

## **ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE**

**Date:** Wednesday, 1 November 2000  
**Time:** 2.00pm - 5.00pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales

## **THE DEVELOPING TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK FOR WALES**

### **Purpose**

1. To outline the considerations to date within the development of an overall strategic Transport Framework on the future transport needs in Wales.
2. To inform and assist the Committee in taking forward their review of public transport.

### **Timing**

3. This paper is being brought to the Committee now to coincide with the committee's deliberations on the extent and programme for its public transport review.

### **Background**

4. The Cabinet wishes to establish a clear Framework within which transport can contribute to the overall aims of the Assembly. To enable the Assembly to develop its own transport programmes and for others to do likewise a strategic Transport Framework is being developed. A key element of the development of the framework relates to the need to provide an improved public transport system in Wales. This was recognised by the committee in its decision to carry out a review of existing services and longer term organisational needs, which the Cabinet strongly welcomes and wishes to support in every way possible.

### **Consideration**

5. When the Framework has been finalised it will enable robust assessment criteria to be applied to the development of programmes under the various components. These programmes will then be developed within the budget constraints ensuring the maximum use of objective one funding for transport will be made.

## **Cross-Cutting Themes**

6. These will be addressed generally within the Framework. The Framework will be subject to a sustainability assessment when the Assembly Sustainable Development Scheme and the methodologies are finalised. On the basis of that assessment and the fact that the vast majority of transport projects are subject to detailed environmental assessment explicitly addressing health issues, a separate health impact assessment has not been carried out.

## **Action for the Committee**

7. The Committee is asked to consider the information supplied and determine any further information or support requirements it has to enable it to carry out the review.

## **Contact Point**

Jane Large

Transport Policy Division

## **REPORT TO ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE ON THE DEVELOPING TRANSPORT FRAMEWORK**

### **Introduction**

1. This report outlines the considerations to date within the development of an overall strategic Transport Framework on the future transport needs in Wales. It is presented now to inform and assist the committee in taking forward their review of public transport.

2. The Framework will contain a wide range of measures defining where the Assembly has a direct role, where it will create the conditions for others to play their part and where it will bring influence to bear to bring about the desired results.

3. The Transport Framework is governed by the Assembly's overarching policies and how they can be interpreted within the constraints of sustainable development, from these we can create a vision of what Wales' transport system needs to be delivering in the future.

4. That system should deliver consistent adequate levels of accessibility, tackling social disadvantage and inequities, it should provide strategic mobility to tackle regeneration and other economic aims, all within benchmarks for air quality, noise and other environmental parameters. We will also need to ensure that in the future through better education and improved awareness, we deliver changes in travel patterns and transport usage, including freight, consistent with real needs and the full social costs of the journeys.

5. A much improved public transport system for Wales will be key to delivering the changes we seek and

the committee's review will be an important step in that process. We have already determined that more frequent and better quality services on rail and bus networks are essential. We seek services with better links and interchange with other means of transport as well as better information on all transport modes with active encouragement to use the public transport system. Cycling and walking must be made safer and easier with both making a much greater contribution to our journeys.

6. We also have within our key long term transport aims:

- | To enable about a quarter of commuting to work to take place by means other than by car compared to about a fifth in the late 1990s
- | To reduce the pressure on the environment by improving public transport and offering alternatives to travel by car.
- | To encourage a higher proportion of freight to be carried by rail.

7. The main element's of the committee's review are currently defined as:

- | transport services within the Assembly's existing powers and the current regulatory and organisational framework;
- | the longer-term issues concerning the organisational arrangements for setting public transport policy, including the regulation of the industry and the provision of support for socially necessary services.

### **The Short-term Improvements to Public Transport**

8. The committee will wish to take into account the information contained within the enclosed Table 1 and the following paragraphs. These show the organisational arrangements for public transport in Wales, together with Assembly actions taken or planned to date and the anticipated outputs from those actions.

9. The committee may also wish to note that the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) predict that prior to the introduction of its 10 Year Plan published in Transport 2010 the baseline passenger rail demand in Great Britain would have grown by 23% by 2010 compared to the year 2000. The DETR predict that implementation of its Plan will raise this figure to 51%. DETR is also predicting that measures put forward through its Transport Plan will support an increase in bus ridership by 10%, with the objective of an hourly bus service within a ten minute walk for a third more rural households.

