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Best practice in transport integration

1 Background

The UK Government's 2010 Spending Review introduced drastic cuts to public spending, aimed at tackling the UK's £156 billion deficit.¹ This policy resulted in a £4 billion reduction to the Northern Ireland block grant (for the budget period 2011-15)², requiring government departments to look at ways in which savings could be made, while limiting the impact on front line services.

Cross-departmental working has been identified as key mechanism for reducing costs and there is growing evidence from Great Britain³ and Ireland⁴ of the potential to save money by coordinating the planning, management and delivery of transport across government departments.

Collectively transport provision requires in excess of £200 million per annum from the Northern Ireland public purse. This is divided among the Department for Regional Development (DRD); The Department of Education (DE); and The Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). However, cross-departmental cooperation is limited to the DE contracting Translink (DRD) to provide home-to-school transport and the agreement whereby DE purchases free bus passes from Translink.

¹ HM Treasury (2010) Government announces £6.2bn of savings in 2010-11 [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/114>

² Official Report (Hansard) Monday 18th June 2012 [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/118>

³ HOC Transport Committee (2011) Bus services after the Spending Review [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/116>

⁴ MVA Consultancy (2010) External Review of the Local Integrated Transport Services Pilot Project. LITS Central Steering Committee [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/gw>

This is despite recommendations made by the Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) at Westminster and the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) for DE and DHSSPS to look at the possibility to achieve efficiencies by coordinating their transport planning and provision.⁵

In addition to saving money better co-ordination or integration of different transport services has the potential to improve the service. Transport plays a vital role in supporting social inclusion and connecting people to education, health care, and employment.⁶ However, there are gaps in the existing provision, particularly in rural areas, which could potentially be addressed through integrating existing services.

This paper provides an insight into the concept of 'Integrated Transport' and examines cases of best practice. Already [RalSe publication NIAR 250-12](#) has considered the outcomes of a pilot scheme in Ireland which looked at ways in which mainstream bus services provided by (the publically owned) Bus Éireann could be integrated with other transport services such as home-to-school, rural/community and health transport. This paper will therefore focus on the cases of transport integration in Great Britain (GB).

2 Integrated Transport

Transport integration has been central to transport policy since the UK Governments 1998 Transport White Paper. Since then integration has taken on various meanings with policies designed to achieve integrated ticketing; integrated timetables; and integrated services. In addition to service integration, this paper will examine the potential costs/benefits of integrating management arrangements; the Northern Ireland Audit Office identifies three ways in which this might happen:

Cooperation – two (or more) departments could achieve efficiencies with joint procurement of fuel, maintenance and insurance.

Joint-use agreement – two (or more) departments could share the same resources e.g. a joint vehicle pool.

Integration – All transport services could be consolidated under one agency.⁷

For the purposes of this paper, transport integration is defined as:

*'A mechanism where departments of an organisation or various organisations jointly plan and deliver transport, sharing resources (vehicles/drivers/staff) and procurement procedures to optimise their use to meet service demand, and enhance the delivery of transport to appropriate users.'*⁸

⁵ NIAO (2005) Education and Health and Social Services Transport [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/117>

⁶ RalSe (2012) Achieving efficiencies in public transport delivery: The role of Local Integrated Transport Services (LITS) [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/115>

⁷ As above

⁸ Transport Scotland (2009) Providing transport in partnership [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/111> (Page 15)

3 Transport Integration in England and Wales

In England and Wales responsibility for transport planning and delivery is devolved to local authorities. Within England's six largest conurbations: Greater Manchester, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, West Midlands and West Yorkshire this function is delivered by Passenger Transport Executives (PTE). PTEs are regional bodies representing district authorities. They are overseen by a Passenger Transport Authority (PTA) which is made of elected representatives from the respective districts. PTEs designated for *"the purpose of securing the provision of a properly integrated and efficient system of public passenger transport to meet the needs of (their) area"*.⁹

All transport authorities, whether local authorities or PTE/PTA, have a statutory (under the Transport Act 2000) responsibility to produce local transport plans (LTP) based on consultation with local people, businesses and statutory bodies (e.g. health and education). The Local Transport Act (2008) (LTA) amended The Transport Act reemphasising the need for local authorities to plan their own transport services around the needs of local people¹⁰, and significantly it gave greater powers to transport authorities to deliver better and more integrated transport services.¹¹

