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MRC McLean Hazel

Transport Implications of Public Sector Decisions

November 2009

Commission for Integrated Transport

Prepared By:

MRC Mclean Hazel

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3 Hill Street, Edinburgh EH2 3JP
Tel. +44 (0) 131 226 1045
Fax. +44 (0) 131 225 9087
E-mail: info@mrcmh.com
www.mrcmh.com

Directors
Prof. George Hazel OBE
Sue Flack
Registered in Scotland no. SC214286

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE BRIEF

The Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT) wishes to understand more about the transport implications of public sector decision-making, and how these can be improved upon, as part of a programme of think-pieces on improving transport outcomes in the current economic situation. Particularly important are the impacts of the 'choice agenda' in education, health and local services generally, as well as location and rationalization policies for post offices, health and other services.

The project will require the identification of hidden or unrecognised impacts of public sector decision-making. As there is little existing data or published information available, assessment of the size of non-recognised impacts will be difficult to make given the lack of evidence base.

The scope of the brief is potentially extremely large, and this paper focuses on what are considered the key issues for understanding what is happening – finding what data and research is available on transport implications, and analyzing decision-making in the public sector. The analysis is largely limited to the last 10 years, but does also use historical information where appropriate. This paper does not provide any sort of comprehensive analysis of the many and varied ways of mitigating transport impacts, but does use a few illustrative examples. Nor does it provide any evaluation of the success of the 'choice agenda' in meeting Government policy aims.

Our starting point is that the impacts of public sector decisions on transport have been recognized for many years, but that the ability of the public sector to organize itself to better manage these impacts does not appear to have progressed (although there are many examples of good practice in mitigating these impacts). This is for reasons that are explored further in this report – including those that are related both to wider changes in society and to internal management issues. Some practical proposals for improvement are also made.

For purposes of clarity, the abbreviation 'service provider' (shortened to SP) has been introduced to describe the Government department, NHS body, local authority department or other agency that is involved in, or is making decisions on, public services. It is intended as a simple and generic term, and does not imply anything regarding the organisation of the service eg whether it has been outsourced or not.

1.2 THE 'CHOICE AGENDA' AND TRANSPORT

Whilst it is not the purpose of this paper to assess the success or otherwise of the choice agenda, it seems clear that choice as an objective in itself has often been prioritized over other desired outcomes, including sustainability and social inclusion. But even within the terms of the choice agenda, some determinants of choice have been neglected. The role of accessibility (meaning physical ability for people to actually

get to services, or to get the services to them) has often not been considered a key contributor to choice.

But this is not new – in economic terms, transport is normally treated as one of many externalities not forming a major part of the decision making related to the provision of public sector services. One has to go back to the 1940s for clear recognition of transport implications of education and health policy. The Education Act 1944 brought in free travel to school for those children travelling more than specified distances and patient transport services and the ambulance service were formalized in 1946. The general stability provided by these 'welfare state' provisions remained until the 'choice' legislation and policy began to appear at the end of the 20th century (eg The Education Reform Act, 1988; NHS Plan, 2000), although changes in society that challenged the original concepts did become evident.

1.3 Responsibility for transport implications of public sector decisions

Perception of responsibility for transport and mode of use has changed completely since the post-war period. Cars have become the dominant form of transport in most people's lives.

Table 1: Passenger travel by mode, 1952 and 1996 (passenger kilometres)

	1952	1996
Bus and coach	42%	6%
Car, van and taxi	27%	87%
Rail	18%	5%
Pedal cycle	11%	1%

Source: Towards a Sustainable Transport System, DfT, 2009

The same document goes on to recognize the wider picture:

People reorganised their lives around the car, and companies changed the way they did business. In their different ways, the 'school run', second home, out-of-town shopping centre and 'just-in-time delivery' concept are all predicated on cheap and easy road-use. There were some powerful economic and quality of life benefits to these changes, but some social costs – not least the increasing disadvantage at which households without cars were placed. (DfT 2009)

Over the last half of the last century, the perception became increasingly that individuals would (and should) take responsibility for their own travel requirements. The increased use of cars was assumed to reflect an increased mobility and freedom of movement that to some extent negated the impacts of distance. Therefore it became possible for non-transport public sector decision-makers to largely avoid the issue of transport.

'Mobility is no longer seen as a privilege, but as an expected norm, where the need for mobility is unquestioned and where those who are not highly mobile are seen to be justly excluded from social participation – if they are seen at all' (Kenyon, June 2003)

Confirming this is the prevailing view that consideration of transport properly belongs with the land use and transport planning 'function', which also takes responsibility for any necessary improvements, relieving the SP of the need to think about it.

However, ironically the result of this neglect has proved a continual bugbear for Government, and some initiatives have had to directly address the social exclusion issues that have been identified – for example, concessionary fares for older people (£1bn spend in 2009/10); piecemeal changes to home to school transport legislation to provide free transport to a greater range of schools for low income families and support for community transport initiatives.

1.4 SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGIES

The Transport White Paper 1998 and the Transport Act 2000, and their associated reorganizations and 'daughter' documents brought new thinking into transport, including Local Transport Plans (LTPs), road charging and social exclusion. LTPs were intended to integrate transport planning with wider policy objectives, and to bring consistency, clarity and objective measurement into local transport planning.

Social exclusion is a relatively recent concept, intended to reflect the new understanding that inequality and disadvantage have multiple causes, not just related to income. The link with transport was developed in a key follow-up document - the report on 'Making the Connections' by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2003. This provided the background and justification for the new concept of accessibility strategies, which were included as requirements for LTP2, covering the period 2005/6 to 2010/11. 'Making the Connections' clearly identified the issue:

*'Historically, nobody has been **responsible** for ensuring that people can get to key services and employment sites. As a result, services have been developed with insufficient attention to accessibility. And too often accessibility has been seen as a problem for transport planners to solve, rather than one that concerns and can be influenced by other organisations, for example by locating, designing and delivering services so that they are easily and conveniently available'.* (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)

This observation did not, however, prevent the primary responsibility for accessibility strategies being given to transport planners, although it was expected that the strategies would be developed in partnership with SPs. The value of working with the new Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) was specifically mentioned. Accessibility strategies, with targets for improvement, were included in LTP2.

Subsequently the Local Area Agreement (LAA) process allowed non-transport and transport SPs to pool funding to focus on previously agreed targets, which often included accessibility. However, guidance for LTP3 (DfT,2009) is extremely vague on what is expected in the future. An evaluation of current accessibility strategies is currently under way (DfT,2009) but anecdotal evidence is that strategies have shown little progress over the last five years.

Some have argued that accessibility strategies are in any case flawed, on the grounds that they promote personal mobility at all costs without recognising that this is one cause of exclusion:

'Continued exclusion for some is guaranteed, for the practical reason that there is not enough space for all members of society to have high levels of personal mobility. In legitimising (indeed encouraging) mobility, the policies will further promote the spatial separation of activities/goods/services, reinforcing the exclusion of those without mobility from these goods, while increasing and legitimising the mobility burden' (Kenyon, June 2003)

1.5 DISTILLATE

DISTILLATE was a major research programme looking at how to integrate land use and transport. It is mentioned here because it is one of the few substantial research projects that looked specifically at the transport implications of public sector decisions, though this was not a major part of the work.

DISTILLATE: Design and Implementation Support Tools for Integrated Local land Use, Transport and the Environment '*is one of 14 research programmes funded under the UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council's overarching research programme on the development of a Sustainable Urban Environment.*

The principal objective of DISTILLATE is to develop, through a focused, inter-disciplinary research programme, ways of overcoming the barriers to effective development and delivery of sustainable urban transport and land use strategies and, through them, enhanced quality of life.

DISTILLATE is coordinated by the Institute for Transport Studies (ITS) at the University of Leeds; its other research partners are the Centre for Environment and Planning at the University of the West of England, the Centre for Transport Studies (CTS) at University College London (UCL), the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) and Department of Mathematics at the University of York and TRL'.(DISTILLATE project, 2008)

The relevant part of the research was entitled 'Distributional Impacts of Sector Strategies and Schemes', written by Peter Jones and James Paskins in May 2008. The authors found that there was little data on transport implications, and that much of the literature focused on policy and process rather than identifying impacts. But they did find some supporting evidence:

'From discussions with local residents (Snell and Jones, 2007), it became apparent that:
• There are gaps between the responsibilities of different agency service providers that made it difficult for people to access services (e.g. between employers' decisions about shift working hours and the timing of public transport services).
• When 'things went wrong', agencies took no collective responsibility to ensure that users are able to complete a sequence of tasks needed to undertake an activity. For example:

o Older teenagers would lose their EMA educational allowance if they arrived late at college, due to a bus cancellation or severe delay;
o Bus passengers would be left 'stranded' in inhospitable situations, if the bus company had to divert a service, due to vandalism or flooding'.

