

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

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Title: Wales 2040 - A Vision for Transport - A Summary View by the
Wales Transport Strategy Group

**Wales 2040 – A Vision
for Transport**

**A Summary View by the
Wales Transport
Strategy Group**

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Wales Transport Strategy Group (WTSG) comprises representatives of five professional bodies with an interest in transport in Wales. It is independent of any political or organisational affiliations. WTSG's report, and this summary of it, looks 30 – 40 years hence to provide a platform against which current trends, policies and programmes can be tested. A view has been taken of the long term because of the importance of avoiding mistakes which will have a profound adverse impact upon the interest of future generations. There can be clear recognition that some current short term actions simply make no sense when viewed against long term scenarios, even though no great certainty can be attached to specific long term forecasts. Timely actions are now imperative as robust and necessary responses to nearly all long term scenarios. WTSG advocates moving away from short termism in transport and other decision making.

2 BACKGROUND TO DISCUSSION

Movement of people and goods is a by product of human activity and choices and is a complex web of economic, social and personal decisions. The demand for travel will depend upon social and economic conditions and custom and the perceived transport opportunities available. In looking forward to 2040 in Wales, there are many scenarios that may be envisaged. The future will depend upon how choices and opportunities change. Some may be moulded by internal policies relating to land use and infrastructure development as well as social agenda and economic planning. Others will be externally driven and may relate to energy resources, international politics and trade. On trade, Wales' connections with Europe will intensify and strengthen.

If past trends in transport were to continue, the cost of transport as a proportion of income would continue to fall in real terms and the average length of journeys would increase. With a continuation of a non-interventionist policy, there will be a natural saturation point for Wales which will result in these trends levelling off. Alternatively, the cost of transport may be increased as an instrument of policy to better control the growth in demand for transport. This seems the most sensible and likely approach where user charging will be introduced for private and commercial transport (i.e. where the cost to the user reflects all costs to the community/environment arising from the movement involved). Expectations, which are increasingly unrealistic, for ever increasing travel may thus be dampened.

There are a number of headline observations that can be stated, namely:

- personal mobility will become more expensive;
- personal mobility will involve taxation at some point;
- society needs to be organised more on a local basis; and
- technology will help, but we cannot be sure as to how much.

WTSG has looked to the future by considering the basic components of the transport market. In each case, pressures on transport which must be faced have been identified; then some opportunities that present themselves now and might help secure our future have been postulated. Comments presented here reflect in certain aspects of transport policy but an attempt is made to identify issues that are of specific relevance to the longer term. Consequently, the suggestions put forward are not intended to be a complete guide to transport planning.

3 ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility is an aspiration of society and commerce. It differs from mobility in that accessibility is about getting somewhere to do things and mobility is about moving about. They are not the same thing. We must ask how accessibility can be improved whilst reducing the need to travel through land use planning and the use of technology.

3.1 Pressures

- Wales has many poor road links, limited coverage with rail services and poor/limited infrastructure for buses.
- Public transport links are currently generally slow.
- There will be more concentration of services in larger towns with adverse traffic effects.
- There is demand for cross border journeys to work in north east and south east Wales.
- Tourism will remain important to the Welsh economy.
- The constraints of housing supply in border regions and disparity in local economies between Welsh and English (North West and South West) regions will increase the pressure for long distance car commuting.
- Within the urban areas of Wales, town centres will increasingly become popular places to live.
- Public transport is often rejected on perceived convenience, comfort and safety grounds rather than on availability and cost. This trend must be reversed.

3.2 Opportunities

- Longer distance links must increasingly favour journeys that benefit the economy and society rather than personal preferences. Public transport must play a greater role in this respect.
- The concept of the Land Bridge to Ireland places Wales in a strategic position in Europe.
- High speed rail links to London must be assumed.
- Better air links will be most justified where they help economic development.
- Long distance coach services need to be promoted.
- Within the rural areas of Wales, there is potential for community transport through improved local bus services and innovative shared use of smaller vehicles.
- Higher car occupancy is needed for the journey to work.
- Public transport corridors must be allocated in urban and peri-urban situations.
- There must be a presumption against out of town commercial and retail land uses.
- A major change in journey to school movements is needed.

4 LAND USE

Transport demand derives mainly from the use made of land. Development Plans need to focus upon sustainability and the creation of opportunities to reduce travel demand.

4.1 Pressures

- In urban areas, planning policy is already in place for most traffic generating uses but, apart from retail, there is not much evidence of it being followed.

4.2 Opportunities

- Spatial planning at national, regional and local levels is strongly advocated.
- There is considerable potential for local development plans and local transport plans to be complementary in supporting sustainable transport.
- The public sector should establish its administrative and service centres and public buildings in sustainable town centre locations.
- Action is needed on "out of town" development and illogical appeal decisions.
- Transport impacts of non transport services (such as health, social services and education outlets) must be assessed through transport audits of major public projects and policies.
- Multi-modal transport assessment must be a key element of development planning.

