**Department for Transport**

**Call for Evidence on the Government’s Review of the Balance of Competencies between the United Kingdom and the European Union**

**RESPONSE FROM THE TRANSPORT PLANNING SOCIETY**

This response refers to Questions 1 and 4

**Transport Planning Society**

The Transport Planning Society is an independent institutional body based in England, established to facilitate, develop and promote best practice in transport planning and to provide a focus for dialogue between practitioners and others interested in the field. It is supported by four long established professional institutions – ICE, CIHT, CILT and RTPI - all of whom have an interest in transport planning within their own core activities.

The Transport Planning Society administers its own Professional Development Scheme for transport planners, leading to award of the Transport Planning Professional qualification which is the only professional qualification uniquely aimed at transport planners. The Society has almost 1000 professional members in the UK and elsewhere. Our members are active throughout the world including the EU.

**Question 1**

*What are the advantages and disadvantages to the UK of EU action in the field of transport? You may wish to focus on a particular mode.*

We comment on :

* some effects of EU membership on transport investment in the UK
* EU funding for university research in transport
* EU stimulus for ITS
* travel planning
* public transport operators
* opportunities for the transport planning profession arising from EU membership

**EU membership and transport investment in the UK**

While it is difficult to know what would have happened if the UK had not joined the EU, our impression is that membership of the EU has resulted in a higher level of funding for transport than would otherwise have been the case.

There has been substantial investment in transport schemes from the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds, in support of the EU policy of encouraging economic growth and employment in regions lying significantly below the EU average in these respects. Within the UK, EU investment tends to have been made in areas outside the South-East. During the 1990’s and 2000’s, this supported a large number of transport schemes which (we believe) would otherwise not have been funded.

While there is still significant EU funding available, its impact in the UK is now less as funds are directed at the eastern Accession States. Nevertheless, many local authorities and others value the funding that can be obtained to supplement domestic sources, and our transport system continues to benefit as a result.

**University research**

UK universities and other research institutions command international respect in the transport field. They attract students and researchers from around the globe and the resulting research outputs have made a major contribution to improving transport both in the UK and elsewhere. It would not be unfair to describe UK transport research institutions as a centre of excellence in this sector within the EU. Some are also world class.

The EU has recognised this by making co-funding available to a range of institutions and projects, which is particularly helpful at a time when domestic funding from bodies such as EPSRC, ESRC and DfT is at a low level. EU funding is proving of vital importance in preserving the UK’s pre-eminent position in transport research.

The amount of funding varies from institution to institution depending on the research projects to be supported and the success of individual institutions in attracting funding. The EU is particularly keen to encourage research undertaken collaboratively between research institutions in different Member States and this has led to some useful collaborations being established with wider spin-offs.

A sample poll of our members involved in university transport research indicated that the sector receives about 30% of its funding from the EU (significantly higher in some individual cases), up to £10m/annum in total. While this is a small sum in the grand scale of things, its importance in maintaining the UK’s reputation in this field should not be underestimated.

The only downside is sometimes EU’s insistence that funding must be given to organisations containing collaborating partners from one or more Member States. In many cases, this has produced high quality and stimulating work, with a good synergy between partners. But in others, weak partners chosen to meet the Member States requirement can lead to a lack of integrated working and become a weak link. While we welcome EU funding for collaborative research, we recommend that more attention is paid to forming quality teams than to having widespread representation for its own sake.

**EU stimulus for ITS**

The EU has been, and still is, a strong driver for the implementation of ITS solutions in the transport sector. The UK has benefitted significantly from this. The ROMANSE traffic management system in South Hampshire is a good example of a long-lasting legacy of EU sponsored research and application. The development of toll collection and road pricing technology also owes a lot to EU funding.

UK transport planners and IT specialists appreciated the potential of ITS solutions in the transport sector a long time ago, particularly as a means of achieving more efficient and effective use of existing infrastructure. They were (and continue to be) well placed to take advantage of EU strategy and funding in this area. Often working in collaboration with their EU counterparts, they continue to be a strong influence in this field.

