



Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation

Consultation on 'Rail and Urban Transport Review'

January 2024

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Summary

The Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) supports the sustainable transport hierarchy with walking and wheeling at the top, followed by active travel (cycling) and then followed by public transport. Many more short journeys could be made on foot or by bike instead of by car. Public transport will support decarbonisation and support greener, fairer, happier, healthier and more prosperous cities. We see the need for government to take forward the recommendations set out in *Improving Local Highways*¹ as this would support those aims.

The English transport network should be identified as an integrated and inter-connected system made up of local and strategic highways, rail, ports, and aviation.

We believe that there should be a strategic focus on investing in existing urban transport networks and infrastructure in line with a vision-led (or decide and provide) approach to define clearly economic, environmental, and social outcomes before providing any infrastructure or services.

Any long-term strategy should integrate land use and transport planning to ensure new developments are best placed to profit from public transport and urban infrastructure proximity as stated in the CIHT 'Better Planning, Better Transport, Better Places'² report. Policies and legislation should be directing people to live and work in areas which can be connected through public transport, whether this is buses, rail or underground.

Rail and urban transport networks and infrastructure are an integral part of the wider transport system. We highlight the need for a clear, long-term approach to investments, taking into account available data on passenger movements, traffic growth and other criteria to ensure a better use of the existing infrastructure in frames of 'decide and provide' approach to decision-making.

Buses are a key component of urban transport networks. There is a need to ensure that the sector collaborates and learns from good practice – this is a key tenet of ensuring the successful delivery of long-term policy for urban transport networks. The Bus Centre of Excellence, which is hosted by CIHT on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT), will support the sector to deliver better bus services.

¹ [Improving local highways, CIHT](#)

² [Better Planning, Better Transport, Better Places | CIHT](#)

Consultation questions

Growth opportunity through unlocking planning

1. What do you view as the current key challenges hindering the delivery of rail and urban transport networks and infrastructure?

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Any long-term strategy should integrate land use and transport planning to ensure new developments are best placed to profit from public transport and urban infrastructure proximity as stated in the CIHT 'Better Planning, Better Transport, Better Places'³ report. Policies and legislations should be directing people to live and work in areas which can be connected through public transport, whether this is buses, rail or underground.

The decision on financial distribution, towards funding line extensions or completely new connections, should be taking place prior to decisions on spatial planning. This will steer us towards achieving net-zero emissions, potentially incentivising individuals to change their behaviour and start using sustainable transport as their default choice of travel.

Looking at infrastructure for Electric Vehicles (EVs), England still has a long way to go to make transport systems seamless for EVs. Only when new developments are in place and occupied do developers start thinking of the possibility of delivering infrastructure for sustainable modes, by which point habits have been formed and moving away from the default car use becomes way more challenging, if not impossible.

From local and central governments and regional transport partnerships implementing policies, to businesses and individuals taking account of their actions, any national strategy should set a long-term direction and urgent and immediate priorities. England – unlike Wales and Scotland – lacks a coherent transport vision and a practical strategy that puts it at a greater risk of failing to achieve Net Zero and

³ [Better Planning, Better Transport, Better Places | CIHT](#)

Levelling-Up the economy. We welcome the publication of the DfT Transport Decarbonisation Plan⁴ and recommend that the transport strategy investment appraisal approach must demonstrate how it supports Net Zero and the development of necessary skills for the sector. We believe that the delivery of rail and urban transport networks and infrastructure should be supported and guided by the right professional people with the necessary skillsets.

2. What spatial planning and associated policy and legislative changes would help unlock the delivery of rail and urban transport projects?

We believe that introducing a long-term strategy for England could create an opportunity to establish a framework that would define key roles and co-ordination mechanisms for national and local governments, sub-national transport bodies, regulatory and monitoring bodies, and other stakeholders. The government should develop the policy, indicate the funding and all other interventions in the long-term strategy accompanied by a consolidated pipeline of other programmes and projects. That would ensure the available resources are allocated in the most effective way to support the objectives of the overall transport strategy. It is essential to highlight the need of policy and funding to support the development of necessary skills and capacity to deliver projects and objectives for both rail and urban transport projects.