10. The negotiations on the new Wales and Borders rail franchise are likely to be concluded by the Summer 2001. The Strategic Rail Authority expects that the new longer franchises will attract significant investment from the successful operator, both in rolling stock and in the management of stations. The Assembly has made clear its aspirations for improved frequency, reliability, and punctuality of services, and for improved security and comfort on trains and in stations. The Assembly is looking for active marketing and measures to improve the attractiveness of services, and working partnerships with other modes and local authorities to improve interchange facilities, whether through infrastructure, through

ticketing, or better information. The rail network created will contribute to the strategy of provide links to all major settlements in Wales, either through direct rail link, or fast, reliable connection via express coach.

11. Financial support for Transport Grant Packages in the draft Budget published on 19 October included the following increased allocations within the budget planning horizon (£45m : 2001-02; £56m : 2001-02; £66m : 2002-03 (total allocation)). These figures and the other figures quoted in this paper for future financial years are subject to approval by the Assembly. The programme is already committed to provide some £14m to package schemes in 2001-02. This programme represents one of the key levers available to the Assembly to secure the identified improvements in public transport.

12. Direct assistance to bus service operators will be increased through the Bus Fuel Duty Rebate (£11.5m: £15.5m: £15.5m); and the Bus Subsidy Grant (£6m: £7m: £8m:) both of which are currently subject to review. This assistance targeted to ensure that it improves accessibility, increases socially necessary services and provides sufficient forward stability to enable Local Authorities to develop a bus strategy for 2003. Community Transport and other flexible forms of transport should be planned as complementary to existing bus services by local authorities to improve accessibility. Total support for community transport, including the Welsh Rural Transport Grant is also increased (£0.6m: £0.6m: £0.6m) and this scheme is also under review to improve community transport provision in urban and rural areas. Transport Grant funds are used to support bus priority measures at junctions, the creation of bus lanes and improved bus stop and boarding provisions.

13. Better information on public transport services is now available. PTI Cymru, a public transport telephone information service commenced operations in the Summer. The Assembly will be co-operating with Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in the development of Transport Direct which will provide this service and in addition real-time information on the roads – this should be available from 2003. The Assembly expects the new rail franchise operator to deliver improved real-time information, accessible to all including disabled people across the rail network. Transport Grant is also supporting the provision of timetable information at stops and the introduction of real-time information.

14. In addition, the Assembly has supported a pilot study of Smartcard technology to support integrated ticketing. Local authorities are bidding for Transport Grant support to develop this approach more widely within their integrated transport packages.

15. The Assembly's aim to increase the proportion of freight carried by rail, is consistent with the broader objectives of the Strategic Rail Authority, which aims to increase freight on rail by 80% by 2010 (equivalent to attaining a market share for rail of 10%. The Strategic Rail Authority is currently developing a rail freight strategy which will include lines in Wales, and the Assembly will be contributing to this exercise. Part of this exercise is a review of the grants available. Historically, the Welsh Office provided Freight Facilities Grant for businesses which are able to show they are able to transfer traffic from road to rail and thus deliver an environmental benefit. There has been a low take up of this grant, and it is hoped that the Strategic Rail Authority will improve the grant regime so that it becomes a more attractive offering and thus more effective in removing freight from the roads.

16. The Assembly will be enhancing current concessionary fares on local buses for pensioners and disabled people. From 1 April 2001 bus passes which typically cost between £3 and £5 per year will be

free. From 1 April 2002 the current half fare concession which is available in most authorities will be replaced with free travel and there will be no time restrictions on the use of passes. Existing alternative schemes can be retained if local authorities wish to do so provided recipients are offered a choice. Local authorities will administer the scheme and the Assembly will be providing additional funds to enable them to do so. (£1.2m in 2001-02, £16.2m in 2002-03 and £21.2m in 2003-04). Local Authorities, bus companies and the Assembly are currently working together to ensure that the new arrangements are implemented effectively.

