



Regional Transportation Strategy Review

Discussion Document



Department for
**Regional
Development**

www.drdni.gov.uk

AN ROINN

Forbartha Réigiúnaí

MÄNNYSTRIE FUR

Kintra Pairts Fordèrin

ISBN: 978-1-904807-29-2

This page is intentionally left blank

Contents

Contents.....	i
How to Give Your Views.....	iii
1. The Context	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Programme for Government	1
1.3 Regional Development Strategy	2
1.4 Regional Transportation Strategy	2
1.5 Economy	4
1.6 Freight.....	5
1.7 Social Inclusion	6
1.8 Equality of Opportunity.....	6
1.9 Environment.....	7
1.10 Sustainable Development	10
1.11 Our Neighbours.....	10
1.12 The Review of Public Administration.....	11
1.13 Public Transport Reform	11
1.14 Conclusion	11
2. The Present	13
2.1 Monitoring of the Strategy	13
2.2 Transport Plans, Accessible Transport, Transportation and Land Use	13
2.3 Public Transport.....	15
2.4 Rapid Transit in the Belfast Metropolitan Area.....	16
2.5 Concessionary Fares	16
2.6 Rural Transport	17
2.7 Road Safety	17
2.8 Walking and Cycling	18
2.9 Travelwise.....	19
2.10 Roads	19
2.11 Connecting to our Air and Sea Ports.....	21
2.12 Conclusion	22
3. The Future	25
3.1 The Trends.....	25
3.2 Demand Management	31
3.3 The Way Forward?	32
3.4 Conclusion	33
4. The Questions.....	35

This page is intentionally left blank

How to Give Your Views

This Discussion Paper has been divided into several sections, the context, the present and the future. We have posed a number of questions at the end for discussion.

You can send us your views on the issues raised in this paper and on any other relevant issues which may not have been covered to the address below.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please contact us.

E-mail: tony.loughran@drdni.gov.uk

Tony Loughran
Department for Regional Development
Regional Planning and Transportation Division
Room 3-01
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB
Tel: (028) 9054 1167
Fax: (028) 9054 0604
Text phone: (028) 90540642

According to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (2000) all information contained in your response may be subject to publication or disclosure. This may include personal information such as your name and address. If you want your response or your name and address to remain confidential, you should explain why confidentiality is necessary. Your request will be granted only if it is consistent with Freedom of Information obligations. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer

generated by your email system will not be regarded as binding on the Department.

1. The Context

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Regional Transportation Strategy¹, published in 2002, aims to address the years of underinvestment in transport infrastructure here over a ten year period, while also promoting sustainable travel and encouraging the use of modes of travel other than the private car. It identifies the strategic priorities with realistic funding requirements and is used to secure public funding.

1.1.2 The Strategy is now due for review and while it is intended to look at where we are and what has been achieved we also need to look forward.

1.1.3 There are important decisions to make about the nature, content and direction of the revised Strategy and we would like to hear your views. The purpose of this paper is to raise issues which we believe are relevant. It is not definitive but rather aims to start a process of debate on how we can best ensure that our future transportation needs are met in ways which are both viable and sustainable.

1.2 Programme for Government

1.2.1 Our Programme for Government² states that we want to build a prosperous, fair and inclusive society, supported by a vibrant and dynamic economy and a rich and sustainable environmental heritage. The aim is to ensure that all parts of our region share in sustainable economic and social development and are able to contribute to and benefit from a shared and better future.

1.2.2 One of five key priorities is to focus on building our infrastructure. There is investment of £194 million in our public transport over the three years and a further £529 million by 2018. This includes £111 million for Rapid Transit in Greater Belfast, which the Programme for Government states will be started by 2011.

¹ Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012, DRD, 2002

² Programme for Government 2008-2011, Office of the First Minister Deputy First Minister, 2008, www.pfgbudgetni.gov.uk

1.2.3 Recognising that a modern, efficient infrastructure is an essential requirement for economic and social development, the key goal identified for transport is to invest £612 million in our roads network over the three years and £3.1 billion by 2018.

1.2.4 This level investment, which includes £400 million of investment from the southern Government, far exceeds the levels of funding originally indicated in the Strategy.

1.3 Regional Development Strategy

1.3.1 The Regional Development Strategy³ sets out a framework to influence growth for greater sustainability and better balanced development east and west, north and south.

1.3.2 It promotes a framework of transport corridors and growth points around which we should focus our investment. It also promotes the wider opportunities to be gained by developing strong linkages between neighbours on an all Islands basis and sets the transportation vision 'to have a modern, sustainable, safe transportation system which benefits society, the economy and the environment and which actively contributes to social inclusion and everyone's quality of life'.

1.3.3 We are carrying out a major review of the Regional Development Strategy. This will include an assessment of the strategic guidance on Transportation. We are looking at issues including the higher than expected population levels, increasing demand for more houses and differing development pressures in parts of the region. These changes influence travel patterns which in turn have consequences for the provision of infrastructure, the location of jobs and businesses, and the provision of public services and facilities.

1.4 Regional Transportation Strategy

1.4.1 The Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) is a vital component of the RDS. Its purpose is to support the RDS's transportation vision. The Strategy was

³ Shaping Our Future: Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025, DRD, 2001

developed using *Guidance on the Methodology for Multi-Modal Studies (GOMMMS)*⁴ which gave the Strategy its five main objectives: to protect the environment; to improve safety, facilitate economic growth; improve accessibility and foster integration, both with other government policies and between different modes of transport.

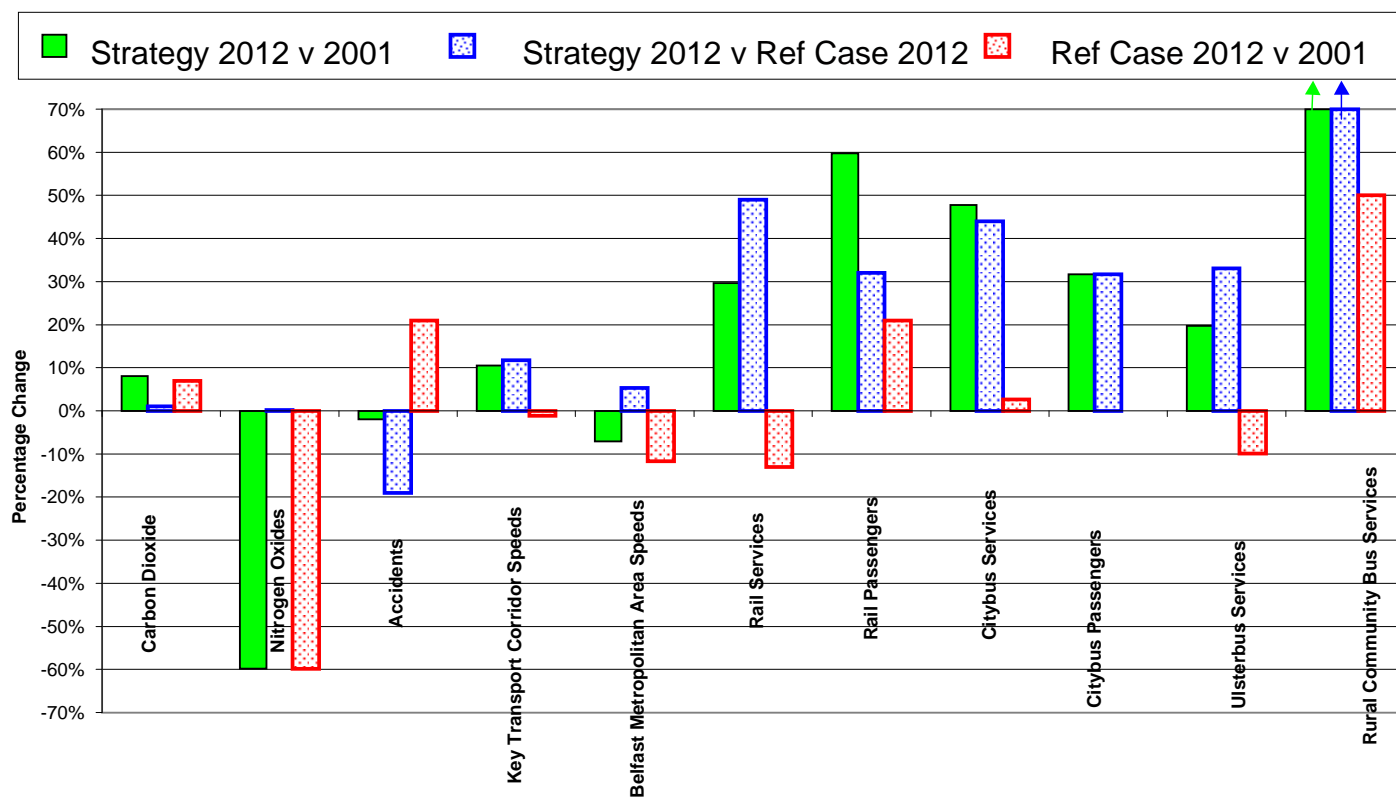
1.4.2 To achieve these objectives, the Strategy identifies strategic transportation investment priorities, considers funding issues and highlights expected outcomes over the 10-year period 2002 – 2012.

