

Environment, Planning & Transport Committee
Policy Review of Public Transport
Consultation Report

Comments by Sustrans Cymru

Sustrans

Sustrans is an engineering charity that develops practical projects to encourage more people to walk and cycle - as a first step towards reducing motorised transport and tackling its adverse effects. Sustrans has pioneered the development of the National Cycle Network (NCN), a visionary project to provide a 10,000 mile network of cycle routes across the UK. The network is a linked series of traffic free paths and traffic calmed and minor roads, connecting urban centres and the countryside and reaching all parts of the UK. These routes will provide a safe, attractive, high quality network for cyclists and a major new amenity for walkers and wheelchair users. The NCN is the UK's and Wales' single most important piece of cycling infrastructure. As well as providing the backbone of new urban networks, it will also form a critical lifeline for rural tourism. Linkage of the NCN to public transport is a critical means of encouraging people to walk and cycle more. This is a key aim of Sustrans' Safe Routes to Stations programme which focuses on developing safe routes for walking and cycling to rail and bus interchanges.

General

Sustrans welcomes this report and supports its ten year 'Vision' to develop a public transport system that is easy to use. Sustrans feels strongly that there must be clear linkage between these aims (and the investment required to realise them) and the provision of better facilities for walking and cycling.

Car traffic will only reduce if there are practical alternatives to the short car journey that accounts for such large proportions of traffic congestion. What is required is a quality public transport system that is accessible and easy to use. Walking and cycling must be seen as key components of such a system.

Walking has been described as the 'glue' that links public transport journeys while cycling can significantly expand the catchment of public transport interchanges.

Generations of under-investment have produced a fragmented and un-reliable public transport system with a poor public image. Negative perceptions of public transport are underscored to a large degree by the poor quality of public transport interchanges and their poor accessibility.

Sustrans' Safe Routes to Stations programme sets out tackle these issues by making it easier for people to walk and cycle to rail and bus stations. We feel strongly that any programme of investment to improve public transport quality must be co-ordinated with significant investment in facilities to encourage access by walking and cycling. Key measures to improve patronage should include:

- Safe and direct routes to rail and bus stations to improve access for pedestrians within a 1km-3km catchment area;
- Safe and direct routes to interchanges to improve access for cyclists from within a 3km-5km catchment area.
- Physical measures to implement safe routes between rail and bus stations;
- Clear, interactive signing to improve legibility, orientation and to publicise the location of interchange facilities;
- Ease of access and movement within interchanges e.g. lift facilities and provision of ramp facilities with moderate gradients;
- Better security through improved staffing and CCTV;
- Better travel information including the introduction of clock face timetabling;
- Secure cycle storage at rail and bus interchanges;
- Improvements to rail rolling stock capacity including:
 - Facilities for at least six cycles on all trains as recommended by the National Cycling Strategy;
 - In addition to the above, space for at least one larger cycle such as a tandem, tricycle or long-wheel-base recumbent cycle;
 - Where trains consist of multiple units, all cycle stowage spaces must be accessible and useable;
 - Proper liaison mechanisms to ensure consistent cycle carriage on connecting local services;
- Innovative schemes to facilitate carriage of bicycles on buses;
- Adequate resources to enable a continual, co-ordinated programme of marketing of public transport through various mass media.

We feel it essential that these requirements become principal measurements of quality and are given sufficient priority for funding and investment.

Specific Comments on Report Findings

Kite Mark Scheme p 17

We strongly recommend that the measures listed above become part of the key criteria for Kite Mark schemes.

Investment

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Investment to address the historical deficit must include sufficient provision for better walking and cycling and cycling facilities as described above. Investment must be long term to avoid an incremental approach to investment and decision-making. Implementation would ideally be through ten year spending plans.

Key Projects

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We support the idea of **all mode information centres** across Wales. Sustrans is developing pilot schemes in England including a current project in Frome in Somerset. The use of '**Individualised Marketing**' and '**TravelSmart**' initiatives must also be recognised and resources be made available accordingly.

Individualised Marketing is based on dialogue-based marketing technique that works by identifying people through household surveys who are willing or able to switch to alternative travel modes. Personalised travel information and incentives are then used to encourage these people to walk or cycle, use the bus or car-share for a few journeys per week, instead of taking their own car.

Individualised Marketing has been used to promote public transport in projects covering around 1.3 million people across Europe and in Australia. The approach was extended to include walking and cycling as part of the highly successful behaviour change programme in Western Australia, called '**TravelSmart**'. The recent large-scale application covering 35,000 people in South Perth achieved a 14% reduction in car trips and increases in walking of 35%, cycling (61%) and public transport use (17%). Individualised Marketing is undoubtedly a very cost-effective means of achieving modal shift.

