

Integrated National Transport Strategy: a call for ideas

Respondent details

Q1. You are responding as an:

organisation?

Organisation details

Q8. What is the name of your organisation?

Urban Transport Group

Q9. You are:

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Q10. What is the approximate total number of employees in your organisation?

2 to 9

Q11. What best describes your organisation?

Local government

Joined up working

Q15. In your opinion, how could the transport network be better 'joined-up'?

Transport is about more than simply moving people from A to B. It is about opening access to opportunities as well as creating economic growth and thriving communities for people to live, work and visit. None of this is possible without taking a strategic, long-term approach.

Strategic Authorities are using their devolved powers and funding to sustain, enhance and integrate their networks. The Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS) must enable our members to accelerate this work, securing modal shift by providing people with attractive, sustainable transport choices that support economic and personal growth, net zero, health and placemaking.

Set the vision and gain cross-departmental buy-in

The INTS should start by setting out a clear vision for how transport supports the Government's missions and priorities, recognising it as an essential investment in the achievement of these goals.

It should make the value of this investment clear to departments across government, including the Treasury. It is particularly important to underline the growth opportunity that investment in walking, cycling and public transport presents, for example:

- Investing in, and prioritising, public transport and active travel breaks the link between growth and congestion, enabling our cities to grow, unlocking housing and employment development sites, boosting productivity and raising living standards across the UK.
- Every £1 invested in bus brings an economic return of £4.55 . If each car user switched just one journey per month from car to bus by 2030, rising to two journeys per month by 2050, the economic benefits would be in the region of £30bn based on the economic value of reduced congestion alone.
- Improving public transport and active travel connections opens opportunities for people to raise their standard of living – 40% of those on the lowest incomes have no access to a car .
- Around 400,000 workers are already in better, more productive jobs as a direct result of the bus .
- Investment in sustainable transport infrastructure is a job creator in itself, generating 30% more jobs than road building ,and supports the UK supply chain. Every £1 of work on the railway network, for example, generates a further £2.50 in the supply chain and through wage-funded spending .

The INTS vision should also set out the vital role investment in integrated transport makes to a host of other policy areas, not least the dividends to the NHS of ensuring people have access to travel choices that promote good health and its potential to cut harmful emissions.

It is vital that the INTS is a cross-government endeavour which recognises and values these crucial connections and contributions. It must set out how the various departments should work together to enable local and national policy goals to be achieved.

The Treasury is key to the effective the delivery of the INTS and must ensure that the wide-ranging contribution of transport investment to policy goals across government is fully recognised and appropriately resourced. Guided by the vision set out in the INTS it should also avoid contradictory incentives which keep down the costs of motoring compared to sustainable modes; ensure appraisal mechanisms adequately reflect the value of transport investment; and continue to implement fiscal devolution to place Strategic Authorities on a stable long-term footing.

The INTS must also support a cohesive approach within the Department for Transport itself and across its agencies including Active Travel England, National Highways, Great British Rail and the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles. Strategic transport planning and investment is not fully integrated across and between transport modes with separate processes for road, rail and local transport. As a result, the corresponding investment decisions are not always coordinated and, in some cases, undermine or contradict one another. The INTS should support planning and investment to be guided by reference to a cohesive, overarching strategy.

Set the outcomes

Integrated, sustainable transport networks are key to achieving the Government's missions, but to meet its full potential, people must want to use those networks. A focused vision for transport should, therefore, place people and their needs at its heart, alongside consideration of, and integration with, freight and business needs.

It is heartening that the Department is taking a bottom-up approach to the development of this strategy. It is important to understand what people and communities want from transport services if we are to design integrated networks that work for them.

The INTS should enable walking, cycling, public and shared transport not only to survive, but to thrive and be the first choice.

For passengers, we propose that the '4 As' provide a sound basis for an outcome framework, setting out what good looks like from their perspective. An integrated transport network is:

Available:

- people can choose to travel without a private car for everyday journeys.
- it is easy to walk and cycle to key destinations locally as well as access public or shared transport to travel further afield or connect with transport hubs for onward travel.
- services operate at times and frequencies that correspond to patterns of family, social and working life.

Q15. In your opinion, how could the transport network be better 'joined-up'?