1.4.3 Based on the assumption that all of the proposed initiatives would proceed, the Strategy used a detailed transport modelling tool to predict a number of key outcomes, presented below. The changes can be broken down as follows:

- Reference Case 2012 versus 2001 – the effects of external factors including demographic changes and expected growth in car ownership to 2012;
- Strategy 2012 versus Reference Case 2012 – the effects of the additional initiatives contained in the Strategy compared with the Reference Case; and
- Strategy 2012 versus 2001– the effects of the additional initiatives contained in the Strategy compared with the 2001 position.

⁴ Guidance on the Methodology for Multi-Modal Studies, Department of the Environment Transport and the Regions, 2000

Expected Outcomes at 2012



1.4.4 Part of the review process will be to determine whether these expected outcomes, if they were to be obtained, are still the outcomes which we would want. The expected outcome for CO₂ emissions, for example, is an 8% rise by 2012 over 2001 levels.

1.5 Economy

1.5.1 Our primary focus over the lifetime of the current Programme for Government is on growing the economy. This includes, amongst other things, a focus on increasing private sector investment in innovation and on improving the strength of our tourism sector. This will require investment in our infrastructure, driving forward social transformation and environmental improvement and realising the potential of our leisure sector, to create a region which offers a high quality of life to those who wish to live and work here.

- 1.5.2 An inadequate transportation infrastructure can increase traffic congestion, reduce productivity, constrain markets and increase costs. This not only affects existing firms but also the general quality of life for everyone living here and the area's attractiveness as an investment location.
- 1.5.3 The Department for Transport and the Treasury commissioned Sir Rod Eddington to look at transport and the economy. *The Eddington Transport Study: Main report: Transport's role in sustaining the UK's productivity and competitiveness*⁵ says that a well-functioning transport system is vital for a successful economy and to people's quality of life. Eddington says that transport planning is a long-term process, with a high premium on making the right decisions from the outset because transport access affects people's decisions on where they want to live and companies' decisions on where to locate their businesses.

1.6 Freight

- 1.6.1 To keep down costs and remain competitive, modern commerce and industry increasingly carry lower stock levels and depend on more frequent, Just-in-Time delivery supply chains which deliver goods and services at the moment they are needed. To ensure that our economy remains competitive in a global market and to achieve the lifestyles that we want, we have to be able to move the goods we need and produce efficiently within the region and have good connections beyond it. At the same time, we need to minimise the environmental impact of freight as much as possible.
- 1.6.2 In their study *Freight Transport Report for the Island Economy 2020*⁶; Intertradeireland identified three trends; rapid population growth, high levels of construction activity and continued economic expansion; which suggest that the growth of vehicle traffic on the road networks will continue. Intertradeireland recommend that improvements should be made to the connections between towns and cities, that congestion should be tackled, the movement of freight in towns and cities eased and that administrations should

⁵ Eddington Transport Study: Main report: Transport's role in sustaining the UK's productivity and competitiveness, Department for Transport, December 2006.

⁶ Freight Transport Report for the Island Economy 2020, Intertradeireland, March 2008

work closely together to ensure that good land bridge connections to European markets.

1.6.3 Rail freight ceased completely in the North in 2003. As all of our freight moves by road, any enhancements to our roads network will generally benefit freight.

1.6.4 We will take account of the region's economic and freight needs as we review the Strategy.

1.7 Social Inclusion

1.7.1 The Neighbourhood Renewal Programme aims to develop economic activity in the most deprived neighbourhoods and connect them to the wider economy. Typical activities involve encouraging investment and business development; helping people overcome barriers to work such as poor transport or lack of suitable childcare; supporting training and transport schemes that can help people get to the jobs that are available elsewhere; and supporting social economy programmes that can encourage community and social enterprises.

1.7.2 26% of households here do not own a car⁷ and this figure rises to over 50% in some urban areas. Good quality, affordable public transport is vital, therefore, to social inclusion. Enhancement of the road network will also benefit public transport, the majority of which is roads based. Without access to an affordable and appropriate form of transport, people in many areas are unable to access education, employment, health and other services.

1.8 Equality of Opportunity

1.8.1 We carried out a full equality impact assessment on the Regional Transportation Strategy. We will also carry out an equality impact assessment on our review to ensure that we fulfil our Section 75 statutory duties.

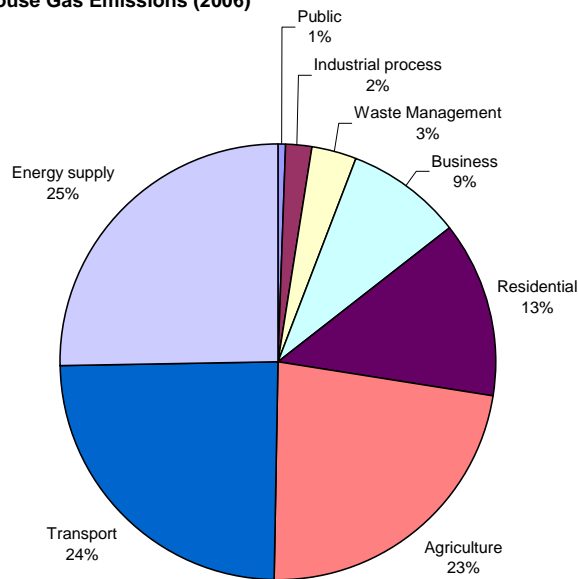
⁷ Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

- 1.8.2 A key element of the impact assessment will be collating and considering available data and research on the differential impacts of proposals across the range of Section 75 groups. Where we find adverse impacts, we will identify alternative or mitigating measures.
- 1.8.3 As part of the discussion and consultation process, we would like to know your views on any Section 75 equality of opportunity or good relations impacts arising from the issues considered in the discussion document. We have included a question later in this document to help you let us know what you think.
- 1.8.4 In the initial EQIA we recognised that transport presents particular issues for older people, people with dependants and people with disabilities. We will consider evidence presented of impacts on these or other groups and the underlying reasons as we develop the final review proposals and the associated EQIA.

1.9 Environment

- 1.9.1 Climate change is the world's greatest environmental challenge. As we burn fossil fuels we increase the amount of climate change gases in the atmosphere. The most common of these is carbon dioxide (CO₂). Transport accounts for around a quarter of the man-made greenhouse gas emissions in the North and it is the only sector where greenhouse gas emissions are rising rather than falling.

Sectoral Split of Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2006)



Source: Department of Environment

1.9.2 The Stern Review – The Economics of Climate Change⁸ says that a well-designed strategy can support economic growth and tackle carbon emissions. We need to aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while still supporting economic growth. To do this, we need to get the right balance and properly include the environmental and congestion costs of transport, to encourage technological innovation, to promote behavioural change, and make the right decisions on investment.

1.9.3 The Committee on Climate Change (an independent body established under the Climate Change Act to advise the Government on setting carbon budgets) published its inaugural report *Building a low-carbon economy - the UK's contribution to tackling climate change*⁹ 1st December 2008. The report recommends that the UK should reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 80% by 2050. For the transport sector, it recommends that this should be achieved first through improving fuel efficiency of conventional engines and increased use of sustainable first generation biofuels and also through

⁸ The Stern Review – The Economics of Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, October 2006

the progressive introduction of new technologies such as electric cars. While these may be more readily addressed at a national and international level, the Report also states that there is significant potential for emissions reductions through changed driver behaviour, modal shift and better journey planning.