In Gloucester Sustrans is working with Gloucester City Council on an Individualised Marketing Project adopting the TravelSmart brand developed in Western Australia. The project covers 500 people in the suburb of Quedgley and is funded through the Local Authority's Transport Grant settlement. The project team is working with public transport operators, the parish council and other partners with a view to starting the first travel surveys in the autumn (2001). A similar pilot project is taking place in the market town of Frome, Somerset, where Sustrans is working with the county's Rural Transport Partnership on a range of new transport and information initiatives. These include the development of a rural travel centre.

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As outlined above, provisions for easier access by walking and cycling must be an integral part of **Interchange improvements**. The importance of this must be emphasised at every opportunity.

Investment in Park and Ride facilities must be considered very carefully. Park and Ride facilities located on the edge of urban areas can have the effect of freeing up road space in more central areas and can thus add to congestion problems. Experience in Bristol and elsewhere suggests that Park and Ride can actually diminish usage of rural bus services. Its provision can mean that regular bus passengers in rural areas are tempted to take the car further to good Park and ride facilities. Investment in Park and Ride should not be at the expense of investment to improve access for cycling and walking, particularly where such improvements can encourage non-car access to interchanges. Park and Ride should generally only be introduced in conjunction with a reduction parking space in city centres.

Bespoke school buses are an important means of reducing car journeys on the school run. However, they should not be seen as a substitute for schemes that encourage to walk and cycle to school.

It should be pointed out that American-style school buses that are now being imported from the USA for use in the UK do not meet access requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act. Due to their design, these buses offer little scope for use beyond the school journey. This raises the question of how cost-effective they are and whether investment might be better targeted in other areas, such as Safe Routes to Schools projects.

The development of **Green Travel Plans** must be closely related to investment in infrastructure and vice versa. Green Travel Plans must, wherever possible, include measures to encourage commuting by walking and cycling and which combine these modes with public transport.

Delivering the Vision

Regional Public Transport Strategies – Page 20

We strongly support the concept of regional public transport strategies that reflect bus strategies and cover rail and community transport (Recommendation 4). These strategies must be closely related to Unitary Development Plans, Local Transport Plans and regional and local walking and cycling strategies. We agree with recommendation 5 that regional strategies should be the principal guide to funding by the National Assembly for Wales (Recommendation 5).

Organisational Structures

Potential of Consortia

Stronger and better-resourced regional consortia will enable better co-ordination between local authorities and will be more likely to command political will. They will also be better placed to raise the profile of integrated transport and to develop branding of regional facilities and services.

Whilst we acknowledge and welcome the progress being made by existing consortia in their current form, we would strongly support any move to strengthen the constitution of the regional consortia and give them their own separate existence, building upon existing arrangements (Recommendation 7).

Raising the profile and strengthening the role of the consortia can only be achieved through better resourcing. We would strongly support any proposal to allocate dedicated administrative support and technical staff to each consortium. We would also urge the National Assembly to have representation on each regional body.

Compacts

We are very supportive of the idea of compacts between local authorities and the National Assembly as suggested by the WLGA or indeed between the regional consortia and the Assembly. Compacts could provide the basis for the commitment of capital funding to long term spending plans. We would support this.

Alternative Organisational Structures – All Wales Public Transport Authority

We are not convinced that the creation of an all Wales Passenger Transport Authority/ Executive is necessary to provide strategic direction to the delivery of public transport improvements and the integration of provision. We feel that necessary strategic direction could be provided by four strengthened/re-constituted regional consortia as described in section 4 of the report. The creation of a PTA/E would introduce an additional tier of control. However, it would be no better placed than the regional consortia to address specific regional problems or cross border issues. We therefore feel that the advantages of an all Wales PTA/E are questionable.

Neither would we support the proposal for a PTA/E for south east Wales. We suggest strategic direction and co-ordination of procurement could be adequately performed by a regional transport consortium for South East Wales comprising the SWIFT and TIGER local authorities.

In counseling against an all Wales PTA/E or an equivalent for south east Wales, we would however support moves by the Assembly to seek stronger powers to regulate the bus and rail industry in Wales including equivalent powers to the Scottish Executive to direct the SRA in matters concerning franchising and strategic developments.

Summary

We hope that the above comments are helpful. Any queries should be addressed to Sustrans Cymru at the address below:

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