policies, traffic management measures and strategies. ... The assessment of alternatives should start from an initial wide base of possible options. ... The assessment of alternatives must be sufficiently robust to allow a detailed comparison between the preferred scheme and its alternatives.’ (section 2.9)

Planning Policy Statement 11: Regional Spatial Strategies (September 2004)

‘The regional transport strategy should set out regional priorities for transport investment and management across all modes. ... The focus, in identifying potential priorities, should not be exclusively on new infrastructure enhancements. It should in the first instance be on making best use of the existing transport network, for example through improved network management and small-scale incremental enhancements. ... Where priorities for further infrastructure improvements are identified as essential, the regional planning body will need to show how they will support the wider spatial strategy and that alternatives have been examined.’ (Annex B, paras 19 and 21)

Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans (December 2004)

‘Local transport authorities should also consider how they could deliver progress in all the shared priority areas through policies aimed at changing travel behaviour, and managing demand for transport services. Sustainable travel policies of this kind should, if introduced in the context of a high-quality LTP, prove highly cost-effective, avoiding the need to spend larger sums on infrastructure-based solutions. ... There is a wide range of possible measures in this area. They include: road user charging and workplace parking charging schemes; active management of the availability and cost of car parking and public transport; school, workplace and personalised travel planning; marketing and transport information services (including innovative use of services such as Transport Direct and Traveline, and innovative ticketing offers); setting up websites for car share schemes and facilitating car clubs; measures to promote teleconferencing and teleworking; delivering through-ticketing, 'seamless journeys', and a better experience of public transport, through the development of smartcard systems; and other innovative uses of information technology.’ (Part 2, paras 41 and 42)

‘The causes, nature and patterns of congestion are different in every area, and there is no single solution to congestion. The right balance between demand-side solutions (e.g. road pricing / congestion charging, parking pricing and restraints, travel planning, provision of services in a way that reduces demand for travel) and supply-side solutions (e.g. intelligent transport systems, improved information to motorists, other traffic management measures, public transport support, improved walking and cycling options) will be different from area to area. But LTPs should provide evidence that authorities have considered and assessed the potential of all parts of the toolkit – not just capital projects – and an assessment of what the impact of these measures will be.’ (Part 3, para 13)

SUSTAINABLE ROAD TRANSPORT – KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES

LOCKING IN THE BENEFITS OF ROADBUILDING

Roadbuilding will be accompanied by measures to lock in the benefits, ie prevent new traffic from filling up the new road space

The wording above is based on the following Government quotes:

A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England (July 1998)

‘The targeted programme of improvements includes a small number of schemes to widen motorways and other major trunk roads at particularly highly stressed points but these are only being taken forward where they support an integrated and sustainable strategy that will involve traffic management measures to ensure that we do not need to add yet further lanes in future years.’ (page 35)

Managing Our Roads (July 2003)

‘Where additional capacity is provided, demand must be controlled. Several [multi-modal] studies recommended strongly that additional capacity in the absence of such control would be short-sighted, and result only in requests for further widening in a few years’ time. As a result, the decisions to increase capacity on the strategic network are taken with a parallel commitment to consider what is necessary to ensure that effective measures are in place to lock in the benefits’ (para 94)

2004 transport white paper (July 2004)

‘Where we add capacity to our road network, we will take steps to ensure that the benefits are locked in’ (executive summary, para 10)

Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans (December 2004)

‘Local transport authorities should also consider how demand management measures could help to deliver the most effective outcomes from major infrastructure projects. Packages of complementary measures have been shown to ‘lock in’ the benefits of new investment, ensuring it continues to deliver the best possible value for money long after initial implementation. The Department therefore intends in future to consider evidence about authorities’ plans for demand management measures when considering major scheme bids.’ (Part 2, para 43)

SUSTAINABLE ROAD TRANSPORT – KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES

ALLOWING FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF ROAD PRICING

A national road user charging scheme may be introduced in the future. To avoid the impacts of providing more road space than would be necessary with such a scheme, road schemes will be designed on the basis that road user charging will be introduced

