

**Danny Williams**

**Director for Integrated National Transport Strategy**

Department for Transport

Great Minster House

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Subject line: The Transport Planning Society's response to the Integrated Transport Strategy call for ideas

Dear Danny,

The Transport Planning Society (TPS) commends the Government for developing a strategy to set the high-level direction for how transport should be designed, built and operated in England over the next 10 years.

The TPS was formed in 1997 to provide a professional framework for the transport planning profession. The society seeks to facilitate, develop and promote best practice and innovation in transport planning and provide a focus for dialogue between all those engaged in it - whatever their background. To aid us with this mission we have recently set up a new Policy Panel representing a wide range of practitioners from across the profession, from esteemed Professors to newly qualified transport planners. One of their early tasks was to consider your call for ideas to support the development of the Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS).

We have used their input to respond to the formal questions asked in the Consultation, as well as the wider question of what England's first strategy of this nature should try to achieve. We are delighted to share more of their thinking with you and we further offer the Policy Panel to help you as a free resource as you consider the feedback received on this consultation.

In this letter, which accompanies our specific consultation response, we set out our view on why the INTS is needed, and what the most important areas of focus in the new strategy should be. We'd be delighted to expand on any of this further with ministers and members of your team as appropriate.

## **Why TPS wants an INTS**

TPS has consistently called for a national transport strategy over the last two decades. Without an overarching vision for the sector, there has traditionally been a reliance on

siload solutions and approaches that, in our view, miss opportunities to deliver improved outcomes. In addition, we would argue that the absence of a strong policy position and collective vision for the transport network has contributed to a lack of collaborative thinking with those departments that generate the trips (e.g. education or business and trade) or have to deal with the negatives arising from that movement (health, energy and Net Zero). It has been encouraging to see efforts taken by the Scottish and Welsh governments in this space. Still, the lack of a strategy for the largest of the UK's nations has represented a critical gap in the policy framework.

## **What should the focus of the INTS be, and how could it be delivered?**

We strongly support the Government's vision to put people who use transport and their needs at the heart of a new strategy.

TPS believe it would be a missed opportunity if this work leads to an integrated transport **network** strategy – the focus must be on taking an integrated approach to both the reasons for the activity and the means of facilitating that. This will entail thinking wider than just how cycle lanes and train stations connect, or integrating ticketing between trains and buses, but more fundamentally about how we support people to access services and opportunities most sustainably and efficiently. It won't be necessary in all cases for the activity to require the use of the network (e.g. as a consequence of new ICT tools) - embedding the [Avoid-Shift-Improve](#) framework should therefore be a key element of the new strategy.

We believe that much of the solution to delivering better integration therefore lies in better governance and decision making. It will also require a common (and ambitious) set of national standards to ensure the widest possible buy-in to this mission across all key stakeholders. Importantly, this work should consider how the transport network should develop to serve future generations as well as current users, using the approach developed in Wales to capture this long-term perspective as a template.

We propose “five core integrations” that we believe are necessary to truly realise an integrated national transport network that fully contributes to all the wider government missions.

1. Integration of an “**optimise first**” approach to managing the network across all key operators and responsible authorities
2. Integration **across government departments** on transport policy, and particularly in respect to respect to climate; land use & transport and; health.
3. Integration **across all tiers of government** around a core mission to deliver sustainable transport
4. Innovation in how integration **can support access** to the network by all users
5. Integration between the mission and the **funding and expertise** necessary to deliver it

We expand on each of these areas below.

## **1. Integration of an “optimise first” approach to managing the network across all key operators and responsible authorities**

The INTS should make clear the huge potential that exists to make better use of the existing network to meet user expectations.

- The INTS should consider the development of a new national travel demand management strategy, drawing inspiration from similar projects internationally such as in Ireland. This should include the promotion of a major national behaviour change programme, on par with long running public health and road safety messaging from the centre, amplified by constructive working with local actors.
- Prioritise the upkeep and modernisation of current transport infrastructure over its expansion, focusing on opportunities for the use of new technology and data to support better and more proactive management of the network to deliver improvements for the user. We believe this approach has the potential to deliver the greatest benefit for the lowest cost and is more likely to be in line with wider obligations, particularly concerning climate.
- Where any major expansion is proposed, embed the techniques pioneered in Wales (e.g. South East Wales Transport Commission chaired by Lord Burns) to explore area-specific demand management and multi-modal alternatives to network expansion, utilising the Avoid-Shift-Improve framework.

## **2. Integration across government departments, and particularly in respect to respect to climate and land use & transport**

### **A. Emphasise Integration Across Government Policies and Departments**

- Integration of transport must mean more than just synchronisation of timetables or interoperability in fares. It is also a mindset that needs to be adopted across all government departments that have an impact on (or are impacted by) travel demand. The INTS should ideally include a joint statement from all these key departments endorsing the objectives of the strategy and offering their support in implementation. This should include the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and the Departments of Health, Business & Trade and Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs and Energy Security & Net Zero in particular.