And:

'During discussions with a wide range of sector practitioners (Jones and Thoreau, 2008), two other problems emerged:

- *The strong focus on government-set targets, which tended to concentrate on certain aspects of a sector's traditional service provision. This left little management or financial resource to consider the wider aspects of their provision, and indeed encouraged the externalisation of some aspects of their service provision that was no longer considered 'core'. For example, a tendency for schools to concentrate on the core curriculum and reduce resources devoted to sport or leisure activities.*
- *A recognition among the agencies that took part in the professional workshops that decisions taken by one agency in their own institutional/commercial interests could create problems, both for their customers and others, which would end up being picked up as costs by other agencies. For example, hospital relocation decisions that do not take into account transport difficulties for those without access to a car'.*

These findings led the DISTILLATE researchers to produce a spreadsheet tool for identifying cross-sector impacts of public sector decisions, which is discussed further in Chapter 5 below.

2 TRANSPORT TO PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICES

2.1 TRANSPORT TO SCHOOL

Choice in education is an issue that ranks high on the political agendas of governments around the world and increasingly in the UK (Gibbons et al., 2007). There are two main economic arguments for moving from a neighbourhood-based system – in which pupils attend their local school – to a system based on parental choice. The first is about allocation, "more choice allows better matching of pupils with schools according to personal tastes and pedagogical needs. If every parent can find a school that educates their child at least as effectively as under a neighbourhood system, then average attainment must improve" (Gibbons et al., 2007). The second point argues that if families are free to choose, then the mechanisms of market discipline will ensure that schools offer high standards.

The increase in choice has probably led to an increase in the length of journeys to school, though robust evidence is hard to find. Murphy (2007) confirms that there has been little data gathered on the longer term implications of increasing distances travelled to school resulting from increased choice. More data needs to be collected in order to obtain a greater understanding of the balance between the increased educational attainment resulting from choice and other factors such as the increased cost of providing public transport needs, increased journey times and their effect on stress and lateness, the effect on equality of education provision and the compatibility of such measures with the creation of a sustainable transport system in the UK.

'According to the Department for Transport, the average distance travelled to school at primary school age has risen from 1.3 miles in 1997 to 1.5 miles in 2006. For secondary school the figures are 2.9 and 3.4 miles respectively. DfT research has examined the factors leading to increased school journey length. Income and car ownership play their part, as do school admissions policies and parental choice: schools competing for the best pupils will encourage longer distances; and parents whose first choice of school is based on performance will make longer journeys.

*According to Gorard et al: "the key legislation was the Education Reform Act of 1988 … which gave all families the right to express a preference for any school and denied schools the right to refuse anyone entry until a standard or planned admissions number was reached. Previously, local authorities assigned children to schools almost entirely on the basis of where they lived." (*Lyons, 2008*)*

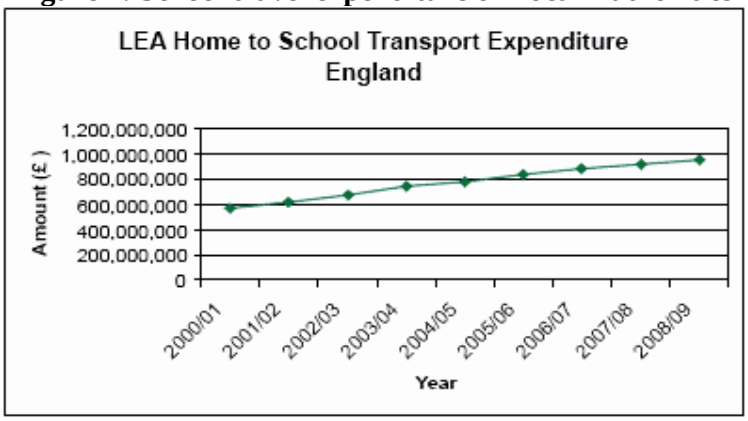
This appears to conflict with other Government objectives – for example, to promote safe and healthy journeys to school, to reduce the carbon impact of the 'school run' and to reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector overall.

Wider parental choice may also come at the cost of increased inequality across schools (Gibbons et al., 2007). Lower-income families are not be able to exercise as much choice as higher income families – due to the barrier of increased transport costs – therefore will be restricted to an institution nearby. The Education and Inspection Act

2006 attempted to tackle this issue by extending qualifying distances for free transport to school for low income families.

Costs of providing free school transport are rising fast, although there is no direct evidence on the contribution of choice policies:

Figure 1: School travel expenditure of Local Authorities



Source: House of Commons Transport Select Committee 2009

Sian Thornthwaite (2009) has shown that:

"Overall, in the UK, the cost of home to school transport provision by Local Education Authorities has risen at more than twice the rate of inflation since the 1980s and the unit cost of transport provision is typically more than £1,000 per year."

This cost is borne partly by parents, partly by the Government and local authorities, and partly by school children themselves who often have no choice but an old and scruffy bus.

School children aged over 16 and young people attending further and higher education have no entitlement to free transport (outside London), and particularly in rural areas can spend relatively high sums on transport to school and/or training.

16–18-year-old students spend on average £370 a year on education related transport, and nearly half of them experience difficulty with this cost. Six per cent of all 16–24 year-olds turn down training or further education opportunities because of problems with transport (Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)

In recent years, a ground-breaking joint initiative between the Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions and the Department for Employment and Education funded and organized school travel plans as 'bottom-up' initiatives for encouraging alternative modes of travel to school. This initiative was one of the few Government projects that provided additional revenue resources to both schools and local authorities, and has been successful in getting large numbers of schools to sign up (though possibly less successful in maintaining the initial momentum).

Building Schools for the Future
The Government's ambitious £45 billion Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme to renew or rebuild every secondary school in England has been underway since 2003. Local authorities are working with private sector companies to build schools that are 'fit for a 21st century education.' The DfES guidance on accessibility planning states:

'LEAs should also demonstrate in their outline business cases that they have considered accessibility as part of the appraisal criteria, including travel to school e.g. if there is a relocation. Clearly accessibility analysis will help to ensure that new schools or schools relocating are in the most accessible locations as far as is possible, and take into account the needs of socially excluded children'.

However, this has been translated in most cases to a requirement for a School Travel Plan rather than a serious consideration of accessibility before decisions are fixed.

2.2 TRANSPORT TO HEALTH FACILITIES

Since the publication of the NHS plan (Secretary of State for Health, 2000) 'choice' has been a recurring theme across a range of health policies from emphasis on individual behavioural choices in the public health Green Paper (Department of Health, 2004) to more recent announcements that choice of provider would be extended to all aspects of health care including long term conditions (Department of Health, 2006). From 2006 where care could be planned, NHS patients were to be offered a choice of 5 providers at the point of referral of which at least one had to be from the independent sector. In January 2008, this was superseded by free choice of any accredited provider. The Government hopes that the introduction of choice will allow patients to access shorter waiting times, better quality care, or have their treatment closer to family and friends.

In addition to greater choice within the health care system, there has been an increase in the centralisation of NHS activities over the past decades. The main arguments for this are the efficiency gains (as outlined in the Gershon Efficiency Report) and the specialisation of services and therefore improvement in the quality of service being delivered.

The increase in patient choice and the centralisation and specialisation of key services is likely to place greater demand on patient transport services, and on transport generally. However, finding evidence and data on the impact of choice policies is difficult and tends to be indirect. For example, "*31% of people without a car have difficulties travelling to their local hospital, compared to 17% of people with a car. Over 1.4 million people say they have missed, turned down, or chosen not to seek medical help over the last 12 months because of transport problems*".(Social Exclusion Unit, 2003)

The Government has emphasised that the full roll-out of choice policy will not impact upon current Patient Transport Services (PTS). Patients who are currently eligible for free transport under the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme, for patients on low incomes, or through Patient Transport Services for patients requiring transport on the basis of a medical assessment will continue to be eligible for free transport to any listed provider" (Impact of Free Choice Policy in Choose and Book: Essential information for providers and commissioners, March 2008). If this is the case, there will be a notable increase in the cost of transporting patients to hospital, alongside other detrimental effects of increasing the travelling distance to hospital.

Patient Transport in Hertfordshire

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust has noted a significant increase in the cost of non-emergency patient transport services provided by Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service. For 2005/06 the Trust faced a £500,000 shortfall on an average annual budget of around £2.3 million. At over 20% the gap is too wide to be bridged and the Trust states that it has "no option but to work with its partner organisations locally in restricting further access to this service."The Trust has therefore targeted patients who were using the service for social, rather than medical reasons. By the end of 2005, the Trust had decreased the number of journeys made by around 4%, but noted that this was much less than the near 40% drop required to bridge the funding gap" (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust, 2005). Those requiring the service for 'social needs' are likely to be low income residents who have trouble accessing health services for financial reasons.