The wording above is based on the following Government quote and decisions:

Government response to transport select committee report on multi-modal studies (June 2003)

‘We will ensure that the case for road schemes taken forward following the multi-modal studies is robust even if a decision is taken to introduce road user charging in the future.’ (page 7)

Government responses to Orbit and South and West Yorkshire multi-modal studies (Department for Transport announcement on 9 July 2003 and Highways Agency announcements on 14 April 2004 & 24 March 2005)

The widening of the M25 and M1 and M62 motorways announced by the Government following the Orbit and South and West Yorkshire multi-modal studies is insufficient to cater for demand in full and is consistent with area-wide road user charging being implemented in 2011 (at the time of the MMSs, the earliest date the Government considered a national road user charging scheme could be introduced)

SUSTAINABLE ROAD TRANSPORT – KEY GOVERNMENT POLICIES

ROAD SCHEMES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

There will be a strong presumption against transport schemes which would significantly harm environmentally sensitive areas or sites, or important species, habitats, landscapes or cultural heritage assets. Environmentally sensitive areas and sites include national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest but this policy does not only apply to designated areas and sites

The wording above is based on the following Government quotes and decisions:

1998 transport white paper (July 1998)

‘For all environmentally sensitive areas or sites (for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Nature Reserves and National Scenic Areas in Scotland) there will be a strong presumption against new or expanded transport infrastructure which would significantly affect such sites or important species, habitats or landscapes.’ (para 4.201)

The above policy ‘will be applied to all forms of transport development which affect sensitive areas or significant aspects of our cultural heritage, such as listed sites or buildings’ (para 4.203)

Transport 10-year plan (July 2000)

‘As stated in the Integrated Transport White Paper, there will be a strong presumption against [transport] schemes that would significantly affect environmentally sensitive sites, or important species, habitats or landscapes.’ (para 6.29)

Government response to transport select committee report on multi-modal studies (June 2003)

‘The Secretary of State will continue to make decisions on transport schemes based on the five overarching objectives under the Government’s New Approach to Appraisal. At the heart of that approach there continues to be a strong presumption against schemes that would significantly affect environmentally sensitive sites, or important species, habitats or landscapes.’ (page 9)

Government responses to West Midlands Area and South Coast multi-modal studies (July 2003)

In July 2003, the Government rejected several road schemes recommended by multi-modal studies because of their impact on undesignated landscapes – the bypasses of Stourbridge and Wolverhampton recommended by the West Midlands Area MMS and bypass of Arundel recommended by the South Coast MMS.

Secretary of State Alistair Darling's statement to Parliament included the following:

'We have to bear in mind our central objective is to enable people to travel in a way that is consistent with our environmental and social objectives. There are therefore some recommendations in these [multi-modal] studies that I cannot accept. As I have said before, unless there is an overriding public interest in a scheme, there should be a strong presumption against building roads through areas of outstanding natural beauty or other sensitive sites. We have a clear duty to do everything that we can to preserve the environment. On regeneration grounds, the West Midlands study recommended dual carriageways around Stourbridge and Wolverhampton. The justification, however, as the local planning inquiry recognised, was doubtful. These roads would cut through an area of remarkable unspoilt countryside. I believe that we can find better ways of achieving regeneration of the West Midlands. That is why I reject those proposals and instead support the case for the regional assembly's study of regeneration in the Black Country. Similarly, on the south coast, the Arundel bypass would cut across water meadows damaging an area of outstanding beauty. I am rejecting that proposal, as well as proposals to expand junctions with flyovers on the Chichester bypass and the proposal for a tunnel at Worthing. Each, in my view, has environmental consequences that are unacceptable and avoidable.'

2004 transport white paper (July 2004)

'There will continue to be a strong presumption against schemes that would significantly affect environmentally sensitive sites or important species, habitats or landscapes' (executive summary, para 12)

'The 1998 Integrated Transport White Paper set out the Government's commitment to a presumption against transport schemes that damage landscapes, townscapes, biodiversity and the aquatic environment. This strategy reaffirms that commitment.' (para 10.28)

May 2005