- 1.9.4 The UK Climate Change Act 2008¹⁰ requires the Secretary of State (for Climate Change) to achieve an 80% reduction in the UK's net carbon account by 2050 compared to a 1990 baseline. The Secretary of State also has to set carbon budgets for the periods 2008-2012, 2013-2017 and 2018-2022 before June 2009. These carbon budgets must ensure that the average annual budget is 26% less than the 1990 baseline. The Executive is considering targets for greenhouse gases here.
- 1.9.5 The Climate Change Act also places a duty on the Secretary of State to prepare reports containing an assessment of the risks of the current and predicted impact of climate change. Departments here will then have to prepare programmes setting out the objectives in relation to adaptation to climate change and proposals and policies to meet those objectives. The objectives, proposals and policies must be sustainable.
- 1.9.6 Renewable energy is also important for our low-carbon energy future. European Union's draft Renewable Energy Directive¹¹ includes a binding target for all Member States to source 10% of their transport energy consumption (excluding aviation and shipping) from renewable sources by 2020. At present the main source of renewable energy available for transport is biofuels. However in the future vehicles powered through the electricity grid using renewable energy may have a growing part to play. This may have implications for the Review.

⁹ Building a low-carbon economy - the UK's contribution to tackling climate change, The Committee on Climate Change, www.theccc.org.uk/reports

¹⁰ Climate Change Act 2008, www.osp.gov.uk/acts/acts2008

¹¹ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, European Commission, Brussels, 2008

1.10 Sustainable Development

1.10.1 Sustainable Development is generally defined as “Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The Sustainable Development Strategy¹² aims to move the region towards a sustainable economy which strikes a better balance between the three different aspects of sustainable development; social, environmental and economic. The Review will have to address the environmental pressures we are facing in a sustainable manner.

1.11 Our Neighbours

1.11.1 *Towards a Sustainable Transport System: Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World*¹³ sets out the UK Government’s transport strategy to deliver economic growth and lower carbon emissions. It summarises the policy and investment plans to 2014; and describes how the Department for Transport will implement a new approach to strategic transport planning for the period after 2014.

1.11.2 The Scottish Government¹⁴ and Welsh Assembly Government¹⁵ have developed National Transport Strategies which set out their policies for transport. These are supported by transport plans which detail how they will develop their respective transport infrastructure and services.

1.11.3 In the south, the *National Spatial Strategy*¹⁶ also seeks to promote balanced growth across the regions, focusing on gateways and the connecting transport linkages. *Transport 21*¹⁷ sets out the capital investment programme to tackle the infrastructure deficit the south. *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport*

¹² First Steps towards Sustainability: the Northern Ireland Sustainable Development Strategy, Office of the First Minister Deputy First Minister, 2006

¹³ Towards a Sustainable Transport System: Supporting Economic Growth in a Low Carbon World, Department for Transport, October 2007

¹⁴ National Transport Strategy, Scottish Government, 2006

¹⁵ One Wales: Connecting the nation - Wales Transport Strategy, Wales Assembly Government, 2008

¹⁶ National Spatial Strategy for Ireland 2002 – 2020 People, Places and Potential, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2002

¹⁷ <http://www.transport21.ie>

*Future*¹⁸ sets out how the South aims to achieve its vision of a sustainable transport system by 2020.

1.11.4 It is vital that we develop our ability to manage our transport strategy and its relationship with others in these islands. We need to work together with other administrations to improve connections between our networks to improve the free movement of goods and people.

1.12 The Review of Public Administration

1.12.1 The Review of Public Administration aims to give some responsibilities currently held by central government to local councils and allow them to make local decisions about their area. The review is considering, among other things, the role local councils will play in planning and delivering transport. The outcome will have a bearing on the review of the Strategy.

1.13 Public Transport Reform

1.13.1 Public transport services are regulated by Government. While Translink, the trading name of the 3 operating companies Metro, NI Railways and Ulsterbus, operates the majority of services, there is an increasing mix of contracts and licenses held by different operators (bus companies require a license to provide a service on a route).

1.13.2 We are considering options for the organisation of delivery of public transport services. We aim to create an effective, efficient and sustainable public transport service contributing to mobility, the environment and social inclusion, while becoming a key component of the development of a world class economy in the north.

1.14 Conclusion

1.14.1 The economic and political context has changed significantly since the Strategy was first published. Improvements to our transportation infrastructure continue to be required to meet the needs of our economy and of the wider society. At the same time, increased emphasis on climate

¹⁸ <http://www.transport.ie/transport/Sustainable/index.asp?lang=ENG&loc=1913>

change through the Stern Report and its implications for transport, the introduction of a local Sustainable Development Strategy, the findings of the Eddington Transport report and the Committee for Climate Change recommendations point to a need to fundamentally re-examine the expected outcomes contained in the Strategy, and consider what adjustments or changes may be required to support our move towards a low carbon economy.

2. The Present

2.1 Monitoring of the Strategy

2.1.1 We prepare regular monitoring reports on the Strategy summarising the progress and key achievements during the reporting periods. At the same time, we prepare tables showing progress against the targets set in the Strategy. Past monitoring reports and tables are available on our website <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/rts>

2.1.2 Our monitoring suggest that there has been good progress on increasing rail and Metro (formerly Citybus) passenger numbers, cycling journeys and on reducing Personal Injury Collisions. The 2007 Belfast City Cordon Survey also recorded a decrease in the percentage of people travelling into Belfast by private car during the 8.00am to 9.00am morning peak. This apparent change in private car use could be for a variety of reasons, including the effect of the M1 – Westlink road works and broadening of the peak period beyond the traditional “rush hour”.

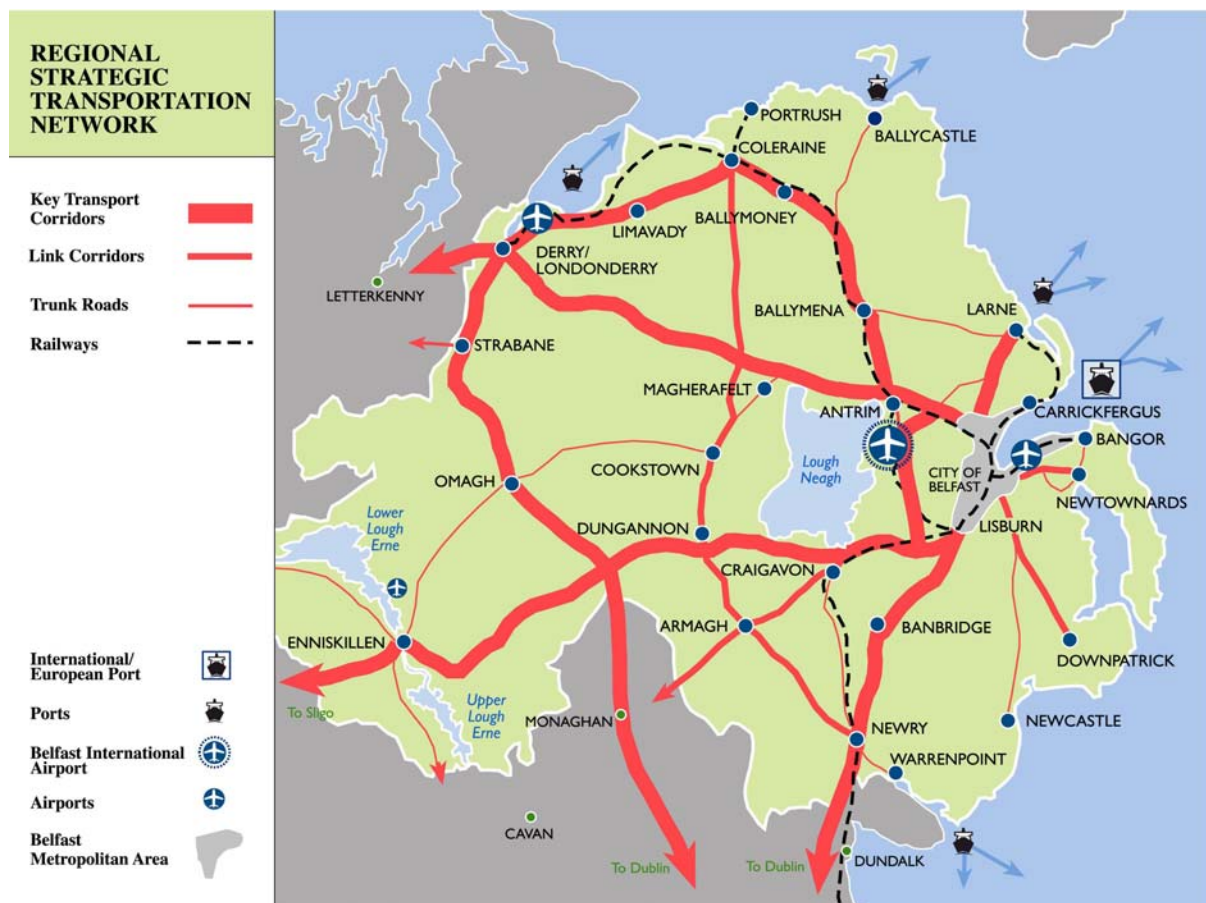
2.1.3 Average morning peak bus speeds in Belfast are decreasing, however, as are average speeds on the Regional Strategic Transport Network. It should be noted that many of the schemes planned to implement the Strategy will not be delivered until later in the Plan period as they have long lead in times associated with statutory processes. The emphasis has also changed from reducing average speeds on strategic routes to providing reliable, reduced journey times. Reliable journey times are believed to be more relevant to travellers and businesses than average speeds (speeds could be relatively high for two days and then very slow the next but still show an increase in average speed).