Increasing choice in the health sector also generates similar worries about the equity impacts as in the education sector (Jones and Mays, 2009). Furthermore, Mungall (2005) outlines how reforms will have a disproportionate impact upon patients who live at a distance from their hospital. Studies have demonstrated that the utilisation of service is inversely related to the distance of the patient from the hospital; so called 'distance decay'. Mungall (2005) recognises the need for cost savings, but argues that this needs to be balanced with the provision of accessible and equitable services for all patients, regardless of distance from service or income.

In general terms an increase in choice and greater specialisation and centralisation within the NHS has led to increased demands on Patient Transport Services, inter-hospital transport services and increased journey lengths for NHS staff. In 2007 Lord Darzi proposed the establishment of polyclinics where minor procedures could be carried out. This would improve accessibility where previously patients would have had to attend a more distant hospital - but the proposal was also to accommodate 'most' GPs into these centres serving 50,000 people each, thus making GPs less accessible.

As with education, many successful hospital travel plans have been developed, often using financial resources from car park charges. In a remarkable confusion of objectives, and in response to public demands, the Health Secretary announced the scrapping of hospital car park charges in September 2009. This will put many excellent hospital travel plan initiatives at risk.

2.3 TRANSPORT FOR SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

A very under-researched area is the impact of social care policies on transport demand and cost. One example is policies for looked after children often encourage them to remain in their original schools (in order to provide stability) wherever they live. This can mean very expensive and long-distances travelled, often by taxi. These journeys can be tiring and on occasion dangerous for children – in my personal experience a child being driven to school (a daily two-hour commute!) in a taxi was very badly injured in a road accident.

In the case of children with Special Educational Needs, the local authority provides free transport to school, at significant cost. The Transport Select Committee identified the extent of transport costs for SEN pupils:

Total spending (on school transport) has risen by nearly £379 million comprising a £141 million rise for secondary school transport, a £111 million increase for primary school transport and a £132 million rise in expenditure on school transport for pupils with special educational needs. Despite accounting for over one-third of the total increase in school transport expenditure, SEN pupils make up only 2.8 per cent of all pupils across England. (House of Commons Select Committee on Transport, 2009)

The reverse of this situation is that other socially excluded people find that their mobility is severely restricted, because of a physical disability; because they can't afford transport or it is not available; or because of very limited horizons due to a culture of worklessness and insularity (for example, young people living in some deprived estates). There appears to be a major dislocation between some social care policies that result in long journeys for vulnerable children and others that do not recognize the limitations to mobility of other vulnerable people, and the implications of this on their ability to access services of whatever type. This dislocation reflects the lack of understanding of the importance of place and distance, and of the difficulties and costs necessary to overcome problems of place and distance, in generating well-being.

Total Place Pilots

In April 2009, the Government unveiled a major set of pilot projects called 'Total Place Pilots' – with the aim of investigating social care provision from whatever source in identified local areas to see whether more efficient and better services can be provided by pooling resources. Hazel Blears, then Communities Secretary, said: *"The impact of the downturn means all of the public sector needs to find new and more efficient ways to serve the public. The early analysis from Cumbria has shown there is scope, with the right local leadership in place, to achieve significant efficiency savings while at the same time deliver improvements in public services for local communities. And in Sunderland today I have seen real innovation - a move away from the traditional model of delivering local services to providing a full range of community services as those available at the Bunny Hill Service Centre under one roof'.(*DCLG, 2009*)*

Although it is to be hoped that this focus on 'place' will improve accessibility, not one of the pilots includes transport or mobility as a priority issue.

2.4 POST OFFICES

The Network Change Programme was a Government led initiative to modernise and reshape the Post Office network and "*put it on a more stable footing for the future*" (Post Office, 2009).

The change programme was proposed as Post Office Ltd had been loss making since 2000 and the viability of the network was under threat. Post Office Ltd's poor financial position reflected a decline in its traditional business and increased competition, only partly offset by new business.

As a result of this the Government conducted a national public consultation from December 2006 to March 2007 to develop a new policy and financial framework for the Network. In May 2007, following the national public consultation, the Government announced a range of proposed measures to modernise and re-shape the Network. The Network Change Programme has now been prescribed by the Government, involving the compulsory closure of up to 2,500 Post Office branches. The closures are the latest stage of a long decline in the number of post offices, which from a peak of 25,000 in 1964 had fallen to 14,200 by March 2007.

In the process of streamlining the service, The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) established criteria to ensure a national network with reasonable access to post office services across the country. These criteria limit the distance most people have to travel to reach their nearest post office. In order to meet the targets the Government has proposed the introduction of 'Outreach' services, where post office services may function within a public building such as a library. At the end of March 2009, it was noted that only four of the five access criteria were being met. One criterion – that 95% of the population of each postcode district should be within six miles of their nearest post office outlet- was not being met in six out of 2,796 postcode districts, although 5 of these cases have since been resolved (National Audit Office, 2009).

There is considerable research on the impact of these closures on rural areas – due to their position at the heart of rural communities, but there is little research on the impact of increased journeys created as a result of the closures. Increased journey distances to obtain post office services (and other services as most post offices include local shops are likely to lead to similar equity considerations as in other public services already discussed.

Essex County Council has pioneered a programme of reopening post offices in rural areas, providing start-up costs to entrepreneurs. The original plan was to incorporate post offices in existing Council facilities such as libraries. However, presumably because the post offices in question were situated in areas without such facilities, the programme has focused on replacing just the post offices. There must be doubts about the long-term viability of such plans, but the initiative is to be applauded.

Essex County Council initiative

'The total number of post offices reopened by Essex County Council since Post Office Limited's closure programme now stands at seven with another three due to open in November.

Essex's post office initiative has received considerable national interest with several authorities looking to replicate the Essex model and a recent visit from the Welsh Assembly.

The latest in line is Castle Hedingham, which reopened for its first full week of business on 5 October 2009. The village lost its post office facility over a year ago, and the new premises have reopened at Angel Corner on St James Street, just a few yards away from its previous premises.

Essex County Council has supported this post office with its initial start-up costs. The post office will then become self-sufficient with no ongoing financial commitments from the County Council. The facility also includes a Community Information Point which allows customers to connect to a number of internet sites including Directgov, NHS direct, local interest sites and Essex County Council services'. (Press release, Essex County Council, September 2009)

3 VIEWS OF PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKING

3.1 THE 'OFFICIAL' VIEW

This is that public sector decisions take the form of a rational process that arrives at a decision with the greatest expected utility (or value). Bazerman (1998) characterises this process as:

- Define the problem
- Identify the decision criteria
- Weight the criteria
- Generate alternatives
- Rate each alternative on each criterion
- Compute the optimal decision

This process is considered to be the basis of most decision-making in the public sector, and is certainly familiar to transport and planning professionals. Proposals requiring Government funding will not be accepted without some form of the above process having been undertaken. In most cases this assessment is lengthy and complex, involving valuations of benefits and costs and modelling of future impacts. This comprehensive assessment or appraisal stage is intended to ensure best value for money for the Government, and to provide a full picture of costs and benefits including those that might not at first be appreciated by scheme promoters.

The process can of course fail at each stage and stages 2 and 3 are crucial. If transport implications are not identified or not prioritised then they will not form part of the rest of the process. It could be that transport implications are just not perceived or understood by decision-makers (some of these unintended consequences are described by Glenn Lyons in his paper 'With the Advantage of Hindsight', Lyons, 2008)

3.2 LEGITIMACY IN DECISION-MAKING

Recent theories on decision-making have challenged the rational decision-making process described by Bazerman (1998) and have looked at the contributions of psychological and sociological factors. For example, we all impose a 'bounded rationality' on ourselves as it is impossible to obtain and assess all relevant information and all available options before making a decision. We also exist in environments that have impacts on us – we obtain 'legitimacy' in the organisation by understanding the social norms prevailing there. Some theorists think that this is particularly prevalent in the public sector, and that organisations deal with these pressures by:

'decoupling' responses to different pressures. The need to appear legitimate in the eyes of important constituencies is met by actions and practices which have a purely ceremonial character: they are done for the sake of appearances and not with any real engagement', (Fenton-O'Creavy, 2007)