3.1 Integrated Transport Areas

The LTA made some significant changes to the governance arrangements for PTA/PTEs, changing the name of passenger transport authorities to "integrated transport authorities". In addition:

- The LTA allows for the possibility of new PTEs to be created and for the areas of existing ones to be altered;
- The LTA has strengthened the powers of PTEs/ITAs to regulate bus services; and
- ITAs can do anything in relation to transport which they think might improve the 'social, economic or environmental well-being' of their area as they are the sole transport planning authorities in their areas.¹²

3.2 Coalition Policy

The Coalition Government released its new Transport White Paper 'Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon – Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen' in January 2011. The focus of their policy is on economic growth and carbon reduction together with an emphasis on local delivery: this is reflected in two of the four funding streams: the Integration Block and the Sustainable Transport Fund. There is also a commitment to examine the best ways to encourage the development of integrated (including multi-

⁹ Transport Act 1968, Part II, Section 9

¹⁰ HOC Hansard 26th March 2008 [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11a>

¹¹ DfT (2008) The Local Transport Act 2008: Creating the right public transport system for your area [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11g>

¹² PTEG (2008) A Full Guide to the Local Transport Act [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11b>

operator and multi-modal) schemes with the possibility of a legislative framework to support this.¹³

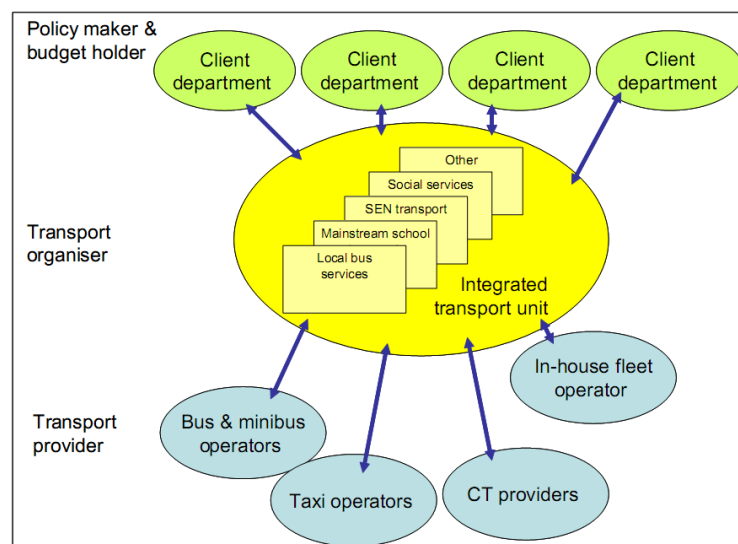
3.2 Integrated Transport Units

Outside of the ITAs, responsibility for planning, organising and procuring transport rests with the local authority. In general local authorities are responsible for home to school transport; social services transport; co-ordinating/subsidising passenger transport; staff travel; fleet management; one-off transport hires; and quality standards and processes.¹⁴

Often these responsibilities are divided between a number of departments whereby social services, education and health departments, facilitate provision of transport for their specific needs without any coordination. However, as there is a statutory duty on English and Welsh local authorities *to deliver services to clear standards – of cost and quality – by the most economic, efficient and effective means available*¹⁵, a number of local authorities have identified better coordination/integration as a way of delivering best value.

An Integrated Transport Unit (ITU) is a single division responsible for coordinating all the authority’s transport services, rather than doing this across a number of teams. Figure one (below) shows how this works at a local authority level in England/Wales. Effectively it is a three tier system involving a top tier of individual clients/departments; the ITU is the middle tier, responsible for designing and managing services and securing their provision; and the third tier comprises transport operators.

