



Our response to the Tyne and Wear LTP3 consultation

9th December 2010

LTP3 is the third Local Transport Plan for Tyne and Wear 2011-2021. The 10-year strategy sets out the transport problems that we face and what the five local authorities in Tyne and Wear and Nexus propose to do about them. The 3-year delivery plan shows what it is hoped to deliver over the short-term.

Question 2: Are there any other priorities you would like to add to the list of activities? If so, what are they?

Yes - we will improve the integration of existing transport networks to facilitate multi-modal and active travel

Active travel (cycling, walking) should be better integrated into public transport to allow users to combine different means of sustainable transport. By this, we mean allowing bikes on metro and buses, providing secure cycling facilities at metro, train and bus stations and incorporating cyclist awareness in bus drivers' training course. The Metro should also offer a range of measures to its customers such as subsidies for folding bikes and station bicycles. Concrete actions need to be taken, not just "examined".

This priority is supported throughout the strategy, e.g. in relation to the aspirations of transport users stated on p.85 and reinforced in a number of policies, in particular policy 13 "We will promote developments which lead to higher levels of walking, cycling and public transport" which we fully support.

Question 3: Do you have any other comments to make on the draft Local Transport Plan?

We believe that cycling as a sustainable, affordable and active travel mode must be given a more prominent place within the LTP3 strategy and plan. It should be a clear priority for all T&W local authority areas and in particular Newcastle, the commuting and economic hub for the sub-region.

We also recommend that cycling be further recognised and encouraged as a means of transport for commuting and short trips, as opposed to the "leisure" activity it has been confined into for too many years.

The strategy document makes a number of positive references to cycling and we welcome LTP3 statements such as:

- “We are therefore promoting a radical shift in emphasis to more sustainable and lower cost modes” (p.3)
- “It [the LTP vision] should also encourage a cycling revolution and mode shift to walking, public transport ...” (p. 48)
- “There is a strong consensus across sustainable communities strategies in all five districts of Tyne and Wear in favour of revitalizing town and city centres, focusing development on accessible locations and improving the public realm to make it more walk- and cycle-friendly” (p112)

Later in this reply, we assess the range of policies supporting these statements as we believe that they need to be much more detailed and specific.

The Delivery Plan 2011-2014, however, lacks focus and clarity and fails to translate the priority given to cycling in the strategy document into concrete actions and measures. In particular, the Newcastle section is very weak and does not identify any priorities for action, making it very difficult to articulate any comments and recommendations.

STRATEGY DOCUMENT

Chapter 4 supporting economic development and regeneration (p.55)

This chapter does not include any reference to cycling – thus failing to recognise that bike commuting and cycling to shops and for social reasons can play an important role in creating sustainable communities.

Whether it is about existing strategic employment sites and neighbourhoods or new ones, the LTP3 should embrace the “radical shift to more sustainable and lower-cost modes”. There is a need for a culture step moving economic development and regeneration away from the traditional and redundant car-centric approach. Newburn Riverside is a typical example of this approach. There are many sites under development (e.g. Scotswood, Stephenson Quarter, Science Central) which have to embed cycling provision (infrastructure and soft measures) in their planning and implementation.

Cycling vision for 2021 (p.136)

We recommend an additional bullet points stating that “City/town centres and local neighbourhoods should be designed or re-developed with cyclists in mind.

Policy 2 – We will work to improve road safety

From a cycling perspective, the definition of road safety as a scheme driver for engineering improvement works requires consideration and discussion. More often than not, cyclists are disadvantaged over pedestrians and cars, and their lives put a risk by “road safety” schemes. This practice is not acceptable and must end.

Example: the introduction of pedestrian refuges on busy roads need be designed so that they don't result in the removal of cycling lanes.

Policy 14 – We will continue to invest in and promote a range of Smarter Choices measures

There clearly is a lot of tension in our transport system and will remain so unless we tackle this at the core: reduce traffic by providing real alternatives including reducing the need to travel by car. An interactive and open Tyne & Wear-wide user debate is required to understand travel reality and perception with the view to finding solutions and answers. We must have a public debate (the Road User Debate) on common perceptions and contradictions ("I drive because I don't feel safe – there are too many cars on the road") in order to inspire behavioural change processes towards a truly sustainable conurbation.

We are sceptical that the LTP3 goes far enough with Smarter Choices and will deliver the above. We are especially doubtful that marketing campaigns and in particular e-marketing are the way forward and will dramatically change perceptions. To be effective, the policy needs to invest in interventions targeted at users, employers and influencers and generate a wider debate about road users.

This policy also needs to acknowledge that behavioural change leading to more active travel can only be achieved through partnership work and the involvement of VCS organisations (Sustrans, CTC, local campaigning groups). We recommend that the policy be renamed:

"We will continue to invest in and promote a range of active and sustainable travel measures to be delivered by Smarter Choices and VCS organisations"

Policy 19 – we will use a combination of education and enforcement to curb pavement parking

The LTP3 must clearly state that this policy includes enforcement of cars parked in cycle lanes (not just on "pavement"). Car parking in cycle lanes is a real problem and a real safety concern for cyclists and must be given due priority.

Policy 22 – We will seek to improve air quality

Cycling helps deliver multiple interrelated outcomes and has many shared benefits: health, environmental and social. So it directly inputs to Policy 22 to improve air quality amongst a number of other policies inside and outside the LTP3, and should be acknowledged and accounted for as such. We suggest that the economic link between transport and healthy communities including city centres could be drawn more clearly.

Policy 23 – We will support the use of priority measures on key road corridors to encourage the use of sustainable modes.