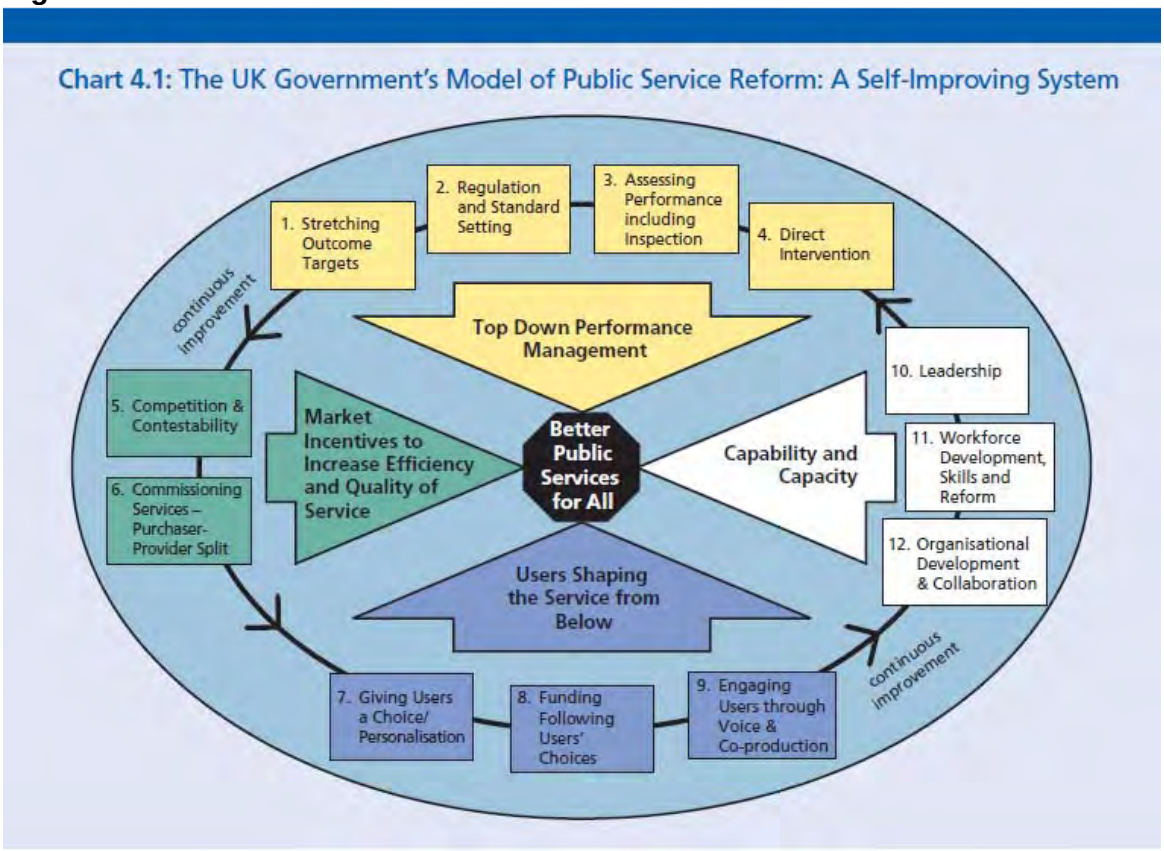
Therefore cultures and methodologies have developed that convince decision-makers that they do not need to consider certain aspects of their proposal – perhaps feeling that it is not their job to do so. In the public sector, performance management requirements, intended to improve decisions, may result in these 'ceremonial' rather than 'engaged' reactions. This has resulted in a focus on a few key indicators, often financial, and the neglect of wider issues even if they are perceived and understood.

3.3 THE VIEW OF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT

The current Government's view of what public sector decision-making should be is very clearly laid out in legislation and guidance. It is based on an overarching view of the need for public sector reform and the component parts of that reform which consist of:

- Top down performance management
- Users shaping the service from below (also called Choice and Voice)
- Improving capability and capacity within the public sector
- Market incentives to increase the efficiency and quality of service

Figure 2: The Public Sector Reform model



Source: 'UK Government's approach to public sector reform – a discussion paper', Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2006

The expectation is that decision-making in accordance with this model will lead to financial savings as well as better services. It also offers a framework in which to add new priority elements – such as carbon reduction – which may now be happening. The methodology is intended to improve decision-making, partly by encouraging the inclusion of externalities (such as transport implications) into the mainstream.

This model has led to considerable changes in the way that public sector decisions are implemented, with a steep rise in the use of project management professionals and processes such as Prince 2. The advantages are that these models break through the professional 'drainpipes' and provide a common language and methodology for all implementation practice. Disadvantages can include a reliance on the process rather than the reality of the situation.

There are a number of 'enforcers' available to the Government to ensure compliance with the model. These include:

1. The Office of Government Commerce, which provides advice on procurement, programmes and projects, and its requirement to use the PRINCE 2 project management tool, now ubiquitous in the public sector.

2. The public service regulators, like the Audit Commission, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the Healthcare Commission (now the Care Quality Commission) in England. Notably the regulation regimes now focus on Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAAs) which assess shared outcomes such as those in Local Area Agreements (LAAs). These shared agreed outcomes often include externalities such as transport implications, perhaps precisely because they are neglected by individual SPs and are therefore identified as priorities within the partnerships.

This drive for reform has been subject to considerable and often vitriolic criticism, for example:

'For reasons that I still find incredibly difficult to pin down, New Labour became as enthusiastic as its Tory predecessors about a peculiarly fundamentalist form of neo-liberal orthodoxy. For a decade (up until the economic crash in 2008), this contaminated so much of the Government's overall performance. Even the best things it has done (the minimum wage, Sure Start, massive improvements in healthcare, huge capital programmes in education and health and so on) have been diminished either by a perverse reluctance to demonstrate the redistributive benefits of those measures, or by a compulsive obsession with "marketisation" strategies' (Porritt, 2009).

Reform has also meant an increase in outsourcing as SPs look for ways to reduce costs. Amongst many other implications for accessibility, this can also mean a direct increase in road traffic as separate contractors service each workplace or facility, rather than an all-purpose in house system.

3.4 A 'PLANNING' VIEW

When possible, the general practice is to pass the consideration and resolution of transport implications to the land use planning and transport planning function of government at all levels. The planning and transport 'function' is asked to act both as a regulator (to prevent the worst impacts) and to 'pick up' acceptable transport impacts created by the non-transport service provider and mitigate or otherwise deal with them. This role has generally been accepted as appropriate to the land use and transport planning function.

But in this passing on the issue is converted from an assessment of how to best reorganize/relocate based on an assessment of transport (as well as numerous other factors) to the need to mitigate the worst impacts of a decision that has already been made. Other factors, such as land values and cost of development, can encourage SPs toward unsustainable locations, usually out of town. But the additional accessibility and sustainability costs are not part of the financial calculation. Problems are 'reframed' into transport problems, and the responsibility for solving them moved away from the SPs.

There are many tools for undertaking transport assessment and mitigating effects that are well known to professionals – for example, transport models, accessibility strategies, Transport Assessments (TAs), travel plans and the allocation of sites that forms a large part of land use planning itself. Funding the infrastructure and services that result from such assessments is a continual struggle, sometimes passed to the developer, but often found at local authority, community or individual level. Government support of the principle of requiring developers, whether public or private sector, to fund necessary transport has been equivocal at best, resulting in some confusion about who is responsible for what.

For example, the allocation of funds for infrastructure in growth areas has led to conflict between developers and the public sector on who should fund specific infrastructure elements. Developers say that it is the responsibility of the public sector, and public agencies say that it is the responsibility of the developer. SPs entering these discussions may find themselves drafted in on one or other side to help the argument rather than acting independently to make the best use of available resources.

In general, the land use and transport planning process intervenes in SP decision-making processes in the following ways:

- Planning policy development provides an opportunity for SPs to become involved and to ensure that their requirements are catered for in the resulting plans

- The allocation and implementation of other residential or employment development brings new demands and sometimes new funding to SPs (particularly important in areas subject to growth pressures)

- The development control process regulates SP plans, including requiring mitigation of identified transport impacts
- Transport policy and plans can offer the potential for improving accessibility to existing facilities, or open up the potential of new sites
- Transport plans compete with SP plans for public funds
- Public sector transport revenue spend (e.g. bus subsidy, transport to school, concessionary fares, community transport) takes care of part of the transport externality of service providers' decisions