Figure 1: Typical passenger transport service delivery with an Integrated Transport Unit



Source: NWCE (2006)¹⁶

¹³ DfT (2011) Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon: Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen. UK Government [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11o>

¹⁴ Audit Commission (2002) Devon County Council: Transport Provision [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11k>

¹⁵ The Local Government Act 1999 [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11i>

¹⁶ NWCE (2006) Integrated Transport Units – A Good Practice Paper [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11h>

3.2.1 Benefits of ITU

The North West Centre of Excellence (NWCE) published a best practice paper detailing different factors for achieving efficiency in local transport. According to their paper, there are five main areas where efficiency benefits can be realised in moving to an organisational model based on an integrated transport unit from one where different passenger transport services are planned, organised and procured separately. These are:

- **More focussed professional staff**
 - An integrated approach presents the opportunity to assemble a team of transport professionals with the skills and experience to address the range of issues around the movement of people.
- **More efficient staff utilisation**
 - An integrated approach can streamline and standardise processes, cutting out duplication.
- **Better service planning and packaging of external contracts**
 - An integrated approach encourages consideration of the whole range of transport needs in planning and procuring passenger transport services;
 - An ITU provides a single point of contact for service providers;
 - An ITU wields greater purchasing power; and
 - An ITU will reduce duplication;
- **Better in-house vehicle fleet utilisation**
 - Better use can potentially be made of the in-house vehicle fleet, particularly where a fleet is under-utilised or used only at certain times e.g. school bus fleet.
- **Greater flexibility**
 - An integrated unit with professionally focussed staff gives a powerful vehicle for responding to new challenges in transport organisation.

3.2.2 Costs

There may also be initial costs associated with setting up an integrated transport unit, Key cost elements in moving to an alternative organisational model may include:

- **Re-location costs**
 - Costs associated with removal to new premises and re-siting of IT systems
 - Costs of any preparatory works at the new premises
 - Costs of any transitional arrangements for re-located staff
- **Staff training costs**
 - There will almost certainly be a need for significant staff training and education
- **Staff package costs**

- Costs associated with any staff redundancies or early retirements where staff numbers are reduced
- **IT costs**
 - Costs of any new integrated systems required to underpin the integrated transport unit
- **Change management support**
 - External consultants may be required to support establishment of ITU
- **Contingency**
 - Inclusion of a contingency sum within the implementation budget to cope with unforeseen events is strongly recommended.

3.2.3 Case Study – Devon County Council Transport Co-ordination Service

Devon County Council (DCC) was designated by Government as a Centre of Excellence for Integrated Transport Planning in 2001, having demonstrated best practice in transport planning. DCC is one of fourteen authorities that were designated by the Government in 2001. The County Council was particularly recognised by Government in terms of its transport co-ordination, traffic management and control across a large rural county.¹⁷

DCC is in the south west of England and while it is the third largest county in England, it is also one of the most sparsely populated with around 735,000 people living there (2006).¹⁸ The major centre of population is Exeter (111,000), with other towns, such as Barnstaple (20,800), Newton Abbot (23,600) and Exmouth (32,400) acting as focal points for a large rural hinterland. There are also important small towns, which have developed to serve local communities.¹⁹

Figure 2: Map of Devon County Council area



Source: Transport Scotland 2009²⁰

¹⁷ Devon County Council [online] Transport Planning: Centres of Excellence, available from: <http://nia1.me/111>

¹⁸ Devon County Council (2010) State of Devon and Torbay's Transport [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11m>

¹⁹ Audit Commission (2002) Devon County Council: Transport Provision [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11n>

²⁰ Transport Scotland (2009) Providing transport in partnership [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/111> (Page 50)

Devon has four times more agricultural activity and twice as many tourism businesses than the national average, and is characterised by many small businesses. The public sector is the largest employer in the area.²¹

DCC's transport is managed in-house by the Transport Co-ordination Service (TCS). The TCS is a corporate unit within the County Environment Directorate and acts in a co-ordinating role for transport provision across the County Council.²² The TCS is responsible for providing the following services:²³

- Transporting students to and from school;
 - DCC transports 20,000 pupils per day and manages a school transport budget of £20m
 - DCC also manages and coordinates Special Education Needs (SEN) transport for schools and FE colleges
- Transporting clients to and from social care facilities;
- Operates the County fleet and manages maintenance contract;
- Manages 220 external contracts for various travel routes;
- Manages contract held by South West Highways, for maintenance of the County's transport fleet;
- Manages customer contacts centre and ticketing service SWPTI Traveline;
- Network planning;
- Schedules/timetables (6 area timetable books covering all Devon);
- Concessionary fares (130,000 pass holders) & education tickets;
- Monitoring service performance/data analysis;
- Publicity & information; and
- Local Transport Plan implementation.