It is important not to overlook the potential for larger developments to facilitate transformational improvements in walking, cycling and public transport accessibility for existing communities as well as new growth areas. It can be powerful to know how people currently travel for regular trips in their local area, for example to work, using data derived from the latest available census or origin-destination data. Using this as a baseline enables transport planners to forecast what impact significant sustainable transport investments – such as segregated cycle routes, dedicated bus priority to support new services, or a new railway station – could have on local residents, employees and visitors, as well as occupiers of the new developments.

The capital costs and delivery timescales of railway infrastructure can mean a high risk of delivery. The business case for rail investments also demands very high sustained passenger volumes, which will, in most cases, be greatly beyond the ability of a locality to sustain if limited or no service is currently offered. It is even less likely that the largest of site allocations could, on its own, justify a new station, much less building or reopening a rail line, without a much wider strategic justification.⁵

CIHT responded to the draft National Network National Policy Statement. In our response we highlighted two key points:

⁴ [Transport decarbonisation plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91212/transport-decarbonisation-plan.pdf)

⁵ https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/10218/ciht-better-planning-a4_updated_linked_.pdf

Strengthens the commitment to move away from Predict & Provide as a guiding principle for network development. The current draft recognises that the Transport Decarbonisation Plan and other documents include a commitment to a take a vision led, Decide and Provide approach to developing our network. Unfortunately, parts of the draft, notably the section on network performance and meeting user needs rely heavily on DfT’s National Road Traffic Projections and place particular emphasis on a core scenario that projects a 22% increase in traffic between 2025 and 2060. This is used to justify a conclusion that “absolute traffic growth is likely under all scenarios, and therefore enhancements on the national road network will be necessary in order to ensure the national road network operates effectively in the face of growing demand.” (Section 3.31). This could be read as return to Predict and Provide and this ambiguity in the overall approach is unhelpful.

Responds to the Climate Change Committee’s advice that government needs to act on its acknowledgement of the need to limit traffic growth. We note that this contrasts negatively with the approach taken by the Welsh and Scottish governments. The discussion of the draft Appraisal for Sustainability of the NPS also reinforces our concern that the NPS will be interpreted as prioritising the accommodation of projected traffic growth. Clarity and confidence will be much improved if the final draft is able to demonstrate consistency between the NPS, the overarching legal requirement to achieve Net Zero, and the emissions reduction goals set out in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.⁶

We believe that if the National Network Policy Statement addresses these points, then it will provide the framework which will help unlock the delivery of rail and urban transport projects.

3. Are there best practice or wider international examples that could be adopted to support growth through unlocking transport network and infrastructure delivery?

London Overground might be considered as a successful example of transforming underused and inconsistent urban railway infrastructure into a frequently used service that hits passenger satisfaction records. Among many reasons, they owe success to a new integrated transport services provision system and station upgrades that allow trains to operate at full capacity and ease the burden of London Buses, National Rail and London Underground on busy routes.⁷

One factor that is worth noting on the success of the London Overground approach

⁶ <https://www.ciht.org.uk/media/17693/nnnps-consultation-ciht-2.pdf>

⁷ [London Underground - a Success Story: Transforming Neglected Urban Railway Infrastructure to Meet Capacity and Connectivity Demands | Request PDF \(researchgate.net\)](#)

is that it uses a concession model (whereby Transport for London (TfL) pays a fee to the train operator to run the service whilst TfL takes the risk of rising or falling revenue). As highlighted in the Williams-Shapps Plan⁸ for Railways many railways across Europe, including local and regional services in Germany and Sweden, use a concession model to contract with private partners to operate trains. These contracts have been more successful than franchising in enabling operators to be held to account for running trains on time, delivering passenger satisfaction and controlling costs⁹.