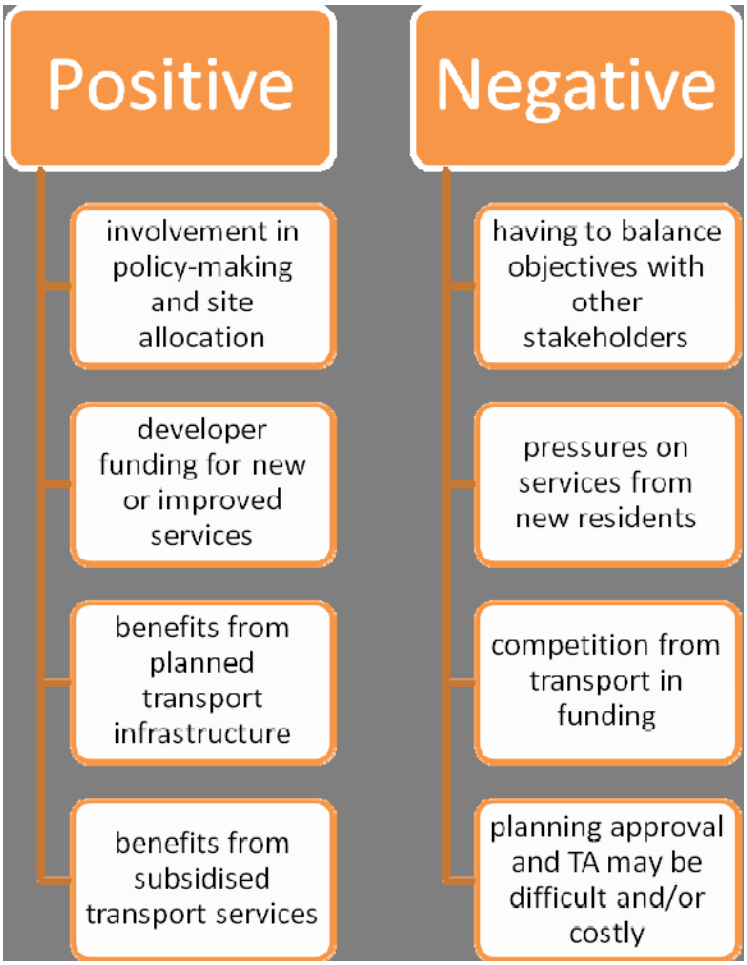
Corby Academy
*Corby Academy is a brand new £30 million, secondary school at **Priors Hall**, being built to replace the existing site of Corby Community College where a recent OFSTED inspection praised the school's on-going improvements and singled out its good leadership and management. More than a thousand pupils aged 11-16 and 250 sixth-formers are taught in an iconic setting, **designed by world-renowned architects, Norman Foster & Partners.** The school specialises in business and enterprise and was opened in 2008 by Prime Minister Gordon Brown.* (Press release, More in Corby, 2009)

But the new Academy is sited out of town, replacing a previous in-town location, and new pupil bus services cost an additional £300,000 per year. These costs were not attributed to the school development costs (personal knowledge).

However, from the point of view of the SP, this whole area is a minefield. The role of the SP becomes a complex negotiation between these various interventions, with the aim of achieving maximum benefit from the system and minimum additional cost as a result of additional requirements. In other words, to grab as many positive externalities as possible and to resist any suggested responsibilities for negative ones. The temptation to enter such an arena with an agreed, funded and largely immutable project is high. The danger of discussing preliminary ideas is that unwelcome costs may be attached to the project.

Of course there is a risk for the SP that their project will not be approved – but this risk is generally manageable within the common consent that the facility to be provided is needed and promoted by influential interests such as politicians.

Figure 3: SP involvement in planning and transport



4 SYNTHESIS

4.1 TRANSPORT IMPACTS ARE RECOGNISED, BUT NOT PRIORITISED AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES

Like all externalities, transport implications do not go away. A lack of consideration of transport to new or changed services manifests itself in operational problems such as complaints, parking problems and recruitment problems as well as increasing social exclusion, congestion and emissions. This is recognised in numerous policy documents and legislation.

But for the reasons outlined above, there is little incentive for individual decision-makers to include transport impacts in their plans – the prevailing view is that people are responsible for their own transport and that land use and transport planning will 'deal with' any remaining needs.

4.2 MANY PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKERS STILL GAIN LEGITIMACY FROM WORKING WHOLLY WITHIN THEIR OWN PROFESSIONAL AREA, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Despite the introduction of performance management, Transport Assessments, partnership arrangements such as LAAs, and accessibility strategies, SPs remain attached to their perceived most 'legitimate' outcomes and do not seriously engage in achieving others, however important.

This practice appears endemic at all levels, from Government departments to front-line staff. It only breaks down when operational problems become so severe that cross-departmental action has to be taken.

4.3 THE LAND USE AND TRANSPORT PLANNING 'FUNCTION' HAS ACCEPTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR TRANSPORT IMPLICATIONS CREATED BY PUBLIC SECTOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

The problem has been reframed as a transport problem, not a service issue. Therefore solutions are sought in the provision of additional transport rather than in changing the way that decisions are made.

4.4 There have been many attempts to improve transport to services. But although often heroic and innovative, these are uncoordinated, patchy, badly funded and poorly targeted.

Even when transport is considered, the extent of the problem is badly under-estimated. This results in a plethora of initiatives, whether legislative, policy or local community action that are not coordinated into comprehensive accessibility strategies. The LTP2 experiment with accessibility strategies did not result in significant additional funding to achieve improvement targets, and were not expected to result in anything other than more short-term and pilot projects.

4.5 Solutions are most likely to be found:

- Strengthening mechanisms for integrated policy development (governance, partnership, stakeholder management)
- Incorporating and strengthening mechanisms in the decision-making process (financial, technical, regulatory)
- From within the Government's public sector reform model
- Using the carbon and sustainable development agenda to secure better integration of transport consequences

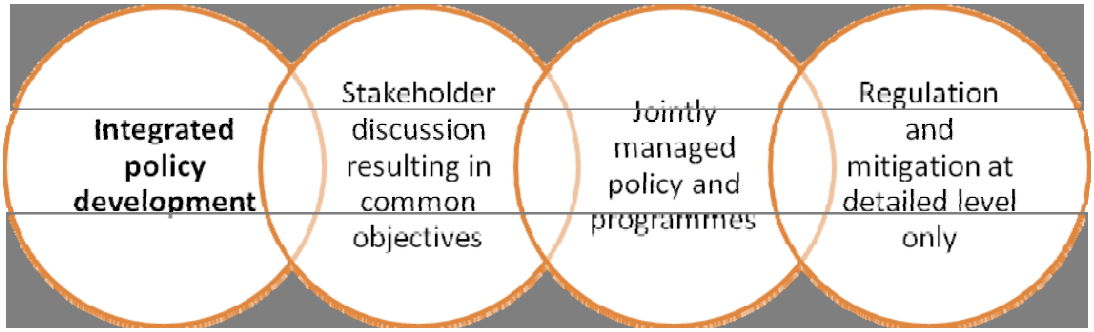
Because:

- These actions are intended to improve decision-making, not mitigate the worst aspects of decisions
- They are more likely to tackle the 'legitimacy' issues raised in this report
- They are pragmatic, fitting within current Government priority agendas
- There are existing developments that have already been researched that offer potential for improvement in these areas

5 SCENARIOS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The scenarios proposed in this section serve to illustrate key aspects of how public sector decisions could be improved. They are not mutually exclusive, nor are they evaluated in detail. But they do provide some insight into what might make a difference.

SCENARIO A – INTEGRATED POLICY DEVELOPMENT



Summary

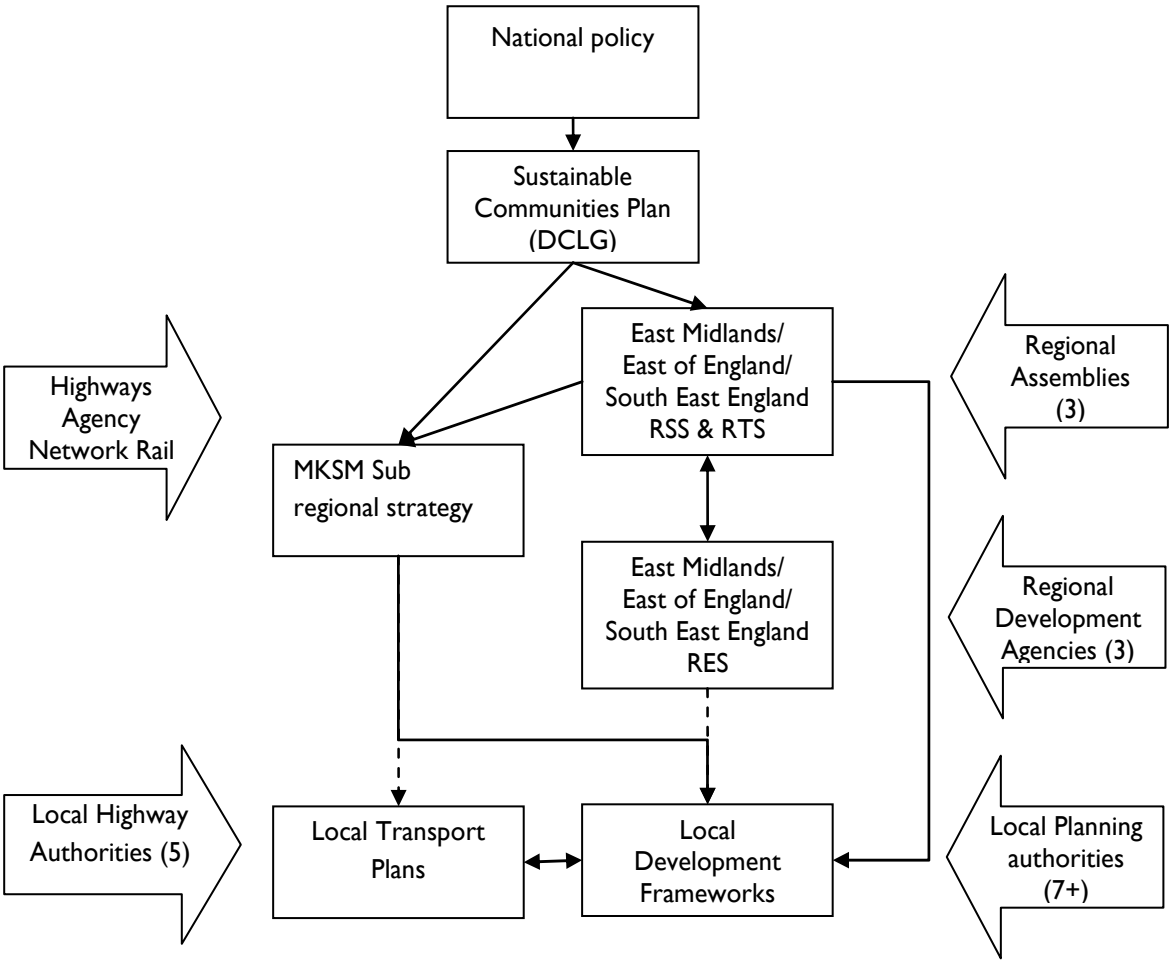
Scenario A represents an idealized picture of true integration at all levels – at national level (for example with common Government departmental advice and rules) and at local level (integrating service plans with the LAA/community strategy and land use/transport planning). This ideal situation has been promoted for many years as the potential solution to fragmented and uncoordinated policy. Many initiatives have been born as a result, but in reality generally fall short of the theory. Still integration remains an ideal state to aim for.