- interchange between services and modes should feel seamless.
- people should have access to accurate information in a range of formats that makes it easy to understand their transport choices across modes.
- services should be reliable to give people the confidence to plan journeys that involve transferring between services and modes.
- when journeys go wrong, useful and timely information should be provided to enable people to understand choices for continuing their journey.

Affordable:

- people are not 'priced out' of choosing sustainable transport.
- people can easily identify the best value option for their journey with simple, integrated fares, ticketing and journey planning across modes.
- transport services should also be affordable to the public purse and recognised as an investment delivering value in the form of better economic, health, social and environmental outcomes.

Accessible:

- everyone from 8 to 80 and beyond, can choose to travel independently and safely using sustainable modes.
- the network should be easy to use, navigate and understand.
- the network should be accessible for, and not disadvantage, those without digital devices.

Attractive:

- walking, cycling or taking public transport are seen as the right thing to do and the most desirable ways to make everyday journeys.
- services set high standards for comfort, safety and convenience and ensure everyone feels welcome and respected.
- services emit zero emissions.

The INTS should also set required outcomes for how goods move around and what that looks like in relation to a strategy with people at its heart.

It should acknowledge that all modes have a place (for passengers and freight) but recognise that not all modes are created equal. The modes that deliver the most for the public good should be prioritised as part of a people focused strategy.

By centring the INTS around the outcomes laid out above, and continuing to listen to the people and businesses the network serves, we can create networks that unlock people's potential and the achievement of wider policy objectives across government.

Support devolution of powers and funding

The best way to ensure people are placed at the heart of the INTS is to continue to bring decision making closer to them, through democratically accountable Strategic Authorities. They are best placed to understand the needs and priorities of the people and places they serve.

With the right powers and funding, they can join up different transport modes locally to provide a seamless passenger experience. They can ensure freight movements and corridors make sense for local businesses. They can also maximise integration with wider plans for the area around economic growth, housing, health, land-use planning and health, making every £1 of investment work as hard as it can for the wider public good.

Continued progress towards long-term, Integrated Settlements will support this work. These will give established Strategic Authorities the certainty they need to take a considered, place-based, approach to planning and delivering integrated networks, based on in-depth knowledge of what would make the biggest difference locally and maximising synergies across policy areas.

It means Strategic Authorities, along with businesses and investors, can plan with confidence, knowing which projects are in the pipeline. It allows expertise and capability in the planning and delivery of schemes to be built up and retained, and it reduces inefficiencies. It also provides a base from which local authorities can build their options for revenue raising, helping them to move towards financial sustainability.

Integrated Settlements should go hand-in-hand with the INTS, enabling Strategic Authorities to flex between spending on different modes and make connections with other areas of investment, such as jobs, skills and housing to deliver the best outcomes for local and national ambitions.

The INTS should aid the delivery of local, place-based interventions, rather than compound further requirements for authorities to deliver modal plans and strategies. Strategic Authorities must be enabled through the strategy to bring the ambitions of their Local Transport Plans and Local Growth Plans to life.

The INTS should avoid enforcing overly detailed guidance and instead aim for a coherent and long-term strategy to guide priorities and decision making over at least a ten-year timeframe, with reviews every five years to ensure continued relevance. The INTS should ensure that new legislative or regulatory tools needed to further and achieve the aims of the strategy are urgently delivered and that authorities are sufficiently resourced to implement these.

Data and technology

Q16. How could data be used to improve the transport network?

Data has the ability to enhance transport planning and delivery, as well as improve the customer experience. The amount of data we have access to has increased exponentially over recent years, but we need to ensure that Strategic Authorities and customers have access to the right data, in the right format to deliver integrated networks.

From a customer perspective there are a number of key factors holding back integrated transport networks:

- **Access to clear and trusted data:** Clear, consistent and trusted data is essential in giving people the confidence to travel by sustainable modes. Currently too much transport data is difficult for users to locate and understand, leading to confusion over journey options, best value tickets, whether a journey will proceed as expected and what to do when things go wrong.
- **Real time information to enable integrated journeys:** If we are to develop a truly integrated transport network, enabling interchange between services of the same mode or between modes will be vital. Currently there is an interchange penalty – the lack of trust and information available to customers means that they will regularly take a service that takes longer to avoid having to interchange. This largely comes down to service reliability and a lack of easily available and understandable real-time data that enables users to make the best journey choices for them.
- **Understanding how to access the best value products:** Access to information around costs and journey times need to be brought together, enabling for more informed decisions to be made by the traveller, opening up the most appropriate transport options from an integrated network.