2.2 Transport Plans, Accessible Transport, Transportation and Land Use

2.2.1 In order to deliver the Strategy we have produced three transport plans to provide detailed multi-modal proposals for sustainable local transport provision up to 2015. They provide for and encourage greater use of public

transport, walking and cycling while also supporting an appropriate level of movement of cars and goods vehicles. They are:

- the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan¹⁹ covering the Belfast Metropolitan Area;
- the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan²⁰ covering the key strategic and trunk routes, including the rail network; and
- the Sub-Regional Transport Plan²¹ covering rural areas and the main towns and cities outside the Belfast Metropolitan Area.



2.2.2 We have developed an Accessible Transport Strategy²² which identifies the barriers that prevent older people and people with disabilities from making full use of the transport network and the actions that will be taken to reduce those

¹⁹ Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015, DRD, 2004

²⁰ Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015, DRD, 2004

²¹ Sub-Regional Transport Plan 2015, DRD, 2007

²² Accessible Transport Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-2015, DRD, 2005

barriers. The associated Action Plan has recently been reviewed and a new Action Plan published.

2.2.3 We have also produced Planning Policy Statement 13 – Transportation and Land Use²³ (PPS 13) which provides advice aimed at promoting better integration between land use and transportation planning. It requires developers to consider alternative means of travel to the private car and a reduction in the number and length of journeys.

2.3 Public Transport

2.3.1 The Strategy suggested a number of improvements to public transport including the introduction of new, accessible buses, Quality Bus Corridors in Belfast and Derry, more services in towns and cities outside Belfast, more frequent bus services between towns and cities, improvements to bus and rail stations, and the maintenance and improvement of the existing rail network (apart from the Antrim – Knockmore line). The three transport plans detailed the ways that these initiatives would be carried out across the region.

2.3.2 Translink has now converted Citybus to create the Metro service and has carried out a Strategic Review to introduce additional local Ulsterbus services. Public funding has allowed Translink to purchase over 194 new buses and 23 new trains. All this has resulted in a 31% increase in Metro passengers since 2005 and rail passengers (excluding cross border journeys) for 2007/08 are up by 53% on 2001/02.

2.3.3 As a result of the Budget and the Investment Strategy, we will be providing:

- £45 million over the next three years for a further 290 new buses;
- £137 million for rail over the next three years for 20 new trains, a track life extension project on the rail line between Ballymena and Coleraine, a complete track relay between Coleraine and Derry, an upgrade of the rail track between Lisburn and Lurgan, and a new station at Newry which it is hoped will be complete in 2009;

²³ Planning Policy Statement 13 – Transportation and Land Use, DRD, 2005

2.3.4 The Investment Strategy includes a further £319 million for rail and £111 million for bus over the following 7 years to 2018.

2.3.5 The Strategy said that taxis are an important part of public transport. Taxis provide a service in places and at times of the day when there is no other public transport alternative. In some areas, particularly rural areas, they may be the only public transport option. There are approximately 14, 000 licensed taxi operators in the north, the majority being owner-drivers. The Sub Regional Transport Plan includes proposals for taxi ranks in towns and cities outside Belfast.

2.4 Rapid Transit in the Belfast Metropolitan Area

2.4.1 In November 2008, the Minister announced that the Executive had given the go-ahead to start work on a Rapid Transit system for Belfast. The next phase will be a detailed design for a bus based rapid transit system connecting Belfast City Centre to West Belfast, East Belfast and the Titanic Quarter.

2.4.2 Such a network would provide Belfast with a high quality public transport alternative which would attract motorists out of their cars. The Investment Strategy includes £111 million to introduce Rapid Transit.

2.5 Concessionary Fares

2.5.1 The Concessionary Fares Scheme provides discounted fares on public transport. The Scheme provides free travel for people who are registered blind, have a War Disablement or who are over 60 and half-fare travel for children, people with a learning disability, receiving Disability Living Allowance, who are partially sighted or who have been refused a Driving Licence on medical grounds. To date, over 200, 000 people have registered for a SmartPass.

2.5.2 Since 2nd April 2007, people from here aged 65 and over who have a SmartPass can travel for free on public transport across the island of Ireland.

2.6 Rural Transport

- 2.6.1 The Rural Transport Fund supports transport services in rural areas that give people improved access to work, education, healthcare, shopping and recreational activities and so reduce their social isolation.
- 2.6.2 The Fund subsidises socially necessary rural services provided by Translink which otherwise would be economically unviable; and provides funding for Rural Community Transport Partnerships that offer a range of complementary services to the public transport network for their members.
- 2.6.3 Currently the Fund supports some 43 rural bus routes and 18 Rural Community Transport Partnerships to provide specialised services to their members. The Rural Community Partnerships provide services for most of the north. In 2007/2008 635, 000 passenger trips were made on Rural Community Transport Partnership Vehicles. The Translink routes include hospital services and services such as the Rural Rovers.
- 2.6.4 The fact remains, however, that public transport provision is limited in rural areas. An independent survey carried out for the Consumer Council²⁴ confirms that access to services and service frequency are major issues in rural areas.

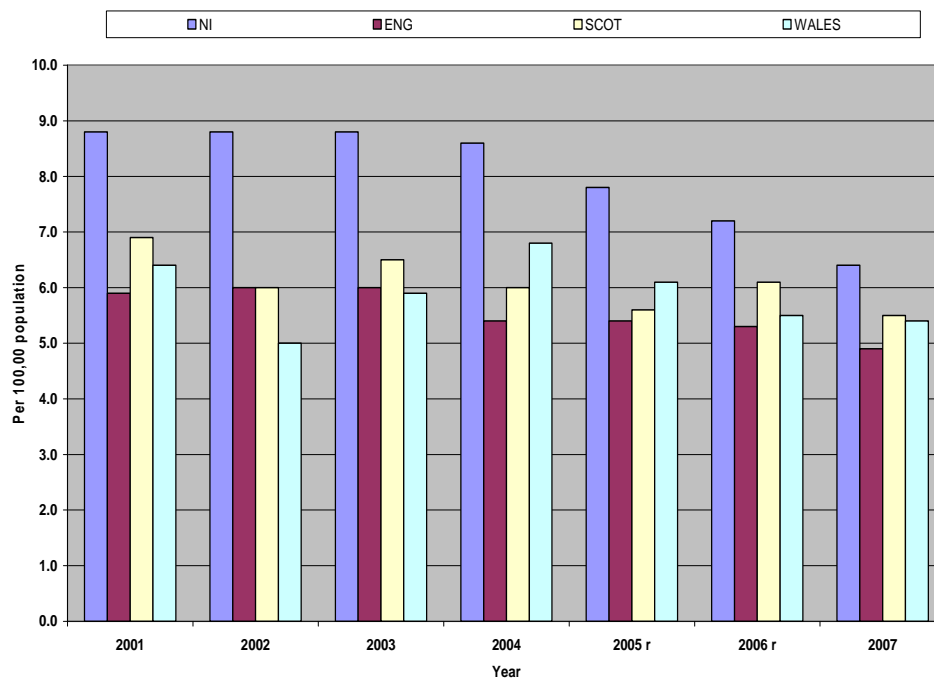
2.7 Road Safety

- 2.7.1 Although the numbers of Killed Seriously Injured (KSI) has decreased here over the last few years, they still head the figures of KSI per 100,000 of population when compared with England, Scotland, and Wales.²⁵ With the number of kilometres travelled increasing each year it is important that measures are taken to continue to reduce the number of KSI.