Scottish Government
'*The "matrix model" adopted by the SNP Government in Scotland was designed in part to overcome the perennial problems associated with Whitehall's vertical silos. It's too early to say whether this is going to make the kind of deeper, longer-lasting impact the Scottish Government is looking for, but it clearly creates greater structural opportunities for sustainable development to thrive than is the case in Whitehall*'.(Porritt, 2009)

Complexity

This scenario requires integration at all levels and at all spatial and organisational scales, which can be extremely complex to identify, understand and order. Figure 4 below (which is not comprehensive) gives an idea of the complexity of the policy background in the Milton Keynes South Midlands sub-region.

Figure 4: Policy background relevant to the MKSM sub-region (2008)



MRC McLean Hazel has undertaken a number of prioritisation exercises for public authorities which usually show a low level of policy integration because:

- Plans and policy documents are written by different agencies, at different times and with different time frames
- Policy is drafted in relation to needs and requirements within the policy writer's own area of action, rather than considering the impacts of one plan upon another

This means that it is difficult for policy makers and implementers further along the process to understand how policies relate to each other and how their particular project fits into the policy framework. In particular, they cannot create a 'thread' back to overarching policy requirements, and therefore initiatives can become prioritised despite the fact that they are not good contributors to the range of required outcomes.

Local Strategic Partnerships and stakeholder involvement

Sustainable Community Strategies, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAAs) are all attempts to manage stakeholder involvement at the local level. They bring together public sector providers to develop local strategies with incentives for joint working to agreed targets. LAAs allow for pooled resources from the partner authorities.

These arrangements also represent an attempt to integrate public sector policy making – but at the local level. They are intended to be the key document against which all other plans, including service plans, are set. Many community strategies include externalities such as carbon reduction or accessibility as key priorities. But partners still have to negotiate the top-down departmental guidance and funding arrangements, which may skew implementation programmes more toward departmental favoured outcomes than the locally derived ones.

Proposals for improvement

It is beyond the scope of this paper to consider large scale changes to governance, legislation and funding. But one perhaps practical possibility is highlighted below.

The Department for Transport has set a good example in its recent 'Towards and Sustainable Transport System' and 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' documents, which are to be included in land use and spatial planning policy and used as the basis for decisions on funding major transport schemes. Each major scheme has to demonstrate its beneficial impacts on a basket of overarching goals:

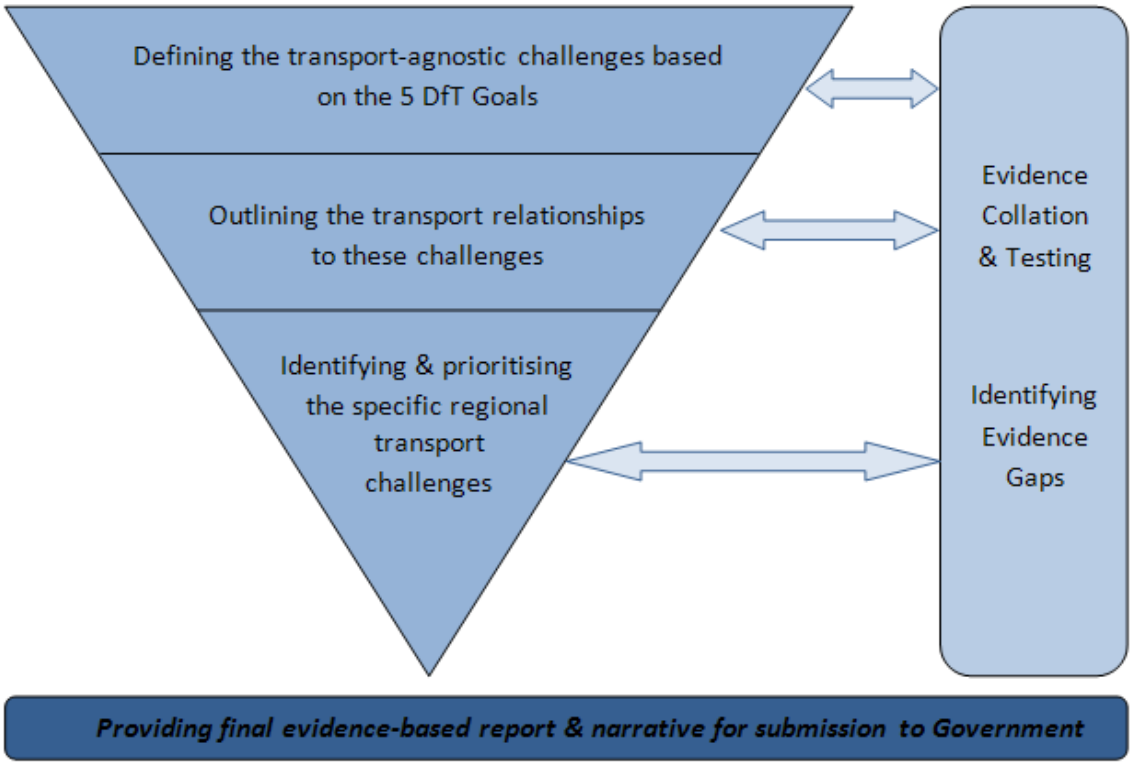
- To **support** national **economic** competitiveness and **growth**, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks
- To reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of **tackling climate change**
- To **contribute to better safety security and health** and longer life-expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health
- To **promote** greater **equality of opportunity** for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society;
- To **improve quality of life** for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a **healthy natural environment**

Other relevant Government departments – principally the Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families – could also consider identifying similar 'baskets' of goals to assess major initiatives. This should include quality of life

and equality of opportunity and therefore inclusion and accessibility as key lower level considerations.

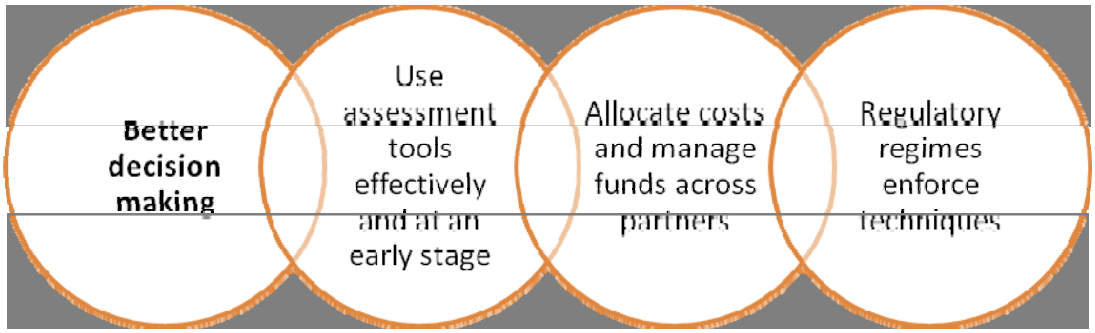
Assessing initiatives against identified goals would enable decision-makers to consider the contribution of the initiative against a number of goals covering a wider area of Government priorities. The promoter would have to consider how well their initiative contributes to the whole basket, by first identifying and understanding challenges and then investigating cross-cutting options for resolution. A methodology for DaSTS (which could be adapted for non-transport challenges) is shown below:

Figure 5: Methodology for DaSTS



This process could be regulated by the current audit organisations – who would need to add 'accessibility and social inclusion' to their list of priority outcomes.