From a transport authorities' perspective, there are a number of factors holding data back from delivering integrated transport networks. The key issues are:

- **National data quality and availability:** To make data more accessible and easier to share, standards and indicators of data quality need to be developed and implemented. Historically, differing data standards across modes have made utilising data for multi-modal journeys difficult. In particular, our members would welcome greater sharing of National Rail and National Highways data to support local decision-making. Accessible data from across Government departments, including from the Department for Education, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology would also be welcome to enable improved outcomes and efficiency.
- **Lack of data from some parts of the sector:** access to operators' data to aid transport planning has historically been restricted due to prioritisation of commercial objectives. What is provided is often on a discretionary basis, with publication restrictions that makes the data unusable in practice. The DfT would be ideally placed to provide guidance and an obligation on bus, rail and shared mobility operators to provide combined and local authorities with accurate, consistent and regular patronage data to aid the planning of integrated networks. DfT can again play a role in setting standards and expectations across industries, ensuring a consistent approach to the provision of data, such as what has been achieved with BODS (Bus Open Data Service). It is also difficult to capture data from specific types of journeys, such as active travel and freight and logistics movements. Initiatives to improve data capture for these difficult to measure journeys would be helpful.
- **Skills and capacity:** many authorities lack the capacity or technical expertise, to analyse, process and interpret data at scale. Strategic investment in data infrastructure and analytics is required.
- **Having the right data available at the right geographies:** Strategic Authorities have evolved over recent years. We must ensure that national data, including the back casting of previous years, replicates these new geographies. Where this information is not presented at the right geographical level it is very costly and time consuming at the local level to replicate the information.
- **Access to expensive data sets:** some of the most valuable data for transport planning and for passenger information (such as mobile phone data) can be very expensive to purchase locally. There could be a role for DfT to purchase large national data sets with agreements in place for local authorities to use the information for planning integrated networks. Each local authority purchasing data is very expensive and can be prohibitive, whereas a central contract may be a more efficient way of unlocking the data.

Q17. How could technology be used to improve the transport network?

Technology and the pursuit of innovation should not be seen as an end in itself, rather as a means to solve identified problems or gaps in integrated transport networks, enabling those networks to run more efficiently and to provide a better passenger experience.

Newer transport modes, such as e-bikes and e-scooters, have an important role to play in filling gaps in transport networks, enabling people to complete journeys that are not served by other modes; expand the range of places people can reach within 20 minutes without a car; connect to larger transport hubs; or to complete their journey when traditional modes fail.

Mobility as a Service (MaaS) apps can ensure that customers are aware of the different options available to complete their journeys and, ideally, offer a one-stop shop for payment. Artificial Intelligence offers the opportunity to further automate, tailor and personalise journey planning, taking account of local weather conditions, traffic incidents and events to offer bespoke, reassuring and timely advice.

If MaaS is to join up modes digitally, mobility hubs could play an important role in joining them up physically. Mobility hubs can be small or large depending on context and location and can bring together bus/tram stops; bike/e-bike/e-scooter hire; car club vehicles; parcel lockers; charging points etc all in one place. The hubs could also include payment and information terminals to be more inclusive for people without smartphones. There is the opportunity to deploy these at different scales, including within suburban neighbourhoods. They could offer valuable first and last mile connections to enable people to travel to neighbouring suburbs or to other transport nodes to make longer journeys.

To enable Strategic Authorities to fully utilise the potential of new and innovative ways to complete journeys they require agility from national government to anticipate and respond rapidly to future modes setting out clear pathways to test, roll-out and legislate. This must include powers for Strategic Authorities to ensure new modes and services complement, and integrate with, existing networks.

We welcome the recent consultation on the on-street micromobility rental framework and emerging proposals to enable Strategic Authorities to license and have greater control over services operating in their area, however, we are still some time away from seeing any changes to legislation and these powers coming into force.

