

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ENGINEERING TO THE REGENERATION WORKING GROUP MEETING 13 DECEMBER 2004

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

Transportation insofar as regeneration is concerned provides the infrastructure that enables

- people to get to jobs
- raw materials to get to manufacturers
- goods from manufacturer to suppliers
- goods from suppliers to retailers
- people to retailers

There is a need to strike a balance to deliver these disparate needs

It is the responsibility of The Council to maintain and ensure the vitality of the various communities residential businesses and commercial that reside, work and play in the Council's area.

There is a need to see that;

- Local jobs are accessible
- Businesses are supported
- Infrastructure is provided

Of these the Council can directly influence local implementation of infrastructure and the Government are introducing accessibility planning to examine equality of access for all.

Transportation needs to be set in the context of growth in the local economy – over the period 2001 – 2010 it is anticipated that in the West Midlands 100,000 new jobs will be created and 42000 new homes generating 83m extra trips.

Against this background do nothing to address transportation issues is not an option.

Government see placing Transportation at the Heart of local Authority Agendas and decision making as fundamental to unlocking the transportation agenda.

If we look at RPG and recent statements from the DfT we see that creation of new capacity – new road building is moving down the agenda for two main reasons pressures elsewhere in the Transportation economy – the vast amounts required for rail and the fact that we can't build our way out of the problem.

The key to unlocking the problem is development of a spatial strategy and behavioural change.

The Black Country Study due to report in September 2005 will address the spatial planning issues and make recommendations for infrastructure development.

I can best demonstrate behavioural change by reference to the West Midlands Local Transport Plan.

This sets out the objectives and priorities for the 7 West Midlands Councils and the PTA and is the document to Government for investment in the West Midlands region against the Planning Guideline figure set by Government.

The Planning Guideline figure being the baseline investment level.

The current level of investment exceeds £100m per annum.

The LTP2 is due to be submitted to Government next July for the period to 2010

Partnership, commitment to the stated agenda and delivery of the outcomes are essential if we are to see continued investment in the region

Current objectives

- A sustainable and growing economy
- Vibrant town and city centres
- More jobs & housing
- Address traffic congestion
- Attractive, cleaner and secure streets
- Safer roads
- Better air quality
- Improved accessibility / better public transport services

These reflect the Government's 4 Shared Priority Action Area

Tackling congestion
Safer Roads
Better air quality
Delivering accessibility / better services

The key outcomes that are under discussion with DfT include

- no increase in congestion
- extra trips undertaken by public transport

The £1.0bn announced by the Government as investment to the West Midlands - that is moving from awarded to aspirational - is aligned heavily to Public transport. This is in addition to existing approved income streams and schemes

£800m is assigned to Metro, Buses and Trains.

Of this Metro is seen as being too expensive, rail is constrained by capacity – with the 4 tracking Coventry – Wolverhampton proposed by WMAMMS having being rejected leaving buses as the local public transport mechanism.

The Transportation hierarchy that is developing is
trains for major inter city connections,
Metro light rail for centre connections and
buses for local journeys.

Bus priority measures in the billion account for £300m over the period.

Bus priority is highly sensitive and no longer just the introduction of bus lanes but is now the route to investment any major scheme is required to demonstrate the public transport benefits

Bus priority is now being looked at in a broader context in terms of maximising the use of road space instead of bus lanes that are space hungry and capacity inefficient – they would be re-designated as freight lanes or multi occupancy (of cars) lanes are being considered

This will rely on camera enforcement and links closely with decriminalised parking as the on highway control mechanism

Schemes now need to chime with Government shared priorities and the main source of accessible funding is the bus priority programme.

Government in looking nationally have expressed concern that whilst capital expenditure exceeds predictions and is welcomed revenue expenditure shows a considerable reduction and this is of concern

Overall nationally there is an underspend on finance allocated to Transportation arising from local redirection of FSS

To address this issue Government are looking more closely at how money allocated through the rate support settlement and how performance through the LTP delivery meets their objectives and are due to implement a carrot and stick approach.

Authorities that deliver will see an increase of up to 25% in the integrated transport block whilst those who don't perform a corresponding reduction.

For the West Midlands this represents a loss or potential gain of £17m.

Government are clear they are no longer prepared to provide capital funding through the LTP to subsidise under spending on revenue.

Against this background the behavioural change that is sought is to persuade people from the private car onto public transport and for public transport to be the mode of choice.

We need to maximise existing road space better journey times for buses does not necessarily mean worse journey time for all – the dedicated bus lane that provides a clear route to centres needs to be used more effectively.

I have talked about public transport - access to the west is a major concern and new capacity building is a major issue that is currently thwarted by RPG – there are arguments to be made that will arise as part of the Black Country Study.

Freight is the lifeblood of commerce and there is a need to maximise existing route investment in rail – whilst an established corridor is easily lost it is near impossible to provide a new corridor.

The proposals for lorry charging by distance that have been announced and take effect from 2007/8 may tip the economic balance in favour of rail for long distance haulage but this means that existing rail heads need to be developed as transfer stations for local deliveries.

As part of the LTP process and the BCS the movement of freight is a major consideration.

Freight charging is seen as the introduction of wider charging mechanism for road use following the publication of the Government paper “managing our Roads” in 2003. Cordon charging as seen in London is only effective as demand management tools where there are strongly defined centres but cannot deal with large complex urban areas as in the West midlands.

The concept of road pricing has been developed and will gain experience from the existing schemes - this is possibly 10 years away.

John Anderson
Head of Engineering