²⁴ Consumer Council, to be published

²⁵ Source: Northern Ireland Transport Annual Statistics 2007/2008, DRD and DOE Road Safety Branch

Number of People Killed or Seriously Injured per 100, 000 Population for Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales by Year



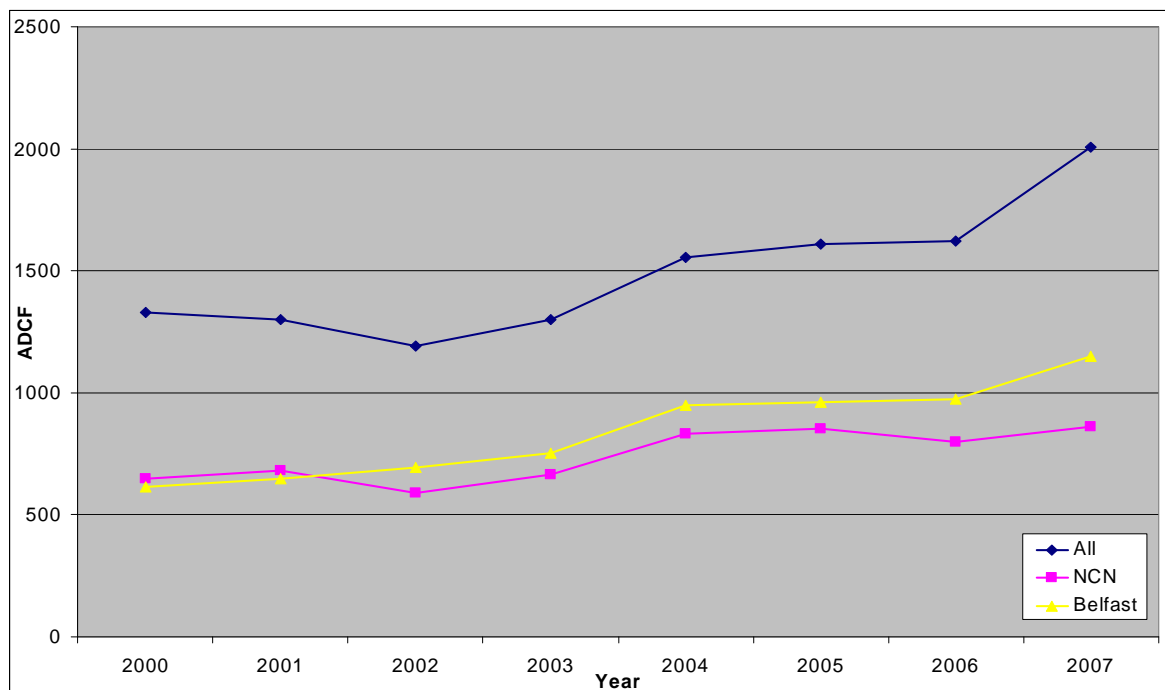
2.8 Walking and Cycling

2.8.1 We have produced a walking action plan²⁶ and a cycling strategy²⁷. The three Transport Plans identify walking and cycling networks for the region and include measures to improve the quality and safety of walking and cycling routes. Since the Strategy was published, we have provided over 130km of new cycle lanes and have seen an increase in the number of people cycling, particularly in Belfast.

²⁶ Walking Northern Ireland – and Action Plan, DRD, 2003

²⁷ Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy, DRD, 2000

Average Daily Cycle Flows on the National Cycle Network and in Belfast 2000 – 2007²⁸



2.9 Travelwise

2.9.1 Travelwise NI is an initiative to encourage the use of sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling, public transport or car sharing. It is delivered in partnership with the Department of Education, DOE Road Safety Branch, Sustrans, Health Promotion Agency and Translink. To date over 2400 people have registered with the Travelwise car sharing website, <http://www.carshareni.com>, 53% of whom now share their journeys.

2.10 Roads

2.10.1 The majority of transport here, including public transport and freight, travels by road, using the motorways and main roads for longer journeys.

2.10.2 The Strategy said that it is important to improve journey times on the motorway and the trunk road network. The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan contained a Strategic Road Improvements programme to improve average speeds on the key transport corridors by at

²⁸ Source: Annual Cycle Usage Report for Northern Ireland, Roads Service, DRD

least 2% over the Plan period. The funding levels now envisaged under the Investment Strategy could enable all the proposals to be included in a new, greatly expanded programme.

2.10.3 The capital investment in roads of £612 million over the next three years which will allow for:

- the opening of the M1/Westlink and M2 upgrades in 2009;
- the dualling of the A4 from Dungannon to Ballygawley; and
- the opening of the A1 Beech Hill to Cloghogue in 2010, which will complete dualling of the main route from Belfast to Dublin; and
- dualling A2 from Maydown to City of Derry Airport.

2.10.4 The Investment Strategy includes a further £2.5 billion for roads infrastructure for the seven years to 2018. At the core of this programme are major road schemes which will see the completion of the dualling of the Eastern Seaboard Corridor providing a minimum of dual carriageway standard between Larne and Dublin, the dualling of the entire A5 between Derry and the border at Aughnacloy and two other major dualling projects on the A6 between Randalstown and Castledawson and between Londonderry and Dungiven. The proposals also include a wide range of other strategic road improvements across the North.

2.10.5 The Irish Government have also contributed £400 million towards the development of the roads infrastructure here, particularly the A5 and A8 schemes.

2.10.6 The upgrade of the M1/Westlink is approaching completion. This three-year project is critical for the future of Belfast and for the economy of the whole of the region. It will provide better access to and through Belfast saving time and cost for all road users, especially the haulage industry which needs swift, reliable journey times to operate efficiently. Significant progress has also been made improving sections of the A1 on the Eastern Seaboard Corridor

and further work is underway to dual the last section of single carriageway on the Belfast – Dublin route at Newry.

2.10.7 While there is an unprecedented level of investment for roads, the £200 million available for roads maintenance is lower than the level recommended in the independently-assessed Structural Maintenance Funding Plan. This means that there is a risk that there will be a failure to meet the levels of Structural Maintenance recommended in National Best Practice Guidelines which will lead to a deterioration in the condition of road surfaces.

2.11 Connecting to our Air and Sea Ports

2.11.1 In 2006, 7.5 million passengers travelled through our airports up from 5.6 million in 2002 while 2.3 million passengers through our seaports in 2006, down slightly from 2.7 million in 2002.²⁹ Despite the recent, well-publicised failure of some low-cost carriers, the number of air passengers is likely to continue to grow.

2.11.2 Connections to our air and sea ports are also increasingly important for our economy, both for freight and for our tourist market. The number of visitors staying here rose from 1.68 million in 2002 to 1.98 million in 2006. Of these, 55% travelled by air, 24% by sea and 21% by land. 24.5 million tonnes of freight moved through our sea ports in 2006 compared to 21.4 million tonnes in 2002 while 39,000 tonnes of freight passed through our air ports in 2006 compared to 30,700 tonnes in 2002. The demands for good connections to air and sea ports are likely to increase.

2.11.3 While the Strategy does not contain any specific measures to improve connections to our air and sea ports, the planned Strategic Roads Improvements funded through the Investment Strategy will significantly improve access to them.

²⁹ Source: Northern Ireland Transport Annual Statistics 2007/2008, NISRA

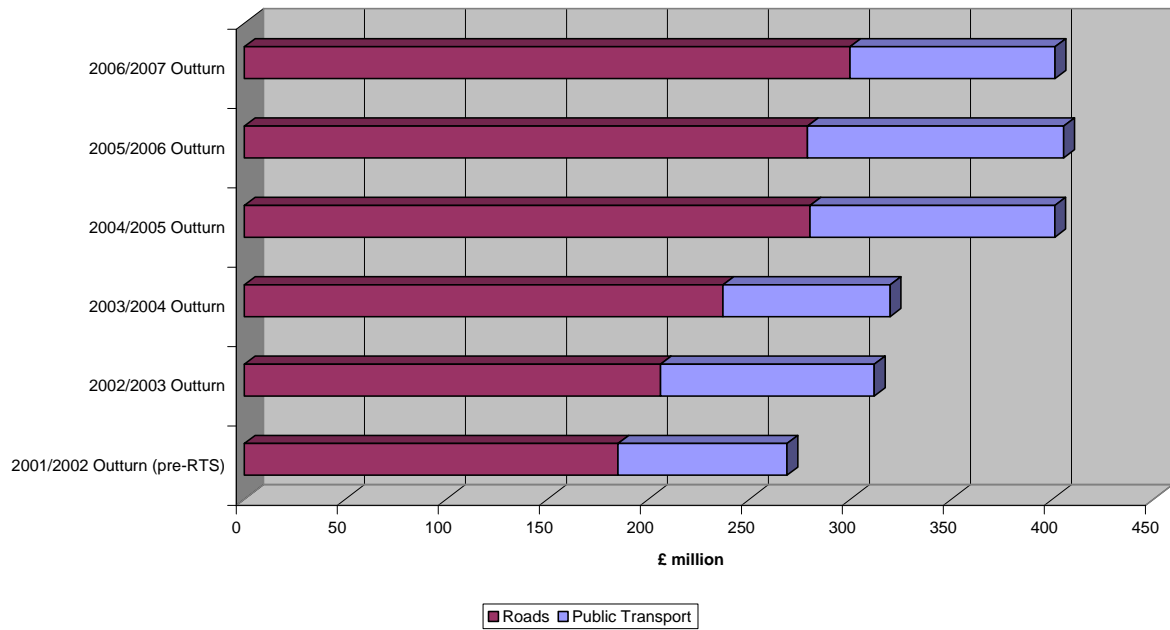
2.12 Conclusion

2.12.1 The Strategy assumed a total investment of £3.5 billion, which comprised the pre-2002 baseline level of £2130 million being maintained and included £1370 million additional funding. The result has been that transportation has been successful in attracting finance and this has allowed significant progress to be made towards the original Strategy objectives.