Meanwhile, a lack of funding and proper regulation of micromobility means Strategic Authorities find themselves struggling to effectively manage demands on limited street space, reducing the effectiveness of integrated transport networks with, for example, obstructive footway parking preventing pedestrians and people with mobility issues from travelling safely.

In London, for example, there are already an estimated 45,000 dockless e-bikes on-street – existing operators have indicated that they will continue to grow their fleets and new e-bike operators are actively exploring entering the London market, with or without permission.

Similarly, e-scooter trials began in 2020 and look set to remain in the trial stage until at least 2026, creating an uncertain environment for transport planners, operators and potential investors.

The INTS must pledge to respond more rapidly to technological development or risk England falling behind its competitors in providing an environment conducive to innovation.

To enable Strategic Authorities to fully harness transport innovation the INTS should underline its support for:

- Agile and devolved governance to support and protect wider goals for people and place: including safeguards to ensure innovations can be tailored by local areas to ensure they contribute positively to integrated networks and local priorities.
- Long-term capital and revenue funding certainty: this gives local areas space to plan strategically and creatively and provides potential innovators with a more secure environment for investment.
- Key standards for new mobility modes and services set nationally with the scope to go above and beyond these locally
- Open data, shared safely to inform decision making (for transport planners and users).
- Freedom for Strategic Authorities to test new approaches on the ground with clear pathways to enable this.

Call for ideas

Q48. How, if at all, would you improve the way decisions are made about the transport network?

In a bid to create integrated transport networks, city regions are making use of the policy and funding levers that have been devolved from Whitehall over the last decade. The English devolution journey has been primarily powered and underpinned by transport, with the impact of the change being increasingly witnessed across city regions.

Despite early signs of progress and positive impact, the English transport devolution journey is far from complete. The ambitions of the government's new English Devolution White Paper are very welcome, however, to fully deliver the government's Plan for Change, and realise the benefits of economic growth, transport devolution must go further. Greater devolution across policy areas and funding, will enable greater local integration.

In order to unlock the full extent of the opportunity that devolution offers to better integrate transport networks, we recommend that the INTS support work to:

- Progress at pace with the further devolution of powers in policy areas outlined in the new English Devolution White Paper, including rail, micromobility, and highways.
- Enable greater fiscal devolution by providing city regions with greater local investment levers, including business rates retention, new land value capture mechanisms, tax revenue devolution.
- Ensure a sustainable financial future for local and combined authorities through a new sustainable, long term funding approach.
- Provide a multi-year funding settlement for Transport for London to enable it to properly maintain and renew transport assets and to honour existing contracts to deliver upgrades to the network.
- Ensure that the method used to allocate transport funds through new Integrated Settlements is fair, transparent and adequate to the needs and plans of the devolved areas.
- Put in place a simplified and flexible accountability approach that clearly recognises and reflects the importance of transport spending, its long-term nature and the requirement for sufficient capacity building.
- Ensure the delivery of various national strategies concerning transport (including the INTS) take account of the timing, goals and interdependencies and requirements to best support Local Transport Authorities.

The INTS should also offer clarity over the Government's expectations on the planning, operation and management of cross-border and regional transport schemes and modes. At present, the governance picture across local, regional and national transport is complex, with roles and responsibilities of various bodies not always clear-cut. The INTS should, for example, clarify the role and expectations of STBs in developing policy and engaging and working with various local and regional stakeholders.

Beyond providing clarity, the focus in the INTS should be on issues of a strategic, national impact, setting out high-level outcomes expected of DfT, its agencies and other government departments in support of the INTS, as well as a spatial framework for strategic national connectivity issues.

There should also be a recognition of the different levels of capability and capacity across local and regional government. By identifying the existing gaps and helping to build capacity locally, including through the provision of adequate long-term funding, we can ensure that all levels of government can effectively work together to achieve the INTS vision.

Finally, England must take note and lessons from Wales in its approach to transforming decision making. The Welsh government established a clear set of goals and made these central to how its own appraisal guidance, WelTAG, works, underpinned by an intervention hierarchy that defines both how existing assets will be used and priorities for the future.

A long-term strategy, underpinned by sustainable capital and revenue funding and necessary powers, and backed across government departments would support Strategic Authorities as they develop and implement their own plans in line with local circumstances and aspirations.