5 NETWORK CAPACITY AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Network capacity and the present infrastructure are a constraint on travel. Past policy has been to respond directly to anticipated demand in order to supply additional capacity. In urban areas, this prospectus is unrealistic. Predict and provide is not universally sustainable. Urban areas will need to be provided with additional public transport capability. This may be achieved through better use of existing networks/infrastructure and/or new infrastructure/systems to provide better levels of service. Inter-urban road and rail capacity should be provided and maintained along main travel corridors to accommodate identified need so as not to constrain economic development.

5.1 Pressures

- There will be growing congestion leading to health problems.
- There will be severe localised congestion in peaks at some transport nodes and in some service centres.
- Movement levels between north and south Wales will remain modest.

5.2 Opportunities

- Outside built-up areas, where justifiable, capacity constraints on the road system must be addressed without duplicating capacity for private transport on whole routes.

- There will be potential for local road network improvements and bypasses where junction improvements might offer better value than carriageway capacity.
- There should be a presumption against major new road capacity provision.
- Space needs to be allocated for urban public transport networks to serve residential areas and service/employment centres.
- Existing and former public transport routes must be retained as public transport rights of way removing, where necessary, ill-conceived land use developments.

6 LIFE STYLE/ECONOMY

Life style and the economy are the other drivers of travel demand. Past trends have resulted in greatly increased commuter travel, an explosion in leisure travel and "just in time" freight delivery from worldwide sources.

6.1 Pressures

- People will always wish for increasingly gratifying and fulfilling lives, but increased travel should not be seen as a necessary adjunct to such achievement.

6.2 Opportunities

- It is sensible to deal with demand before supply.
- Car usage is the issue, not car ownership (comparison between UK and Continental Europe).
- New technologies will offer new opportunities which will affect life style decisions – internet shopping, home deliveries, tele/video conferencing etc
- Intervention is needed on the effects of advertising upon life style decisions as regards the demand for transport.
- At the present time, encouragement should be taken from the generational change in attitudes towards drink/driving and smoking. This shows what may be achieved in terms of social responsibility if targets are generally accepted and pursued.

7 ENVIRONMENT

The environment is placed under increasing threat as a result of emissions from vehicles, energy consumption, noise, vibration, and the potentially intrusive nature of transport infrastructure.

7.1 Pressures

- The link between carbon emissions and global warming is beyond challenge.
- It is difficult to build large infrastructure projects given their effects upon landscape and the built environment.
- Impact on the environment will increasingly influence the form of transport investment.

7.2 Opportunities

- Well designed, mixed land use development in urban areas that form part of an acceptable spatial framework will reduce the dependence on the private car whilst improving the ambience of the built environment.
- Development of urban transit systems will capture a larger share of the journey to work market by public transport.
- Introduction of graduated transport user charge rates will reflect the cost to the environment of movement in areas/times of the day where this might vary.
- The maintenance of free flow conditions on the inter-urban transport routes will minimise energy consumption.
- The promotion of walking and cycling will support health, community orientation and social interaction.

8 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

In 2040, the need for transport is expected to be at least as great as it is today. The demand for personal travel could be greater unless there are significant changes in land use development and life style, especially with respect to employment, education, housing and retail. A higher proportion of travel within urban areas will need to be made by modes other than the private car, especially at peak times. This will require significant investment in urban transit systems along the South Wales coastal belt, throughout the Valleys in the south, and in the coastal towns and Deeside in North Wales.

The strategic road and rail networks should not impose capacity restrictions and hence should not be a source of congestion during the working day. This will require a new rail crossing of the Severn Estuary, as well as road and rail modifications in the southern east/west corridor.

The demand for north to south road links is likely to remain modest, requiring only limited, incremental, investment and the main rail link can be developed with modest outlay.

The education sector has a very important role to play. Firstly, it has become a primary generator of motorised traffic in its own right. There is considerable scope to rationalise situations to minimise vehicular movements. Secondly, education can influence life style and travel habits. This may take a generation of persuasion and education, but it will be possible to promote socially and environmentally responsible travel patterns which result in reduced dependence upon the private car.

The process of education, encouragement, persuasion, evangelism and management of expectations, is one that engages us all, no matter what our role in transport or in society at large.

Links to Ireland in the north and the south will remain important, and will continue to reinforce the need to maintain high quality free flow conditions on the strategic east/west routes that are components of the Trans European Network.

The importance of Wales' ports and airports in the longer term future remains an open question. There is potential for expansion in use of Cardiff International Airport, but even the most ambitious plans are expected to have limited impact on the overall transport market. The Welsh ports have previously experienced decline in throughput with the demise of manufacturing industries, and there is little to suggest that the attractiveness and/or competitiveness of these ports will increase relative to English south coast ports. Nevertheless, access to marine transport remains as a potential, albeit minority, alternative mode of transport.

In summary, major investment will be needed along the M4 corridor for both road and rail to promote the national/regional economy and to reinforce the links to Ireland, England and beyond. Investment in urban transit systems is required as well as other means of diverting the journey to work and to school away from low occupancy private car use throughout Wales. Finally, a responsible approach to spatial planning will be vitally important to afford future generations accessibility to services, leisure and employment commensurate with a quality of life style that befits both urban and rural areas of a modern European country set in the 21st Century.