## **The Organisational Arrangements for Public Transport**

17. The delivery of efficient public transport will in all cases require a strong partnership between the various parties involved in regulating, planning and delivering passenger services. Central and Devolved government, and the associated regulatory bodies, interplay with Local Authorities and the transport industry in a complex matrix. There are two key areas that need to be addressed within any consideration of future organisational arrangements. Namely ensuring effective strategic planning to underpin a national network for Wales, and ensuring effective local planning to underpin an integrated system which will attract modal shift on the journey to work and school. These are taken in turn below:

### **Strategic Planning Arrangements**

18. The Assembly is well placed, because of its overall responsibility for economic regeneration, and sustainable development to identify areas where access to markets needs to be improved and to have an oversight of the key strategic needs of a national network. However, although it has overall control over the development of the Trunk Road network, the Assembly holds comparatively few powers which enable strategic control of the public transport trunk route equivalents - rail, air, or ports. All of these areas have been reserved, and the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, together with the Office of the Rail Regulator and the Shadow Strategic Rail Authority retain the lead.

19. So far the arrangement adopted by the Assembly has been to ensure strong working relationships, characterised by an open exchange of information. This has been particularly marked in the relationship with the shadow Strategic Rail Authority, where the Assembly has been able to feed in its aspirations and priorities for the rail network at each stage of the franchise process, and also into the various funding programmes and other consultation exercises which have been run. The relationship has been further formalised by the Transport Bill, which places a duty on the sSRA to consult the Assembly on all issues relating to Wales and on the appointment of a SRA Board member to represent Wales. A similar approach has been taken through joint working in the development of emerging policy on ports and air with colleagues in DETR.

20. The Assembly however has identified that it would like to have stronger powers in particular over rail strategy. The recent Partnership Agreement indicated that the Assembly objective is to have an office of the Strategic Rail Authority in Wales, and that it would like powers of direction over the new single franchise for Wales and Borders, and of appointment of a representative to the board of the SRA.

21. Achieving an office for Wales will rely upon an operational decision of the SRA. Achieving powers of direction and appointment will require primary legislation to be taken further, together with consideration of the impact of the inclusion of the English border counties within the franchise, and the interdependence of Welsh and English rail services.

### **Local Planning Arrangements**

22. The Assembly has greater control in relation to local public transport issues than national ones, though here again the development of transport services must be taken forward with Local Authorities. The Transport Bill offers some key additional powers to assist the development of a strategic approach to local transport. This is largely through the powers in relation to Local Transport Planning, to the definition and support of Quality Bus Partnerships and Quality Contracts, and to the ability to extend Concessionary Fares schemes. Local Authorities lead in delivering services, though there is also some input retained by Central Government, such as the specification of bus vehicle standards, and vehicle taxing. The Traffic Commissioner for Wales regulates bus services.

23. The Assembly, through guidance and the grant programmes which it operates can influence the way in which Local Authorities prioritise services to meet particular objectives such as modal shift (Transport Grant) or rural access (Bus Subsidy Grant). However, for travel to work areas, the Assembly currently has no overall control to ensure proper cross boundary transport planning. This is of particular relevance in Wales, with its unitary authority structure – where a single conurbation can cover a number of different authorities.

24. Local Authorities have met this challenge by forming co-operatives: SWIFT, SWITCH, TIGER , the Mid Wales Partnership and the North Wales Economic Forum. The Assembly Executive has welcomed this approach, and has supported the work of these consortia through Transport Grant payments, taking the line that the existing powers of the Assembly, complemented by strong working partnerships, can deliver effective local solutions.

25. The Assembly has previously discussed whether there is a need for more formal powers of direction over local authorities, such as might be provided by a Passenger Transport Authority (PTA) for all of Wales, or for urban regions within Wales. The Assembly has asked the EPT in its review to consider these possibilities and the recent Partnership Agreement indicated that the Assembly should explore the case for a PTA following completion of the committee's review. Any decision to have a PTA would require primary legislation, as the powers which authorised the establishment of PTAs in England and Scotland have since been repealed.

**TABLE 1 - PUBLIC TRANSPORT (INCL RAIL and FREIGHT)**

<u>Measure/Issue</u>	<u>Lead Organisation(s)</u>	<u>Assembly Actions</u>	<u>Output</u>
All Wales Rail Franchise.	Shadow Strategic Rail Authority (SRA).	<p>  Close liaison with SRA and Local Authorities to encourage successful bids for Rail Passenger Partnership funding which can later be taken up by new franchise holder.</p> <p>  Assembly rail bidders pack published setting down aspirations for new franchise and complementing more detailed aspirations</p>	<p>  Enhanced rail services improving punctuality, reliability and quality.</p> <p>  Extended services.</p> <p>  Better interchanges.</p> <p>  Coherent network complementary to bus services.</p> <p>  Better station environment,</p>