This integration model is based on joint-commissioning of mainstream public and home-to-school transport by one in-house unit. According to the Audit Commission this approach provides economies of scale in the technical skills necessary to manage transport, allow them allowing them to better integrate home-to-school transport with the wider transport policy and improve the prices obtained when letting contracts.²⁴ DCC TCS also integrate their SEN transport requirements with special needs vehicles used for health and social services. Special needs transport is often more expensive with many users requiring adapted vehicles and/or specially trained drivers. Therefore, using these vehicles for both school runs and health and social service appointments brings greater efficiencies by maximising the use of both physical and human resource.

The Audit Commission also praised DCC TCS for:

²¹ Devon County Council (2010) State of Devon and Torbay's Transport [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11m>

²² Audit Commission (2002) Devon County Council: Transport Provision [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11n>

²³ Taken from combination of Sources: Transport Scotland (2009); Audit Commission (2002) and Devon City Council (2010)

²⁴ Audit Commission (2001) Going Places: Taking people to and from education, social services and healthcare [online] available from:

- Generally good satisfaction levels from end user surveys;
- Service agreements and good interaction with principal clients (Education and Social Services);
- A high standard of travel information, easily accessible by service users;
- DCC was recognised as an example of best practice by the Audit Commission in its going places publication for its co-ordinated approach to transport management;
- The positive attitude of TCS staff and their good understanding of the TCS business, service aims and client/customer relationships;
- Positive relationships with transport contractors; and
- Robust performance management systems.

The only negatives for the DCC TCS were the relative high costs of Devon's school transport and community transport schemes although it should be noted that many factors influence the cost of transport services including geographical characteristics, population density and the competitiveness of the local transport service provider market.²⁵ As noted above Devon is sparsely populated and predominately rural.

4 Transport Integration in Scotland

Transport Scotland was established as an executive agency of the then Scottish Executive in January 2005. As of September 2010 Transport Scotland merged with Transport Directorate of core Scottish Government but they continue to be called Transport Scotland albeit with an expanded portfolio of responsibilities, including:

- Rail (management and investment);
- Road (management and investment);
- Transport Strategy;
- Sustainable transport, road safety and accessibility;
- Local roads policy;
- Aviation, bus, freight and taxi policy;
- ferries, ports and harbours; and
- Concessionary travel and the Blue Badge Scheme (disabled persons' parking permits).

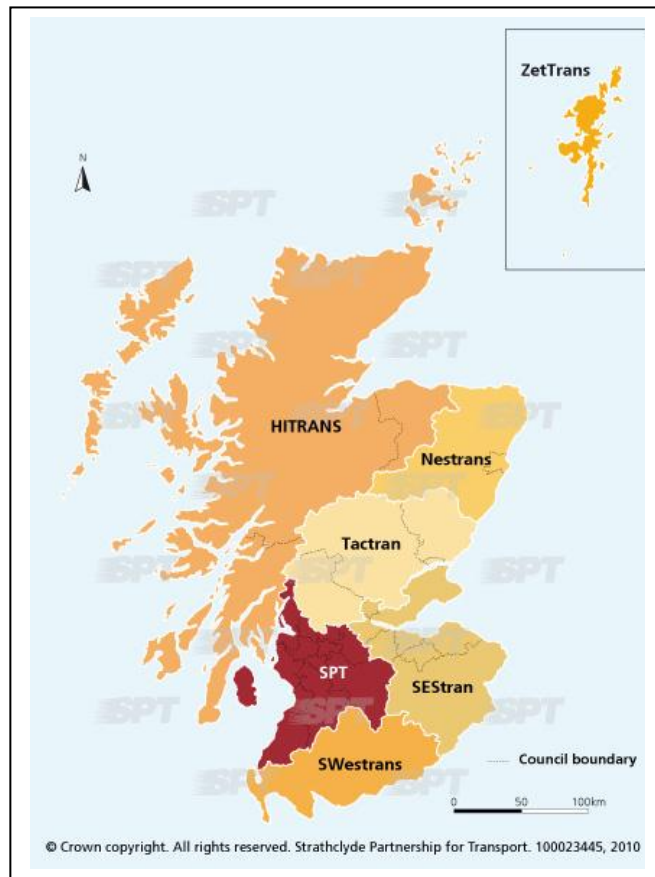
4.1 Regional Transport partnerships

Another one of Transport Scotland's roles is to liaise with and monitor the funding of Scotland's Regional Transport Partnerships (RTP). The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 required the establishment of Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs) covering the whole of Scotland. Seven RTPs were established on 1 December 2005 (figure 3):