SCENARIO B – STRENGTHENING ASSESSMENT AND REGULATORY MECHANISMS IN DECISION-MAKING



Summary
There already is a battery of existing mechanisms that could be employed to tackle the transport impacts of decisions. They fall into three categories, each with limitations:

a. Planning related (but happen late in the decision-making process)
b. Project management related (but may not be given the emphasis they deserve)
c. Operational (tackling the unanticipated or ignored impacts of decisions, at a much later stage)

a. Planning assessment and regulation

Transport Assessments (TAs) assess the transport impacts of planning applications, and require mitigation in the form of infrastructure, services or travel plans to manage identified impacts. The mitigation measures required after a TA may be required to be funded by the developer (or project promoter). However, location and funding decisions are largely fixed before this stage.

Accessibility strategies are intended to counter this problem by providing partnership based assessments alongside action plans to be led by local transport authorities. These are not related specifically to planning projects but are intended to identify deficiencies in accessibility to priority destinations, or for selected groups or areas.

b. Project management

The OGC-preferred project management methodologies require the identification, recognition and management of wider costs, risks and benefits. This may not be comprehensively or effectively carried out. The general effectiveness is regulated by means of OGC Gateway Reviews, and indirectly by regulation by Government regulators such as the Audit Commission or the Care Quality Commission. However, these regulatory regimes are partial and sometimes infrequent.

c. Operational

Ultimately the result of neglected transport implications is operational difficulties. These can take many forms, including increased transport costs, parking problems, a high level of 'no-shows' for GP appointments, recruitment problems, and school behaviour issues, as well as the realization that some people are to all practical purposes excluded from using the service provided. Good operators will react by attempting to solve some or all of these problems, perhaps rolled up into a travel plan. There are many excellent examples of successful travel plan initiatives that have brought operational benefits.

Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust
Twice winner of the Good Corporate Citizenship HSJ awards, 2007, 2008 and currently shortlisted for 2009, Nottingham University Hospital NHS Trust has been recognised for their holistic approach to sustainability and innovative initiatives. As one of the largest acute trusts in the country, and in an area of high social exclusion, NUH understands the positive role it can play in the local community.

Recognising the multiple health benefits of active travel, NUH launched Medilink, a free, direct bus service linking Nottingham's two hospitals (Queens Medical Centre and Nottingham City Hospital) and incorporating all of Nottingham's public transport services. In addition to the health benefits of using public transport (increased levels of active travel and mitigation of climate change), NUH is making savings by reducing the number of taxis used and has cut staff car journeys by approximately 600,000 every year. This initiative encourages social inclusion and helps with recruitment and retention. ((Sustainable Development Commission, 2009)

Proposals for improvement

Early intervention

The ESPRC DISTILLATE project developed a qualitative spreadsheet tool that could be used at an early stage of decision-making based on identifying benefits to selected sectors. An example is shown below:

Figure 6: Example of DISTILLATE decision-making tool

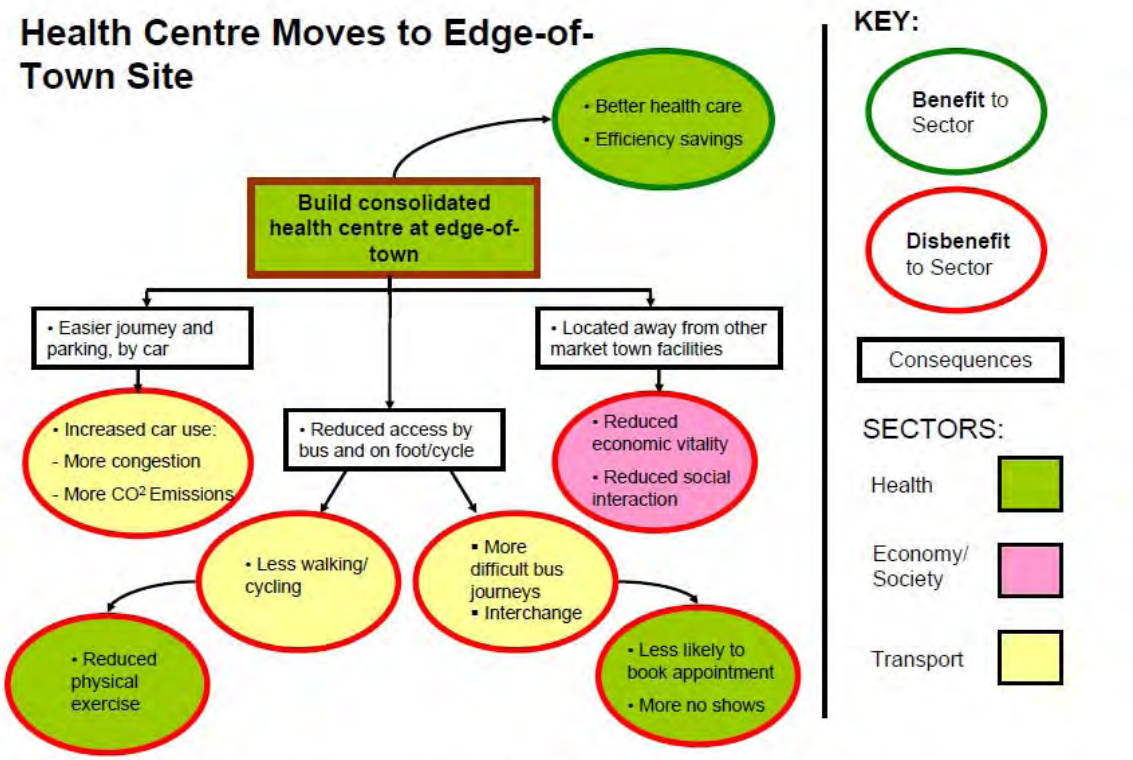


Figure 5: Example of a Consequences Tree linked to the consolidation of GP services in an edge-of-town health centre

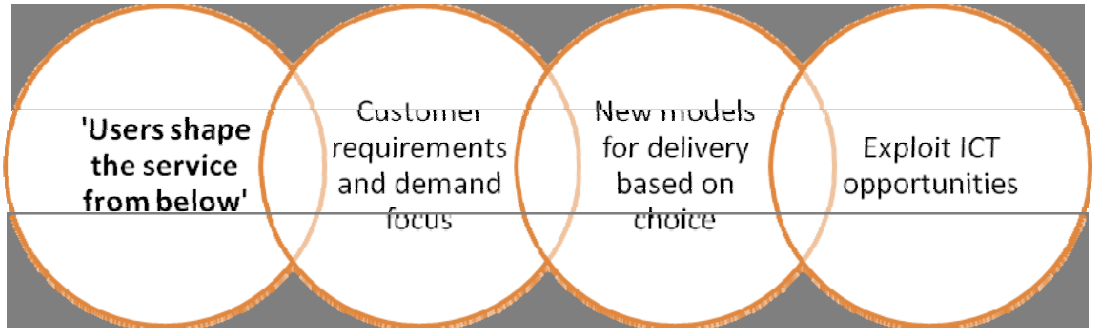
This was developed into a usable spreadsheet tool which was received positively by early participants in the project, but has not been widely promoted. An easy win could be to establish the use of this tool within the PRINCE 2 project management guidance produced by the OGC. This should be reinforced by inclusion in the scope of relevant audits.

The tool does not help with issues of funding mitigation and/or allocating costs to beneficiary areas. But at least identifying beneficiary areas would enable these to be included, where appropriate, in standard appraisal methodologies.

Late mitigation

Conversely, the good examples already produced in the form of travel plans should be further promoted and used as examples when considering planning applications. There are already numerous guidance and good practice documents. It should be noted that these measures can be appropriate to tackle not only the impacts of new development or expansion but also operational problems caused by the desire to improve services and make them more accessible to a greater range of people.