2.12.2 With the increased emphasis on improving our infrastructure seen in both the Programme for Government and the Investment Strategy, higher levels of investment are becoming available for transport than the Strategy envisaged.

2.12.3 The Strategy suggested a spending ratio for roads – including walking and cycling – to public transport of 65:35. The average ratio for spending from 2002/2003 – 2006/07 was 72% on roads and 28% on public transport. With the Investment Strategy, that ratio has moved to approximately 80:20. There is an interdependence between roads and public transport in that the majority of people who use public transport travel by bus on our roads. Improvements to roads including Quality Bus Corridors and park and ride sites therefore benefit these users. Indeed the roads network is particularly vital in rural areas. Additionally all freight here is transported by road and therefore any improvements on the roads infrastructure significantly benefit the economy.

Transportation Spend by Year 2001 - 2007



Source: DRD

2.12.4 The Review will have to strike the right balance between investing in public transport and investing in roads; between developing quality public transport and improving our roads infrastructure.

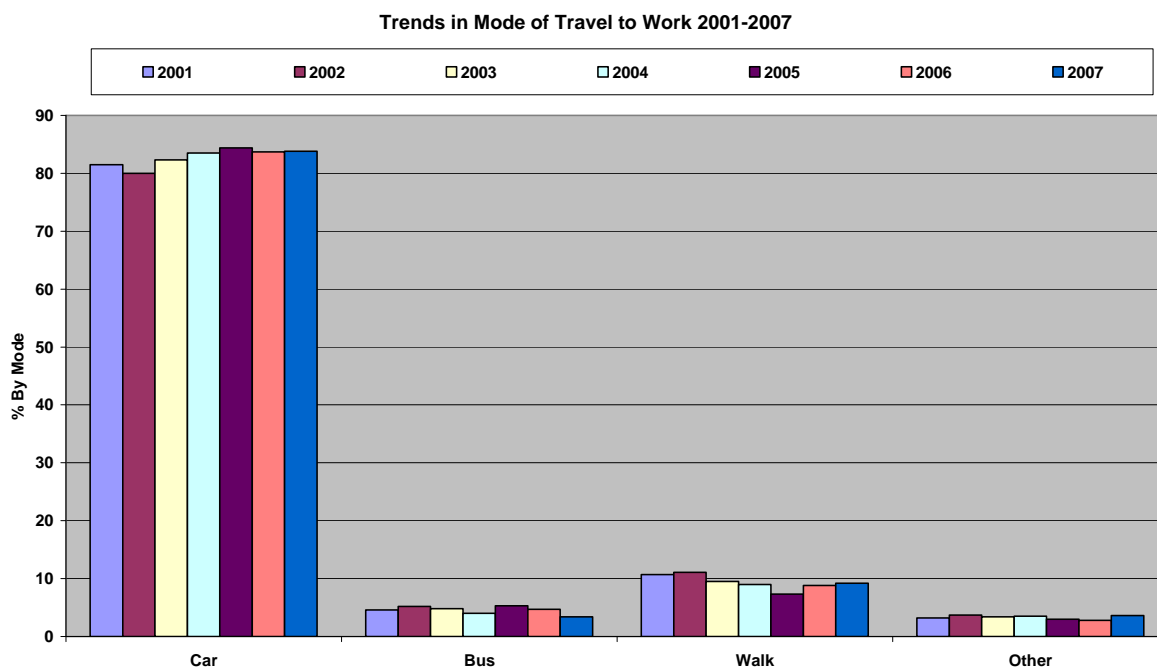
This page is intentionally left blank

3. The Future

3.1 The Trends

3.1.1 We are doing a lot to improve the transportation system here. Many of our main roads, including the Belfast – Dublin road, will be at least dual carriageway standard. Investment in public transport has already resulted in an increase in passenger numbers and in the future there will be new trains on all our lines providing more frequent, reliable services and we will have a modern bus fleet with increased capacity.

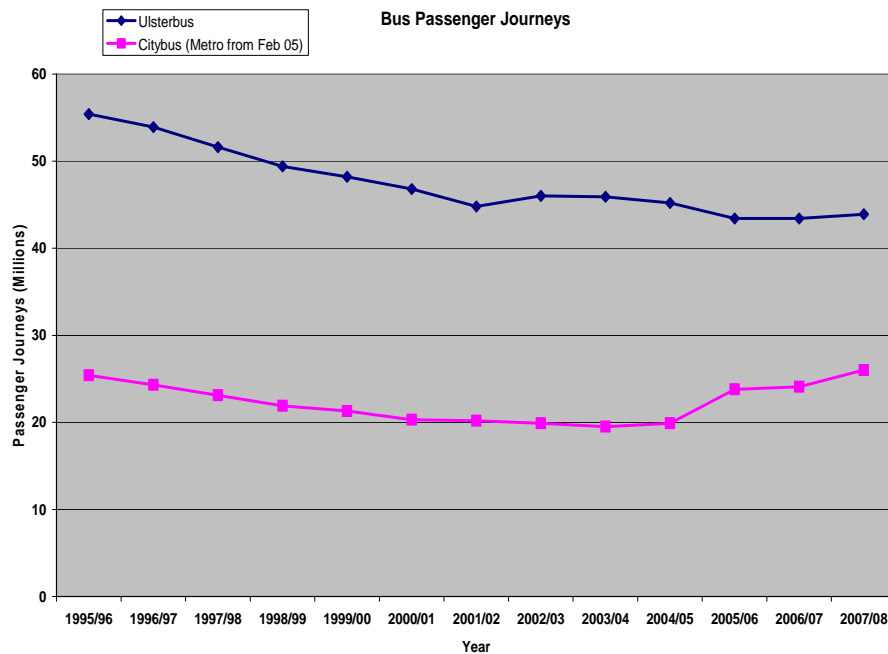
3.1.2 This all sounds very encouraging, but there is another side to the story. While there are more people travelling by public transport, figures for 2007 show that 83.7% of all home to work journeys were by car compared to 79.9% in 2002. This compares to 81% in Wales, 71% in England and 69% in Scotland. It is also much higher than Ireland where, according to the 2002 Census, 62% of people used their private car to get to work.



Source: Northern Ireland Transport Annual Statistics 2007/2008, NISRA

3.1.3 The independent research carried out by the Consumer Council on Public Transport³⁰ suggests that only 3 in 10 use bus services regularly, and less than 1 in 10 use train services. Those that use public transport are largely satisfied with most aspects of the service, although this is lower in rural areas than in towns.

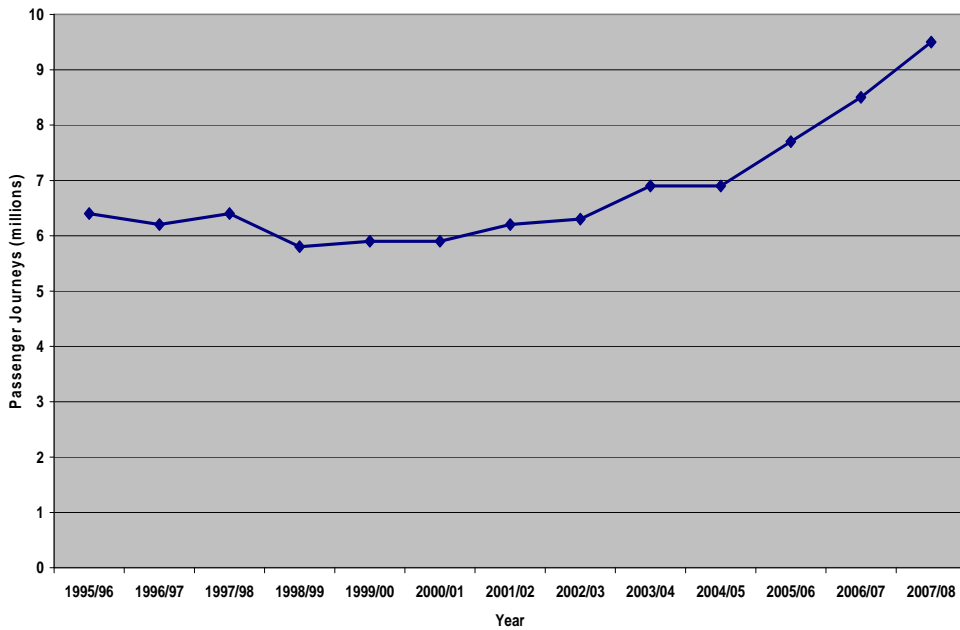
3.1.4 The survey suggests that value for money (cost), frequency, choice, safety and reliability should be the priorities for public transport here in the future, but around 1 in 4 questioned said that nothing would encourage them to use public transport.



