

# **SHAPING TRANSPORT IN YOUR AREA**

## **THE NEW LTP GUIDANCE**

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### **THE NEW GUIDANCE**

The new Guidance comes into effect in July 2005. It covers English higher tier authorities outside London and lasts for five years. 'Excellent' authorities are exempt, but can still do LTPs. It takes a radically different approach from the last Guidance, which was on a mode by mode basis. The new Guidance aims for a more integrated approach, not only within Transport but by links to other key policy areas. As such preparing an LTP2 will be a very challenging task.

The NGOs have had a dialogue with the DfT on all this, but this has proved difficult, due to internal delays, policy changes and personnel changes within the Department. We were particularly bemused when a study of LTPs by W.S. Atkins found the system was starting to work well and really needed better monitoring by the Department rather than wholesale change.

However most of the Guidance is rooted in the 'Shared Priorities Agreement' of July 2002, made between central Government and the Local Government Association. This covers a number of topics, but for Transport the agreed priority areas were:

- **Tackling congestion**
- **Accessibility**
- **Safer roads**
- **Air quality**

These form the basis of the LTP Guidance, and as such this is already agreed. It was therefore uncertain to us how much of the Guidance could change, no matter how bad or out-dated it was.

One other major change is in funding. In future authorities will get 75% of their money via 'formula-derived spending guidelines'. The other 25% will be based on the quality of the LTP.

Here are some further key quotes from the Guidance:

- 'The Department for Transport intends to develop the LTP system to deliver objectives, by emphasising its role as a performance management system... two key elements of this are Comprehensive Performance Assessments and Local Public Service Agreements'
- From page 34 'Local transport authorities are encouraged to develop active partnerships with neighbouring authorities and other bodies working locally in the transport, health, education, housing, spatial planning, employment, regeneration, crime reduction and social service sectors'
- From page 47 'The Department is keen for authorities to lead by example and demonstrate through LTPs how wider local transport policies would contribute to the achievement of CO<sub>2</sub> targets'

- From page 63 'Second round LTPs, like their predecessors should contain:
  - A set of objectives
  - An analysis of local transport problems and opportunities
  - A long term strategy to tackle these problems
  - A five year implementation programme
  - A set of targets and performance indicators

### **WHAT THE GUIDANCE SAYS A GOOD LTP IS**

#### **1) It sets transport in a wider context**

- This includes regional economic and spatial strategies, and the local vision for the area
- There is evidence of a long-term transport strategy within which the 5-year Plan is set **[NB THIS!]**
- It takes a realistic view of transport investment
- It has been developed in partnership with stakeholders

#### **2) It contains locally relevant targets**

- The LTP supports targets for housing, jobs and social inclusion
- It contains targets that are prioritised, and focused on the 'shared priorities'
- The targets are 'challenging but realistic'

#### **3) It will demonstrate value for money**

- The solutions are evidence-based
- 'The aim is to make the best use of existing infrastructure'
- 'It will include innovative solutions, not just capital investment'
- It will be underpinned by analysis of problems and opportunities

#### **4) It will contain indicators and trajectories for performance reporting**

- There will be targets and trajectories for key outcome indicators
- There will be a range of other targets and trajectories, reflecting the delivery of the transport solutions identified by the Plan (please see copy of attached page from the Guidance)

### **WHAT WE LIKE**

In theory LTPs should at last link Transport to other key policies in your local area. This **should** provide invaluable linkage to topics such as:

- The siting of new offices, schools and hospitals
- Getting far more people walking and cycling, as part of 'active travel' programmes
- Linking transport needs more effectively into new housing, regeneration projects, and sustainable communities
- Bringing a Climate Change/Fossil Fuels/Energy Security perspective into transport and other planning
- Promoting genuine sustainable development at local level

At the same time the emphasis on Best Value for Money – if rigorously applied – ought to produce more results to our liking. Also in this context there are some welcome words of warning about not allowing cost inflation on major schemes and of not supporting ‘proposals offering positive but relatively weak appraisal cases’.

In all of this, the Department stresses the need to look at what is achieved. It is not outputs (e.g. so many more miles of bus or cycle route) that matter, but outcomes i.e. how many more people travel by bus or bike.