**Travel Planning**

Travel planning involves the development of travel plans for schools, businesses, industries, hospitals etc. which encourage and facilitate the use of sustainable modes by those accessing the locations concerned. In terms of congestion and emissions reduction, they can offer extremely good value for money.

The development of travel planning in the UK owes much to EU funding and lessons learnt on mobility management from other Member States. In this area, EU membership has had a positive effect.

**Public transport operators**

Traditionally, public transport within the Member States was operated by public sector bodies or private sector companies based within the Member State concerned. A significant effect of the EU has been the opening up of public transport operations with operators now free to operate outside their home countries. This has resulted in companies such as Deutsche Bahn (German), Keolis and RATP (French), and Abellio (Netherlands) gaining a significant share of the British market - sometimes in joint venture with established British operators and sometimes by taking over British operators.

On the one hand, they have brought with them investment, experience and management expertise, to the benefit of our public transport services. On the other, there is perhaps some concern about whether state- or regionally-owned operators (even if at arm’s length) from other Member States offer fair competition with wholly privately owned British companies, and whether it is appropriate that profits made in Britain should accrue to such bodies.

**Transport Planning profession**

Given the UK’s reputation in the transport sector for research and analysis, EU membership has opened up a variety of opportunities for the transport planning profession. Consultancies and public sector transport planning professionals have benefitted from EU funding of transport projects in the UK. Consultancies in particular have benefitted from access to work elsewhere in the EU, where there has been a demand for UK transport planning skills.

The CIHT Transport Consultants Directory 2013 shows 66 out of 176 UK companies listed as working in the EU. We estimate transport planning consultancy fees earned within the EU to be of the order of £25m/annum. Again, this is not a large sum but it is an export, selling UK transport planning services to other EU countries. It should be noted that there is no comparable import of transport planning skills from EU countries to the UK, which testifies to the strong position of the UK in this respect.

UK transport planning consultancies benefit from access to new work through the Official Journal of the European Union, and many have now acquired local companies within EU Member States, particularly in the eastern Accession States. Again, this has not occurred in reverse to a significant extent.

We conclude that the UK transport planning profession benefits from EU funding of transport projects in the UK, and has gained work in EU markets through UK membership of the EU.

**Question 4**

*To what extent is EU action to harmonise social and environmental standards (e.g. to ensure safety and security or to limit vehicle emissions) necessary for the proper functioning of the internal transport market as opposed to desirable in its own right?*

There are benefits in having a single market for transport operations (freight and passenger). However, this must be accompanied, and preferably preceded, by common standards.

In the road freight sector, the absence of enforced quality standards is a serious problem. For example driving or operating an HGV is strictly controlled in the UK on safety and environmental grounds, less so elsewhere. There is evidence that foreign registered HGVs are involved in a disproportionate number of accidents in the UK due to tired drivers and less well maintained vehicles, although this is also influenced by use of left hand drive lorries.

Relaxation of rules on cabotage has led to a fall in market share for UK based hauliers and increased business for operators and drivers from the eastern Accession States in particular. For example, in 1992, 50% of goods vehicles on international ro-ro ferries at UK ports were UK-registered vehicles. That had reduced to 22% by 2009, reflecting a small drop in absolute vehicle numbers in a significantly expanded market, and a considerable loss of market share by UK hauliers.

In addition to the higher safety and environmental standards observed by the UK fleet, another reason for loss of market share by UK hauliers is believed to be the high fuel prices in the UK. These are the highest in the EU, mainly due to the high rate of duty included in UK pump prices. They impose high costs on hauliers who have to refuel in the UK.

We believe that the liberalisation of the road freight market without at the same time (or in advance) standardising safety and environmental vehicle controls, and without standardising policy on fuel prices, has been to the severe disadvantage of UK hauliers.

A single market operates fairly only when all have to play to the same rules, and we recommend that these rules are in place and applied in practice before liberalisation takes place.

**In conclusion**

We have concentrated on a small number of selected areas of particular interest to our members, but we hope that this submission will be of value.