Source: Northern Ireland Transport Annual Statistics 2007/2008, NISRA

³⁰ Consumer Council – to be published

NI Railways Passenger Journeys

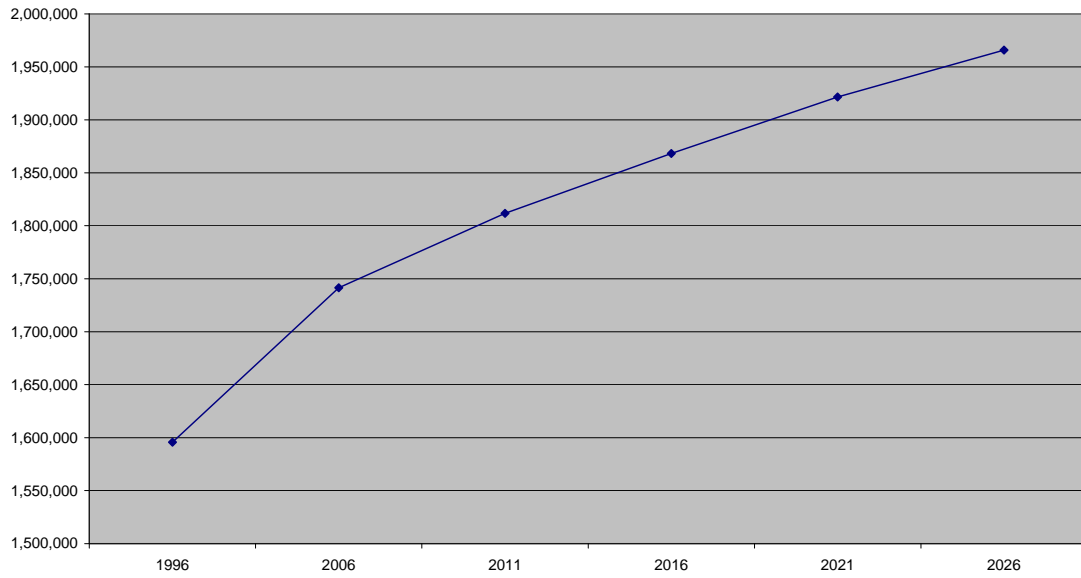


Source: Northern Ireland Transport Annual Statistics 2007/2008, NISRA

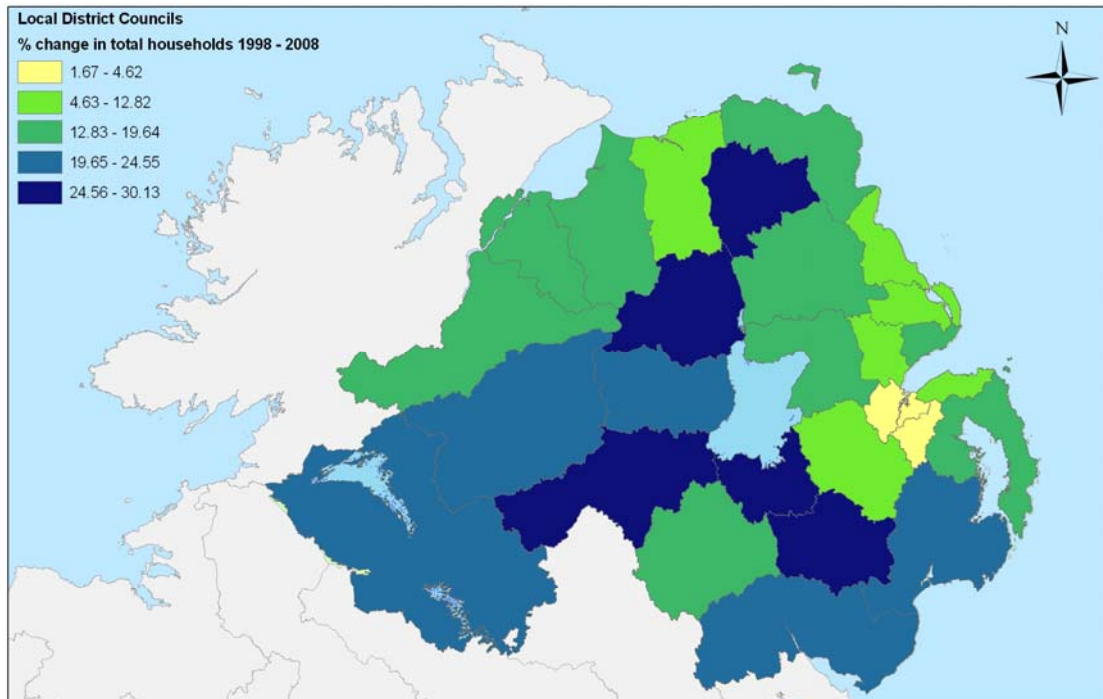
3.1.5 The population here increased by 4.3% between 1996 and 2006 to 1.7 million and will be over 1.9 million by 2021.³¹ This places additional pressure on the transport system, the local economy and the environment of travelling times. Not only is the population increasing, but the demographics of the Region are also changing with a changing pattern of growth.

³¹ Source: NISRA

Population Projections in the North



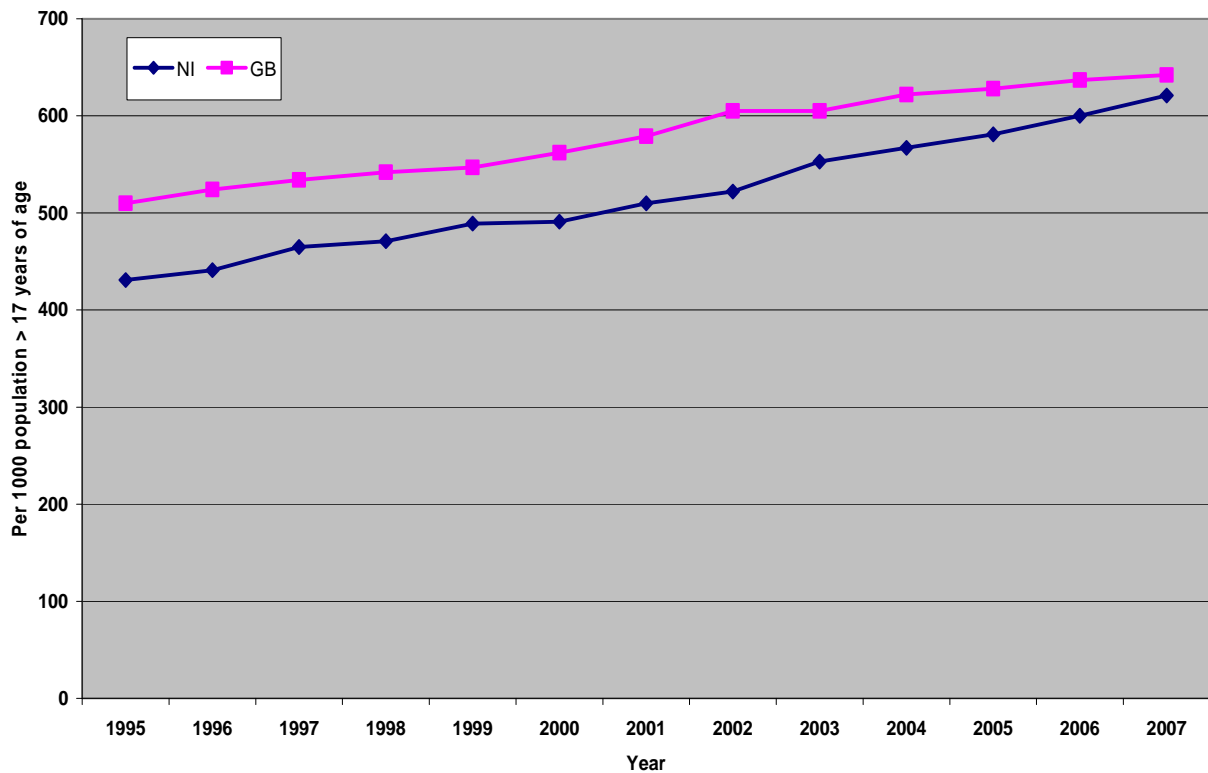
Source: NISRA



Source: Compiled from Northern Ireland Housing Statistics - Department for Social Development

3.1.6 By 2007/08, the number of people passing their driving test had increased to just over 29, 000 a year from under 19, 000 in 2002/03. By December 2007, there were 1,008,289 vehicles licensed to be on our roads, compared with 794,477 in 2002, an increase of 27%.³² This can be broken down further by district; approximately 52% of households in Belfast have access to one or more cars compared to 79% in the east and 76% in the west.