CIHT members also shared examples that one might find useful: ‘Cities like Barcelona and Bogota (2022 Sustainable Transport Award Winner)¹⁰ set the pace in delivering sustainable modes decades ago and are now considered historical best practice examples internationally. The most recent initiative towards reducing transport emissions is investigated in Sweden, where the road networks are being upgraded to provide charging for electric vehicles whilst these are moving.’¹¹

Clarity and certainty of policy and funding

4. What are the key tenets of a successful, strategic long-term policy for the delivery of rail and urban transport networks, taking into account wider decarbonisation and transport integration goals?

We support the sustainable transport hierarchy with walking and wheeling at the top, followed by active travel (cycling) and then followed by public transport. Many more short journeys could be made on foot or by bike instead of by car. Public transport will support decarbonisation and support greener, fairer, happier, healthier and more prosperous cities.

CIHT’s Improving Local Highways recommended that the government commits to deliver a four-point strategy for the Local Highway Network (LHN) that will create a vision, funding and focus over the next ten years. We believe that if the government does not change the current approach then we will not fully:

- Achieve healthier lifestyles if we do not invest to support active travel to encourage walking and cycling
- Supporting a move to net zero through improved public transport, modal shift, and infrastructure for electric vehicles

5. What reforms to current transport funding approaches would support the safeguarding and expansion of rail and urban transport networks

⁸ [Great British Railways \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

⁹ <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60cb29dde90e0743ae8c29c1/gbr-williams-shapps-plan-for-rail.pdf>

¹⁰ [2022: Bogotá, Colombia — The Sustainable Transport Award \(staward.org\)](https://staward.org)

¹¹ [Sweden is building the world's first permanent electrified road for EVs to charge while driving | Euronews](https://www.euronews.com)

and infrastructure? Does the Green Book allow for sufficient factors to be taken into consideration and what should any additional factors/considerations be regarding infrastructure?

Most transport journeys begin and end on the local network and any highway investment must include a focus on the vital role played by local roads. Government has the opportunity to provide clear, long-term views on how we will use the transport network and support this with a long-term approach (at least over 10 - 20 years) to transport investments. As a minimum, CIHT calls for a 5-year commitment for local roads maintenance/renewal funding (a Road Investment Strategy for local roads).

6. What mechanisms are available to facilitate effective public/private relationships and funding?

There is a need to improve the efficiency of how funding is allocated to local highway authorities by reducing the number of complicated funding mechanisms and bidding processes.

7. What role does the maintenance of existing transport assets play in harnessing growth and how could the current approach be improved?

With ageing infrastructure and the challenges presented with climate adaptation for more extreme weather there is a need for sustained long-term investment. Without a new strategy, the local highway network may struggle to facilitate business growth, enhance productivity, seize economic opportunities, and meet the nation's needs for a sustainable future.

We believe that insufficient funding is allocated to asset maintenance. Investment in highway maintenance brings a high return, approximately for every £1 spent in increased maintenance comes a £2.70 return¹². Currently, money that is allocated for maintenance is not ring-fenced and so is often diverted for other expenses.

Supporting a transition, particularly in urban areas, from cars to walking and cycling, will require a network that is well-maintained. The failure to maintain our existing infrastructure can deter people from cycling (due to poor road conditions), and footway slips, trips and falls are a cost to the NHS. There is a vital need to maintain investment into our existing infrastructure.

The current approach to maintenance could be improved by creating a fund which local authorities can apply to when extreme weather conditions cause catastrophic failure of road infrastructure, bridges, retaining walls etc. Climate change is causing

¹² [Valuing the benefits of road maintenance: summary \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61444/valuing-the-benefits-of-road-maintenance-summary.pdf)

more extreme weather events and the funding mechanism for maintenance of road infrastructure has not adapted to this.

Devolution and sustainable partnerships

- 8. What role does devolution have in supporting and accelerating the delivery of rail and urban transport networks and infrastructure fit for the future?**

No comments.