Other noteworthy elements are:

- A stress on sub-regional and cross-boundary working
- The need to share best practice (there may well be a role for a coordinated NGO exercise here)
- ‘The Department would be particularly interested in any evidence that local authorities have sought to exercise strategic leadership to achieve local support for potentially controversial LTP proposals’
- ‘The Department would also encourage local transport authorities to learn from best practise overseas’
- ‘Local transport authorities should consider how they could manage demand for transport services through policies aimed at bringing about behavioural change. Policies of this kind could, if introduced in the context of a high quality LTP, prove highly cost-effective and avoid the need to spend larger sums on infrastructure based solutions’

### **WHAT WE DON'T LIKE**

Firstly, the Guidance still seems to be in denial about car use and traffic growth. There is no discussion about what is and what is not appropriate car use and how realistic it is to transfer certain trips to other modes or to maximise use of car journeys.

Allied to this is a whole set of development and land surface journeys connected with the Government’s wildly unrealistic and unsustainable aviation policy.

As a classic example of both of the above, Climate Change is relegated to a sub-set of ‘air quality’ and given a minor role in the draft Guidance. Indefensible then, this becomes more in view of the Prime Minister’s statement in September that **‘climate change is the world’s greatest environmental challenge’**.

Next, there are a series of process worries. It is becoming commonplace for Government to place large numbers of lengthy and complex documents on its web-site and then expect people to download them in their own time and own expense.

This is probably a crucial and wider issue. It also relates to how much genuine participation and consultation there will be over LTPs – and how much the general public will be able to understand the process.

Moreover, linked to this is a serious worry about not only the time and expense it may take to prepare the Plans but whether authorities have the data and – even more – the skills to complete them satisfactorily. These same authorities will also have to prepare Accessibility Plans, a useful allied development – were it not for the fact that the draft Guidance on this is lengthy, boring, incomprehensible, and wrong.

Another area of serious concern is the ‘capital v revenue’ issue. The trouble with LTPs is that they are money for infrastructure only. Transport subsidies, information campaigns, staffing, data collection, schemes such as School Travel Plans and TravelSmart – all come out of a Council’s general revenue fund and are not ring-fenced for Transport. Not only does the Guidance not tackle this issue, it remains astonishingly naïve about the possibility of financial contributions from other departments of local government.

One main result of this is an under-valuing of ‘soft factors’. Schemes such as Sustrans’ TravelSmart can actually reduce traffic 10-12%, one of the most effective of all Transport interventions, yet under-valued in the official process.

Among the other concerns we have are:

- **A lack of clarity over how local targets will be assessed**
- **A lack of intention to assess LTPs as compliant with the EC directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment**
- **The continuing exemption of so-called ‘excellent’ authorities – some of whom have indifferent records on Transport**
- **An over-emphasis on transport modelling to predict results (i.e. the risk of ‘garbage in, garbage out’)**

## **WHAT WE WANT**

### **Good LTPs should:**

- Contain data and evidence
- Be objectives-based
- Have strong linkage to other policy areas, notably Land Use Planning, Regeneration, Employment and Smart Growth, Health, Education, Regeneration, Energy, Leisure/Tourism/Recreation
- Make clear how they relate to the DfT’s four objectives
- Discuss inputs and outcomes
- Relate to Climate Change
- Reduce traffic
- Not support ‘predict and provide’ aviation policies
- Promote revenue funding, including from non-Transport sources
- Explain why a particular option is chosen and show why alternatives are less effective
- Be good value for money
- Give due weight to rural and suburban areas as well as urban
- Promote real accessibility planning for all
- Support the new UK Framework for Sustainable Development
- Discuss car use and ways of managing and reducing it, including car-pooling and lift-sharing
- Reduce road danger

- Promote increased use of rail, bus and light rail
- Reallocate road space in favour of public transport, cycling and walking
- Integrate with Rights of Way Improvement Plans
- Continue expansion of the National Cycle Network
- Relate to the 42 action points in the DfT's Walking and Cycling Action Plan
- Promote cycle training
- Spread best practice, including the CTC's bench-marking
- Involve all schools in Travel Plans and Safe Routes
- Mainstream 'soft factors', including information on travel choices, timetables and promotional campaigns
- Demonstrate modal shift, including the setting of local targets and how these will be achieved.

Above all, the acid test is – have these Plans improved accessibility and sustainable development or not?

**dm 10/04**

The full text of Sustrans' replies to the LTP and Accessibility Planning consultations can be had by contacting me at [donm@sustrans.org.uk](mailto:donm@sustrans.org.uk)