		<p>already published.</p> <p>  Support for key infrastructure projects which enable enhanced services within new franchise (see below).</p> <p>  Limited rail revenue support in short term.</p>	<p>marketing.</p> <p>  Improved integrated ticketing.</p>
<p>Current Franchises held by Virgin and First Great Western for long distance high speed rail links.</p>	<p>Shadow Strategic Rail Authority (SRA).</p>	<p>  Close liaison with SRA to reflect Assembly aspirations relevant to ongoing discussion with franchise holders.</p>	<p>  Enhanced rail services improving punctuality, reliability and quality.</p> <p>  Extended services.</p> <p>  Better interchanges.</p> <p>  Coherent network complementary to bus services.</p> <p>  Better marketing.</p> <p>  Improved integrated ticketing.</p>



<p>Improved rail services</p>	<p>SRA/Local Authorities/Train operators.</p>	<p>  Rail Passenger Partnership support.</p>	<p>  Enhanced rail services improving punctuality, reliability and quality.</p> <p>  Extended services.</p> <p>  Better interchanges.</p>
<p>Improved rail Infrastructure.</p>	<p>Railtrack plc/Local authorities.</p>	<p>  TG Packages financial support.</p> <p>  Local Transport Plans.</p> <p>  Funding from Strategic Rail Authority through Incremental Output Statements and other capital funding.</p>	<p>  Improved capacity of national network, to support improved service levels.</p> <p>  Better interchange facilities with both local transport and private car, leading to modal shift (Provision of park and ride facilities, safe cycling, general station access up-grades and provision for links with buses and taxis).</p> <p>  Improved safety and security in stations.</p>

<p>Improved Bus Services.</p>	<p>Local authorities/bus operators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Bus partnership fund (formula) to LAs.</li>   <li>  Bus Fuel Duty rebate funding to operators.</li>   <li>  Guidance from Assembly on Quality Partnerships under new regime.</li>   <li>  Guidance from Assembly on preparation of bus strategies within local transport plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  60% increase in socially necessary services by 2002.</li>   <li>  Coherent network of bus services complementary to rail services.</li>   <li>  Local authorities to have bus strategies in place which address accessibility by 2003.</li>   <li>  Proactive development of new services and facilities through partnership between operators and local authorities.</li> </ul>
<p>Port</p>	<p>Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, Port Authorities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Liaison with DETR to reflect Welsh interests within UK Ports Policy.</li>   <li>  Liaison with Port Authorities WDA and local authorities to develop new market opportunities, and improved transport links to ports, and freight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Ports offer safe, efficient operations, consistent with local priorities.</li>   <li>  Improved interchange and support for links to Ireland.</li> </ul>

		facilities.	
Ferry and Shipping Services.	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, Local Authorities, Operators.	<p>  Liaison with DETR to reflect Welsh interests within UK Shipping policy.</p> <p>  Facilitate Local Authority and Operator partnerships to develop improved interchange.</p>	<p>  Improved interchange, marketing, and through ticketing.</p> <p>  Develop services to Ireland.</p> <p>  Develop short sea shipping for freight carriage.</p>
Air Services.	Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, Airport Operators, Airlines.	<p>  Support for Welsh element of UK Regional Air Services study.</p> <p>  Liaison with DETR on development of airport and air services policy.</p> <p>  Funding to support improved surface links to airports.</p>	<p>  Improved interchange.</p>
Rail Freight	Rail freight operators Railway/Railtrack plc/ Strategic Rail Authority.	<p>  Freight facilities grant.</p> <p>  Liaison with Strategic Rail Authority on development of new freight grants framework.</p> <p>  Liaison with SRA on development of</p>	<p>  Greater flexibility and scope to get new markets due to simpler, more permissive grant aid.</p> <p>  Improved interchange between modes.</p>

		<p>Strategic Plan.</p> <p>  TG Packages offering support for improved infrastructure (gauge, facilities).</p> <p>  Support for Wentloog intermodal terminal.</p> <p>  Liaison with WDA and Local Authorities in commissioning freight studies.</p>	<p>  Strategic development of facilities to meet local authority plans for business development.</p>
<p>Concessionary Fares.</p>	<p>Local Authorities.</p>	<p>  Funding through Revenue settlement.</p>	<p>  Free passes for pensioners and disabled people on buses by April 2001.</p> <p>  Free passes and fares for pensioners and disabled people on buses by April 2002.</p>