- 9. How can effective relationships be facilitated between all tiers of government, to help accelerate growth and deliver rail and urban transport networks and infrastructure?**

No comments.

- 10. How can the capacity of public bodies be enhanced to effectively partner, procure and deliver urban transport and rail networks and infrastructure and provide value for money?**

Buses are a key component of urban transport networks. CIHT hosts the Bus Centre of Excellence (BCoE). BCoE is a place for those working within the bus sector to come together to share best practices and develop skills in order to deliver better bus services across England. There is a need to ensure that the sector collaborates and learns from good practice – this is a key tenet of ensuring the successful delivery of long-term policy for urban transport networks. Whether following the franchising or the enhanced partnership model for improving local bus services, all places in the country need the right skills and capability to deliver attractive bus services as part of a net zero transport system. The Bus Centre of Excellence will help grow skills and understanding in order to deliver better bus services.

Private Sector and Industry Capacity

- 11. How can effective private sector investment be best leveraged in the long term to unlock growth?**

No comments.

12. What can be done to build resilient and efficient supply chains and necessary skills to accelerate infrastructure delivery and maximise value/job creation to local communities?

No comments.

13. How to best harness the benefits and be adaptable to future technological trends in the sector?

The main question the transportation sector must ask itself when embracing any future technology is – how will this bring maximum benefit to society?

This is an approach CIHT has taken recently when we investigated the role of data and artificial intelligence (AI) in achieving transport decarbonisation¹³. We did not want to write a report on technology for the sake of technology, instead we highlighted how AI can be used for transport decarbonisation by:

- **Encouraging modal shift** by making active travel a more attractive option
- **Decarbonising road transport** by supporting the rollout of electric vehicles whilst minimising pollution of petrol and diesel vehicles.
- **Implementing low carbon infrastructure** by predicting the best way to build and maintain assets.

Looking at how technology can best serve transportation users, other areas to investigate would be:

- **Safety** - using both in-vehicle and out-of-vehicle technology¹⁴ to minimise road deaths and improve infrastructure.
- **Reliability** – smart mobility solutions¹⁵ can be used to manage travel demand, increase traffic flow and improve accurate predictions of journey times.
- **Accessibility** – navigating the public realm must be made easier and more accessible for disabled people. This is an area CIHT is working on this year and will produce a report on in the summer.

Another important issue the transportation sector must consider is our skills gap, especially when it comes to embracing future technology.

¹³ [The role of data and artificial intelligence in achieving transport decarbonisation | CIHT](#)

¹⁴ [The co-dependency of road safety and technology | CIHT](#)

¹⁵ [Key Takeaways from CIHT Masterclass – The latest technology for smart mobility](#)

This issue spans from the public sector, where only 4% of civil servants are digital professionals¹⁶, to industry, with predictions that Britain will run out of electric vehicle mechanics by 2030¹⁷.

We must also recognise that data will underpin most new technologies and the DfT have already released plans for encouraging open data in their Transport Data Strategy¹⁸.

To ensure that transport practitioners are able to comply with any new data regulations or standards, training will need to be provided. This is something CIHT raised when submitting a consultation response to the Transport Select Committee's 'Future of transport data' inquiry. CIHT particularly highlighted the need for skills in:

- **Data collection** knowing *what* data to collect and how to do this.
- **Data storage** knowing how to store the data you have and find the data you don't have.
- **Data analysis** knowing how to draw meaningful conclusions and present them effectively.

Enabling technology skills for the transport sector is also an area CIHT is working on this year with plans to publish a report in the spring.

Ends

¹⁶ [Digital transformation in government: addressing the barriers to efficiency - National Audit Office \(NAO\) press release](#)

¹⁷ [Britain to run out of electric vehicle mechanics by 2030 - Social Market Foundation. \(smf.co.uk\)](#)

¹⁸ [Transport data strategy: innovation through data - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)