We are concerned about Policy 23 where cyclists may have to share with buses and taxis the 'priority lanes' on key road corridors. We do not see

this as a helpful way to encourage safe cycling as key road corridors are unlikely to be part of the 20mph network.

We think this measure can only be part of the cycle network with quieter alternatives routes also being provided in parallel.

Policy 24 – We will give priority and invest in walking and cycling

The LTP3 must make it clear that, in order to encourage cycling, a better urban cycle network is needed. This network must be:

- safe
- convenient and pleasant
- direct and continuous
- supported by good quality cycling ancillaries (bike storage/parking, signage)

The network will be combining on-road, road and pavement sharing in accord with DfT's user and the provision hierarchy. Strategic cycle routes must be identified to enable traffic reduction schemes to be implemented.

Policy 25 – We will seek to reduce car dominance in residential areas

We recommend that it is not just residential areas that benefit from public realm improvement. City and town centres need to be given clear priority over unfettered car access as well.

Pedestrianisation and reduced space allocation for cars should also benefit cyclists and should not be implemented to the detriment of cyclists.

A clear link between decline in social cohesion/interaction and car dominance (lack of public realm) must be made.

Policy 26 - We will seek to allocate a proportion of funding to schemes and activities that encourage cycling.

Policy 26 requires to be developed in more detail. Much more detail is required on how funding of cycle schemes will be sourced, partitioned and proportioned, programmed, communicated, consulted upon before being implemented and monitored. Rigorous pursuit of active application for grants by dedicated and skilled funding officers is essential. Maybe the individual authorities' Cycling Strategies could achieve this in which case this should be mentioned here.

Policy 31 - We will examine ways in which Metro can better accommodate the needs of cyclists.

We urge the LTP3 to make a much stronger case for integrated transport including bikes on metro, thereby unlocking the true potential of multi-modal travel. The current wording in Policy 31 is weak and utterly non-committal. In the meantime, before the provision of suitable carriages, Nexus must show real commitment to mode integration by offering options to their customers such as secure bike storage at stations, a folding bike subsidy and station bicycles.

Policy X - The future of travel

We ask the LTP3 to include a policy on 'integrated transport and car alternatives' considering our comments below and in line with the suggested additional priority outlined at the beginning of our reply. We ask all authorities and organisations in charge of transport to work together for a better, inclusive and fairer deal for integrated travel choices. This is because a fully integrated transport system offers a real alternative to the private car and alleviates congestion so that major 'predict & provide' road schemes (A1, A19,...) become largely unnecessary.

In the longer term, solutions may also include non-travel or virtual travel where employers are flexible with their employees (home working) and provide equipment to reduce the need for travel (telecom equipment etc).

In the short term a real incentive must be given to use sustainable active modes. The provision of a clear alternative and benefits to sustainable mode users such as subsidised fares, better facilities, infrastructure and timetabling. Sustainable modes must become the first choice for their sheer convenience, effectiveness and comparable affordability to private car use. The other part of the equation is the deterring (hugely unpopular) of private car use would be welcomed such as increased parking fees and fines, and reduced available car parking in city centres.

DELIVERY DOCUMENT

We recommend that current commitments (p.1) clarify whether they include any improvements for cyclists:

- Does the Tyne Tunnel include refurbishment of the existing pedestrian tunnel that will benefit cyclists?
- Does the Metro reinvigoration include better provision for cyclists?

In relation to these questions, we urge the LTP team to ensure that all large scale investments towards the T&W transport infrastructure benefit cyclists and that investments towards cycling is not limited to tokenistic small-scale interventions.

The following comments are focused on the Newcastle section:

It is disappointing that the Newcastle section does not identify any priorities, objectives nor actions as opposed to Gateshead and Sunderland which clearly state their key objectives.

In its description of policies, strategies and key strategic sites, cycling is simply ignored –apart for some references related to the climate change strategy. This is despite the 1PLAN having the objective of creating an urban environment which puts cycling and walking at the forefront.

We are very concerned by statements such as "The City Centre Area Action Plan's remit is to improve the public realm in the City Centre, including rationalising road use and parking, enhancing provision for public transport and extending pedestrian priority areas." which omits any reference to cycling. We recommend that LDF and all Area Action Plans

listed on page 12, consult cycling organisations to ensure that cycling is considered and recognised as an essential ingredient to create an attractive, functional and sustainable urban fabric.

Unlike North Tyneside, the Newcastle section does not provide any data about travel modes to work and cycling. Without benchmarks and baseline data and indeed without a Newcastle Cycling Strategy providing local data, it will remain difficult to make a case for increased investments in cycling.

Because of the lack of priorities/objectives in the Newcastle section, it is difficult to understand how the LTP3 resources are broken down by areas/budget lines in the Newcastle's indicative allocation tables. In particular we recommend that additional information be provided to clarify what the "sustainable travel initiatives" and "strategic interventions" budget lines are and what they intend to fund. We welcome the cycling budget line which we understand is mainly capital investment towards the cycling infrastructure (please confirm) and recommend that it is kept at 15% of the overall budget.

We understand that resources are limited and therefore we encourage that larger transport capital schemes include cycling elements, e.g. central station could have a cycling hub providing safe storage, repair services and bikes for hire. This would also have the benefit of creating sustainable jobs.

Finally we would like to comment on the performance management section and recommend that "cycling" and "cycleway condition" be added in the performance indicators column for the safe and sustainable communities objective. What more than cycling contributes to healthier communities with higher levels of physical activity?

Thank you for reading our comments and taking them into consideration when revising and finalising the LTP3 strategy and delivery documents. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our reply with the LTP team so please contact us for a meeting!