Car Ownership Levels in NI and GB (Per 1000 population greater than 17 years of age)



Source: Northern Ireland Transport Annual Statistics 2007/2008, NISRA

3.1.7 The average distance travelled each year by people living here has not changed considerably over the period 2005-2007 with an average of 5999 miles per year with the typical average length being 6.5 miles. On average each person took 929 journeys each year which is approximately 3 journeys per person per day with an average time spend of 50 minutes travel per day.

³² Source: Northern Ireland Transport Annual Statistics 2007/2008, NISRA

Just over 33 minutes (66%) of this time was spent travelling by car with just over 8 minutes spent walking.³³

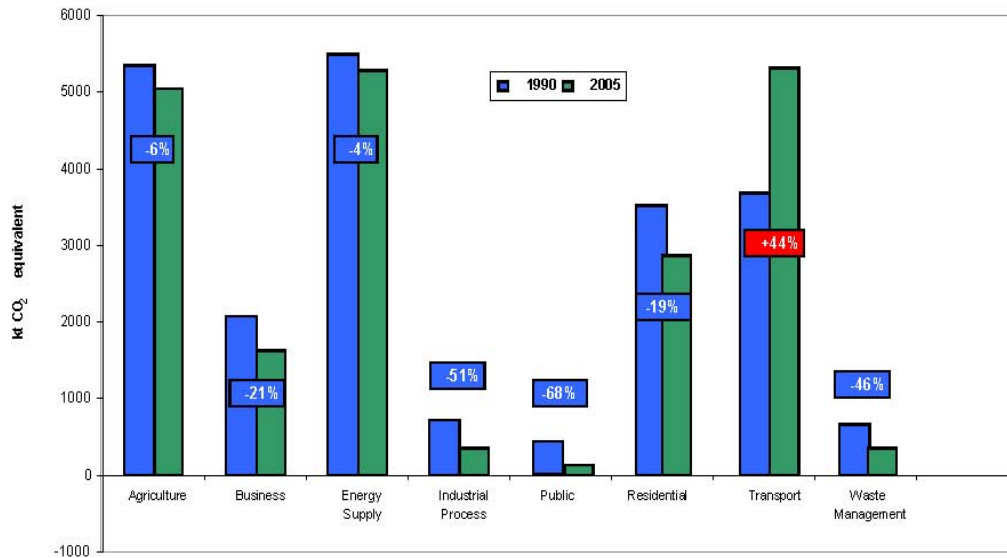
- 3.1.8 While there have been improvements in fuel efficiency, and hence a reduction in emissions from individual vehicles, the rise in real incomes associated with economic growth (in 2005, the economy here grew by 2%³⁴) has resulted in an increasing demand for personal travel and ever increasing levels of car ownership. In 2006/07 we imported over 800,000 tonnes of diesel and petroleum, up almost 25% from the 2002/03 figure.³⁵ While we are currently going through an economic downturn, growth is likely to continue in the long-term.
- 3.1.9 We had 781,000 persons in employment at November 2007, an increase of over 90,000 since 2001. Increasing future prosperity will lead to higher numbers of economically active people leading to increasing levels of congestion in urban areas unless appropriate alternatives are available. We need to provide people with realistic options to get to and from their work efficiently while supporting sustainable patterns of travel.
- 3.1.10 While the number of cars on the roads is increasing, 26% of households here still do not own a car. As we said earlier, good quality, affordable public transport is a necessity for many for access to education, employment, health and other services.
- 3.1.11 We face increasing pressure to reduce our emissions. Along with energy supply, transport remains a major source of greenhouse gases in the north. Unlike energy supply, however, transport emissions are rising rather than falling.

³³ Source: Northern Ireland Travel Survey, NISRA

³⁴ Source: DETI

³⁵ Source: Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector (1990 and 2005)



Source: DOE

3.1.12 When the Strategy was published in July 2002, a typical 60 litre tank of petrol cost £45.42 (75.7p/litre) and diesel £46.50 (77.5p/litre). In August 2009, fuel prices were £62.10 (103.5 p/l) and £62.46 (104.1 p/l) for petrol and diesel respectively. Time spend in traffic not only adds to the polluting effects of transport, but also increasingly adds to the cost of travel. This affects all of us living here, either directly as we buy diesel or petrol or through increased delivery costs for our goods and services.

3.2 Demand Management

3.2.1 At the moment, while our main roads, towns and cities suffer from congestion, this does not approach the levels experienced in other major cities in Europe, London and Dublin for example. As congestion continues to rise, however, more active steps to encourage motorists out of their cars and onto other types of transport may have to be considered. These “stick”-type measures

would have to go hand in hand with improvements in alternative forms of transport, the “carrot”.

3.2.2 Many of our towns and cities have a lot of car parking spaces available in them; Roads Service car parks, on-street parking, shopping centre car parks and car parks associated with offices and businesses. Managing the availability and cost of car parking (either directly or through a workplace parking levy) could help control use of the private car, 'No parking' areas could ease the flow of traffic, and 'Resident parking only' zones would stop residential areas near town centres from being used as free car parks.

3.2.3 We already pay to use the roads through our vehicle license and the tax we pay on our fuel. This doesn't cover the real costs of the congestion our car use creates, especially if we add in noise, local air pollution or road safety. Road user charging is a system based on charging drivers a monetary cost to use the roads according to the time of day, location and level of congestion. Charging in this way makes us think about our journeys more carefully.

3.3 The Way Forward?

3.3.1 While the current Strategy has been successful in attracting funding for transport, one of the weaknesses is that it does not, in fact, set the strategic policy direction for transport. We propose preparing a higher level revised Strategy based on public consultation which would give everyone living here the opportunity to set the key outcomes and priorities that they want for our transportation network.

3.3.2 For example, the revised Strategy might determine that the key outcomes should include: to reduce the impact of transport on greenhouse gas emissions; to improve the efficient, reliable and sustainable movement of freight; to improve access to education, training and life-long learning; to improve the safety of travel; or to improve sustainable access to key visitor attractions. These outcomes would include indicators to allow their achievement to be measured. Recognising that everything cannot be achieved at once, the Strategy would also identify the key priorities for transport here.

- 3.3.3 Unlike the current Strategy, the revised Strategy will not propose individual schemes or funding levels but will map out the long-term future for transport here. Once the revised Strategy has been developed, we will review our Transport Plans and revise them as necessary to detail the schemes and associated expenditure required to implement the policies set by the revised Strategy. The opportunity could be taken to align the Transport Plans with the Reform of Public Administration, with a Strategic Transport Plan for the main routes and rail and other Transport Plans based on the new “Super-Council” areas and integrating with local Development Plans.
- 3.3.4 Both the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government have adopted similar approaches, producing Transport Strategies to set clear policy direction and developing subsequent Transport Plans to implement the Strategy. The South has not produced a Transport Strategy. Instead, the South has produced Transport 21, a capital infrastructure framework under the National Development Plan, as well as a Rural Transport Programme and a Sustainable Travel and Transport Plan.
- 3.3.5 This approach would also allow the review of the Regional Transportation Strategy to mesh closely with the Review of the Regional Development Strategy. The revised Strategy would also be available to inform the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review

3.4 Conclusion

- 3.4.1 We have provided some information on current trends for transportation in the north and our thinking on the way forward. These raise a number of questions about what our transport strategy should try to achieve and how to achieve it.
- 3.4.2 In this Paper, however, we do not want to tell you what we think, but would like to know what you think. The next section sets out some questions to help you give us your views.

This page is intentionally left blank

ISBN: 978-1-904807-29-2