²⁵ Audit Commission (2002) Devon County Council: Transport Provision [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11n>

Figure 3: Regional Transport Partnerships in Scotland

- Zetland Transport Partnership (ZetTrans)
- Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS)
- North-East of Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRANS)
- Tayside and Central Scotland Transport Partnership (TACTRAN)
- South-East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN)
- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- South-West of Scotland Transport Partnership (SWESTRANS)



Source: SPT (2012)

RTPs are governed by boards which consist of councillors from each of the constituent local authorities, who have voting rights, and external members appointed by Scottish Ministers, who may only vote in certain circumstances,²⁶ in this way they are comparable to the English/Welsh Integrated Transport Authorities (formerly PTAs).

PTAs have a responsibility to publish a Regional Transport Strategy (RTS). The RTS influences all of the future plans and activities of the organisation and informs future national and local transport strategies. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 sets various requirements for RTS but essentially the must consider the best way to meet local transport requirements while taking account of cost, funding and practicability.²⁷

4.1.1 Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) is the largest of Scotland's seven regional transport partnerships. SPT has a broader suite of powers having replaced and then retained the functions of the former Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive (like those in England). Unlike the other RTPs, which are funded solely by local authorities, SPT is also funded by Central Government (mostly capital funding) to carry out

²⁶ Rehfish, A (2011) SPICE Briefing: Transport in Scotland [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11q>

²⁷ The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 [online] available from:

transport planning, transport co-ordination, capital investment and project development for the 12 member councils in its area. Examples of the services SPT provides include:

- The operation of the Subway;
- The management of socially necessary and demand responsive bus services (MyBus);
- Capital investment in regional transport projects for all modes;
- The operation of regional bus stations/interchanges;
- The administration of the regional ticketing scheme (ZoneCard);
- The administration of the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme;
- managing school transport contracts; and
- bus stops and shelter maintenance.²⁸

While there has been criticism levelled at the current RTP in Scotland in terms of variable outcomes, there is recognition that the additional powers held by SPT make it an exemplar of regional integrated transport planning and provision.²⁹

5 Lessons for Northern Ireland

There are currently two Transport Plans for Northern Ireland:

- The Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP)
- The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP)

These are high level strategic documents designed to deliver an overall vision of transport for Northern Ireland. However, they fail to consider the unique characteristics of Northern Ireland's diverse communities and landscape and do not deal with the day-to-day issues of delivery like the local (England and Wales) and regional (Scotland) transport strategies discussed in this paper.

As a result of public transport reform the DRD proposed to provide an improved and more efficient customer focused service, built around integrated local transport plans.³⁰ As part of the reform process a local council based transport authority was considered (Discussed in NIAR 602-12). However, it was considered favourable to retain responsibility for public transport provision within central government alongside complimentary business areas such as road planning.³¹

A three tier structure was approved; initially involving the formation of a Public Transport (Executive) Agency. However, there are now plans to combine public transport and roads service into one departmental body. These proposals are still at an early stage and are not expected to come into play before 2013. To date, there has

²⁸ SPT (2011) Strathclyde Partnership for Transport : Annual Report 2010/2011[online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11v>

²⁹ Peakin, W. (2011) Are Regional Transport Partnerships worthwhile? Holyrood, April 12th 2010 [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11w>

³⁰ (DRD) Department for Regional Development (2010) Public transport Reform: Final Report on Public Consultation [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/10d>

³¹ RaiSe (2008) Public Transport Reform: Analysis of Strategic Business Plan Options [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/11p>

been no (public) discussion of the potential for this body to take on responsibility for coordinating SEN, health and education transport. However, this paper has provided examples of cases where this approach has been beneficial both in terms of improving service and delivering efficiencies.