SCENARIO C – PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM MODEL

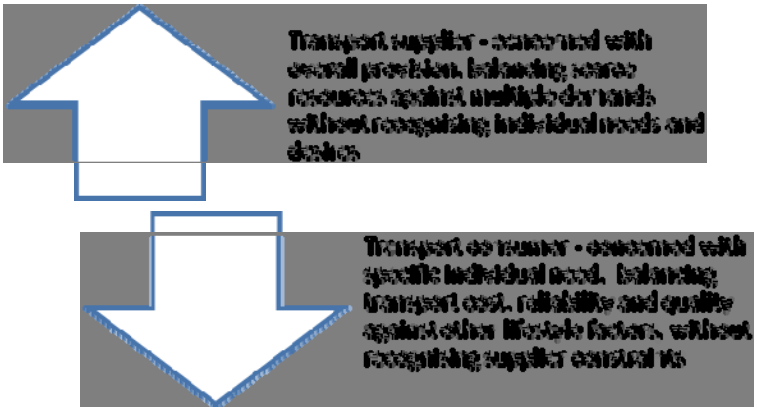


Nottingham smartcard strategy
'The City Council are looking to improve integration through smartcard technology which reduces boarding time, could allow integration of any number of tickets or passcards for work or leisure facilities and can personalise journey information and discounts most effectively. The technology is progressive and developments are being made all the time as information fed back by the smartcards show how people travel and where future investment need to be targeted. Funding for the scheme comes from grants that are already in situ and from efficiency savings'. (Andy Gibbons, Nottingham City Council Public Transport Manager, 2009)

Summary

An opportunity may be found in the Public Sector Reform model described in 3.3 above. Traditionally transport planning focuses on the necessary 'supply' of transport – providing the necessary infrastructure and services. Transport users are consulted on specific initiatives and via the national user groups on the details of bus and rail services – but rarely are the actual needs of people used as the basis for transport planning.

Figure 7: Transport supply and demand



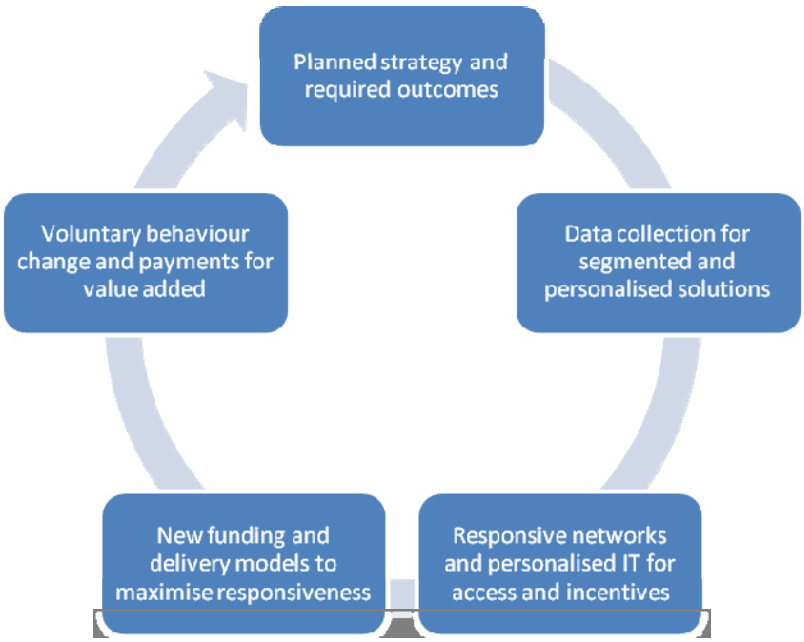
By re-focusing on the needs of users, and using new technology where possible, improvements to public services and efficiency savings might be found. Examples might include:

- Development of public transport tickets, in the form of smart cards, to hold subsidies for transport. Service users (using whatever criteria considered appropriate) could then be segmented and provided with a contribution toward the cost of their transport to services. This could be quite subtly differentiated depending on the policies and criteria applied.

- Developing personalised ‘packages’ of services that could be managed via smart cards or other devices. These could include combinations of payments for the services themselves as well as for the transport required. Subsidy provided in this way would go direct to the user rather than to bus or taxi operators and users could choose the best form of transport available to them.

- Considerable changes to delivery mechanisms might ensue. For example, school children in receipt of a transport subsidy on a smart card instead of a prescribed school bus place might choose to use public buses instead. If these are not available, the payment smart card could facilitate use of shared taxis or community buses. But these changes will be demand-driven rather than supplied by service providers to minimum standards.

Figure 8: The virtuous 'demand-focus' circle

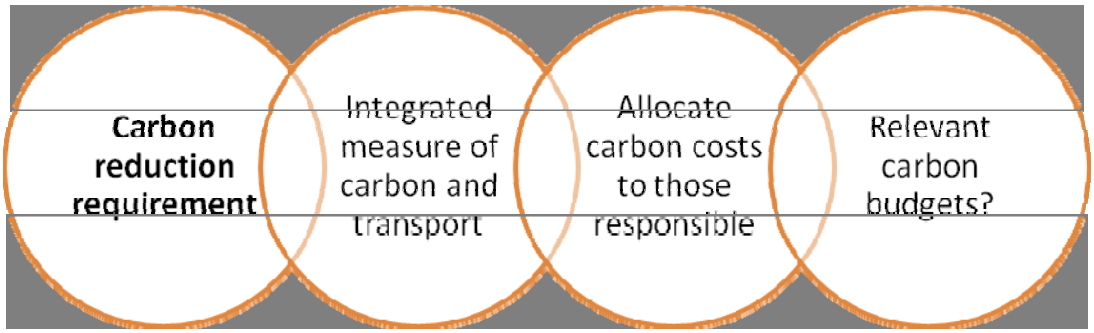


Proposals for improvement

The Commission for Integrated Transport could consider lobbying Government to develop and fund pilot projects, perhaps based on competitive bidding.

SCENARIO D – CARBON MANAGEMENT

MODEL



The use of carbon budgets is complex and controversial:

'The European Union Emissions Trading Scheme is the largest active scheme in the world. It is a key indicator of the likely success of emissions trading mechanisms in delivering guaranteed emissions cuts. Under the Kyoto Protocol, the original 15 EU member states are expected to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by eight per cent compared to 1990 levels by 2012. In reality, if the UK and Germany are excluded, emissions in the EU15 increased by 12 per cent between 1990 and 2005, and have not fared much better since. This is despite the creation of the EU ETS with the explicit objective of helping member states comply with their Kyoto commitments. In fact EU performance over the first Kyoto commitment period (2008-2012) has been no different from US performance so far, despite the EU having an emissions trading scheme when the United States does not'. (Friends of the Earth, 2009)

Summary

One suggested measure is to allocate limited carbon budgets to Government departments, which can be 'spent' on departmental activities until the limit is reached. The carbon budget would have to be used to 'pay for' greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) generated by each department. Such a measure would mirror current carbon permits and trading in the private sector within the EU. The model could also include the potential for trading if the budget holder wishes to exceed their limit.

In relation to accessibility, additional transport use generated by public sector decisions contributes to GHG emissions and therefore should be included in any calculation of carbon budget 'spent'. If this could be done, and the carbon

generated by additional transport use accurately measured, then the carbon budget would also act as an incentive toward more accessible solutions.

However, there may be some conceptual and practical problems:

1. Setting the level of budgets is controversial.
2. Reducing GHG emissions generated by transport is considered more difficult than reducing emissions generated from other sources (DfT, 2009). Departments might still neglect transport impacts.
3. Measuring carbon impacts at departmental level is complex and costly. It may be better to focus at first on front line services – possibly allocating indicative carbon budgets to schools, care providers and health providers at the local level, where (arguably) impacts can be measured more easily. These could then be subject to the existing regulation and audit regimes.
4. Carbon management is not the same thing as accessibility management. For example, in some cases it may be necessary for service users to drive or be driven to services even when there are more carbon-friendly solutions available.

Proposals for improvement

The Commission for Integrated Transport could consider lobbying Government to develop and fund pilot projects allocating and evaluating carbon budgets for front-line services, related to travel plans, perhaps based on competitive bidding.

6 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Non-transport Government departments should use the Department for Transport's 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System' and 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' as examples for developing their own 'basket' of wide-ranging goals that can form the basis for policy making and funding decisions. These should include inclusion and accessibility as second-level requirements to achieve quality of life and equality of opportunity goals. Policy and projects that contribute to more than one goal should be recognized and prioritized.

2. Government regulators (the Audit Commission, OFSTED and the Care Quality Commission) and the Office of Government Commerce should be engaged in discussions about the value of inclusion and accessibility (using the model developed by the Sustainable Development Commission) with a view to including them as cross-cutting issues to be specifically assessed in audits and Gateway Reviews.

3. Some version of technical transport assessment should be required at an earlier stage in the decision-making process. The OGC preferred project management methodologies require benefit and risk management strategies at an early stage – these should include transport assessments and required mitigation. The DISTILLATE project provides a tool that might be appropriate. In practice, this requirement would need to be included in OGC guidance and in project management training programmes.

4. More focus should be given to the 'Users shape the service from below' element of public sector reform. Using new technology to identify and record transport habits and preferences will allow subsidy to be better targeted and contribute to the public sector service choices available. Pilot studies are required to investigate incentives, payment methods, technology, delivery models, and the potential for private sector involvement.

5. Carbon budgets at departmental level are considered problematical. But local, perhaps, 'virtual' budgets for front line services might be easier to manage and could link with existing travel plans. Guidance would be needed and carbon management could be regulated as now. Again pilot studies would be required to develop the guidance, measuring tools and possible activities.

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