- It will be a missed opportunity if the INTS does not also seek to deliver genuine integration of transport planning with land-use policies in particular, helping to improve choice for the user, reduce the need for travel and ensure genuine sustainable development. The INTS should go hand in glove with a new spatial plan for England and should help guide and inform the development of National Development Management policies.

## **B. Decisions should be led by emissions reduction potential**

- Climate change is the greatest single challenge facing us, and the role that a better integrated transport network can play in radically reducing our emissions needs to be front and centre. The strategy should acknowledge the key role that electrification of mobility will play, but also that changing the drive train in itself is not a panacea.
- Following this, the INTS must set out a clear approach for developing and implementing a modal hierarchy that is fully recognised in both policy and funding. Whilst the strategy should recognise the application of this hierarchy will vary spatially, it should also make clear that all parts of England can and must do more to support genuine modal choice and shift.

## **3. Integration across all tiers of government around a core mission to deliver sustainable transport**

### **A. Establish Clear High-Level Objectives for Local Transport Planning**

- Integration also means better collaboration between national and local governments, ensuring all actors have a common “mission” to work towards. This does not mean prescribing in detail the best route to get to those outcomes, but it must at least point a clear way forward.
- The INTS should therefore develop universally applicable strategic goals for transport planning to guide decision-making, aligning objectives across modes and regions for consistency.
- The INTS must become a key reference for Local Transport Plans and major schemes in the same way as the National Planning Policy Framework is for Local Plans. It should be clear that a renewed emphasis is needed on LTPs as the key way of identifying, prioritising and delivering transport investment that supports a more integrated network – effectively forming the Strategic Outline Business Case for a region’s transport investment pipeline and therefore streamlining delivery. The

INTS should take the opportunity to introduce new LTP guidance as a key tool in driving a new wave of activity in this space.

- More widely, the strategy should acknowledge the need to address regional inequalities by drawing explicit attention to the interlinkages between economic development and transport connectivity.

## **B. Create a Coherent Assessment and Appraisal Framework**

- Develop robust evaluation standards for transport projects to ensure alignment with the INTS' strategic objectives.
- The INTS should help ensure that there is a strengthening of the consideration of sustainable transport solutions during appraisals.
- Ensure practitioners move away from predict & provide towards vision-led planning, and consider all users of the network, and not just the commute.
- Expand this across the assessment of all business case work, with a strong focus on driving up the importance of the Strategic Outline Business Case and the need for this to be compliant with the objectives and vision of the INTS.
- Consider national adoption of effective local techniques for developing and assessing schemes, e.g. Healthy Streets approach in London or the Modeshift approach to monitoring the effectiveness of travel plans.
- There is a particular need to ensure that there is an effective peer review of transport modelling and appraisal work, and for better dissemination of results from post scheme monitoring to ensure we know how effective our tools and approaches are. Our Governance panel will publish further thoughts on this in the coming months.
- Highlight the need to increase the weight given to the health impacts of schemes as part of decision-making.

## **4. Innovation in how integration can support access to the network by all users**

### **A. Focus on Accessibility, Equity and Inclusivity**

- Implement policies ensuring transport accessibility for individuals with mobility challenges and underserved regions.
- Remove barriers to active travel and incorporate security considerations into transport design.
- Implement high-quality equality impact assessment to better meet the needs of all users with protected characteristics

- The strategy should seek to shine a broader light on the wider health issues associated with high levels of traffic, including poor air quality and road danger, and the disproportionate impact this has on more vulnerable members of our society.

## **5. Integration between the mission and the funding and expertise necessary to deliver it**

### **A. Strengthen Skills and Qualifications**

- Recognise and enhance professional qualifications in transport planning to ensure high-quality execution of strategies.
- Invest in training programs to adapt to ensure practitioners are best able to exploit new technologies and approaches.
- A national “what works” centre covering all aspects of how devolved government can deliver sustainable integrated travel outcomes would help drive up best practice, reduce costs and improve productivity

### **B. Improve Efficiency of Funding Landscape; Introduce Innovative Financing and Taxation Models**

- Explore innovation in road-user taxation as a means to fund sustainable transport projects and manage demand.
- Ensure adequate funding – both revenue and capital - to deliver and maintain the changes we need to see delivered on the network in coming years. Provide long-term settlements for Local Authorities akin to that secured by the rail sector and National Highways (for example City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements, but they need to be awarded to more authorities).

More generally, there is much support across our membership in learning from international best practice, incorporating insights from successful examples abroad, such as the Czech Republic’s bus-rail integration and Europe’s many effective public transport interchanges. Nearer to home, Scotland’s vision-led approach and Wales’ successful 20mph rollout all offer valuable lessons. Setting up an integrated transport observatory that could offer quick, sharp dissemination of best practice from overseas would be welcomed, and potentially something we could support.

The five sub-groups of the TPS Policy Panel have prepared more detailed ideas which expand on some of the points we make above, which we would be happy to share. As the professional organisation for transport planners in the UK, we would be delighted to work with you as you develop a new Integrated Transport Strategy for the UK.

Yours sincerely,

# **TransportPlanning***Society*

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Mark Frost and Lisa Martin

TPS Policy Directors