

Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into Sustainable Transport

Sustrans response

September 2009

Submitted by:

Steven Paterson
Director Sustrans Northern Ireland
Ground Floor
Premier Business Centres
20 Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8GD
Tel: 028 9043 4569
email steven.patterson@sustrans.org.uk

Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity.

Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. We work on practical, innovative solutions to the transport challenges facing us all. Sustrans is the charity behind the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, Bike It, TravelSmart, Active Travel, Connect2 and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all projects that are changing our world one mile at a time.

To find out more visit or call: www.sustrans.org.uk 0845 113 00 65

Northern Ireland office

Sustrans Northern Ireland
Ground Floor
Premier Business Centres
20 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GD

028 90 434569

steven.patterson@sustrans.org.uk

© Sustrans, September 2009

Registered Charity No. 326550 (England and Wales) SCO39263 (Scotland)

VAT Registration No. 416740656

Introduction

Sustrans is pleased to be able make a submission to the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Regional Development Inquiry into Sustainable Transport. We have thirty years' experience of practical promotion of walking and cycling across the UK, and in Northern Ireland we have worked closely for more than a decade with several government departments and communities in the practical delivery of projects that change travel behaviour and advance understanding of the role of active travel in healthy living, to inform policy making and establish effective programmes.

Terms of reference:

1. To explore and clarify the social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainable transport;
2. To identify the policies, attitudes and technologies likely to underpin a move to more sustainable transport in Northern Ireland; and
3. To make recommendations arising out of the above investigations, and report to the Assembly.

1. To explore and clarify the social, environmental and economic aspects of sustainable transport

- 1.1 We are now seven years into the NI Government's Regional Transportation Strategy for 2002-2012, with its intention to create a modern, safe and efficient transport system. However, currently public transport usage is the lowest in the UK, while the share of trips made by car is the highest in the UK and levels of walking and cycling for local journeys are lower than in the rest of the UK. Traffic levels and resulting congestion have now reached unprecedented levels and are estimated to cost the NI economy £250 million per year¹.
- 1.2 In Northern Ireland the cost attributable to lack of physical activity includes over 2,100 deaths per annum, equivalent to over 18,000 life years lost, and 1.2 million working days lost each year. The cost of physical activity and obesity to the NI Economy in 2010 is likely to exceed £500m.².
- 1.3 The Northern Ireland Assembly seems to be focussed on tackling congestion on our strategic roads – the motorways and 'A' roads – but this misses the bigger picture. Research by the UK government has revealed that almost 90% of congestion is in towns and cities³, making the motorways and 'A' roads wider just moves traffic into already-congested urban areas just that little bit faster. The planned £3.1 billion investment programme to improve and expand Northern Ireland's road network will do little to address the growing concerns of congestion, worsening health, transport inequalities and climate change.
- 1.4 In Northern Ireland 63% of all journeys are less than five miles (a 30 minute bike ride) yet investment in cycling is very low.

¹ PA Consulting, 2008. "Northern Ireland economy burns £250m per year in roads "slow lane""
<http://www.paconsulting.com/introducing-pas-media-site/releases/northern-ireland-economy-burns-250-million-a-year-in-roads-slow-lane-23-may-2008/>

² Investing for Health, DHSSPS, 2002

³ Eddington, R. (2006) *The Eddington Transport Study*, page 79. Department for Transport, London.

- 1.5 UK Government studies show that people are far more annoyed by urban traffic than by hold-ups on the motorways⁴. Sustainable transport solutions should be made in cities, towns and villages.

Social

- 1.6 There are important social equity issues around transport. There are now 900,000 vehicles registered in NI for a population of 1.7 million yet 50% of households in areas of Belfast and 20% of rural households do not have access to a motor vehicle. 39% of women in NI do not have a full driving licence.
- 1.7 Amongst the poorest fifth of households, those who do own cars spend nearly a quarter of their income on the cost of motoring.⁵ A family is officially defined as suffering 'fuel poverty' if heating their house costs more than 10% of their income⁶. Although there is no similar official definition of 'transport poverty', that is what these families are experiencing.
- 1.8 Despite owning the fewest cars, the poorest households are the most exposed to death or injury by cars, and this is especially true of children⁷.

Climate Change

- 1.9 "Doing nothing is no longer an option", according to the Chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution⁸. Professor Sir John Lawton says that technological improvements alone will not be enough to deliver the scale of emissions reductions we need to see from the transport sector. "Behaviour change is vital", he stresses, "and that means all of us travelling less far, in more energy efficient ways and at slower speeds".
- 1.10 Northern Ireland's per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of 12.83 tonnes per annum compares badly with the UK average of 10.48 tonnes. While the UK as a whole has achieved a greenhouse gas emissions decrease of 15.7% since 1990, Northern Ireland's total has decreased by only 5.8%. Much of the differences between the UK and Northern Ireland averages are down to our transport (and agriculture) emissions.
- 1.11 While domestic transport emissions in the UK increased by 9% from 1990 to 2006, in Northern Ireland they increased by a staggering 51%. The transport sector now accounts for 25% of Northern Ireland's total GHG emissions, much to do with increasing car use. The proposed massive road building programme will contribute to more, longer distance journeys so raising GHG emissions.
- 1.12 One main reason transport emissions are growing is because we're travelling longer distances. For example, between 1985 and 2005 average annual mileage per head (excluding foreign travel) increased by 35%, though the number of trips was broadly unchanged. This is the result of the interaction of transport policies with land use planning. Tackling small journeys will bring big rewards. Car journeys under five miles account for 20% of passenger transport CO₂ – shifting some of these to walking and cycling will also help cut congestion and obesity and improve health too.

⁴ Lyons, G., Goodwin, P., Hanly, M., Dudley, G., Chatterjee, K., Anable, J., Wiltshire, P. and Susilo, Y. (2008). Public attitudes to transport: Knowledge review of existing evidence. Department for Transport, London, July. Available online at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/scienceresearch/social/evidence.pdf>

⁵ Social Exclusion Unit, 2003, *Making the Connections: Final Report on Transport and Social Exclusion*, 145pp, p.3

⁶ Scottish Government, 2002, *The Scottish Fuel Poverty Statement*, at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/08/15258/9955>, accessed 30/10/2007

⁷ Institute for Public Policy Research, 2002, *Streets ahead: Safe and liveable streets for children*

⁸ Quoted in Sustrans Low Carbon Information sheet: <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/webfiles/Info%20sheets/ff44.pdf>

Health

- 1.13 The 2007 Foresight Tackling Obesity report highlighted the scale of our obesity problem. Unless we act decisively and immediately, by 2050 almost 60% of the UK population could be obese, with the economic cost of overweight and obesity reaching £49.9 billion at today's prices. Obesity alone justifies a shift in transport policy from sedentary to active travel, but the benefits of physical activity go much wider.
- 1.14 The Health and Social Wellbeing Survey 2005-06 found that a quarter of all men and 23% of women in Northern Ireland were obese. The survey findings also show that this represents an overall increase of 26% in adult obesity since 1997.
- 1.15 The World Health Organisation recommends adults undertake 30 minutes of physical activity everyday and evidence shows that only 30% of people take the recommended daily amount in Northern Ireland⁹. The Chief Medical officer for England says "For most people, the easiest and most acceptable forms of physical activity are those that can be incorporated into everyday life. Examples include walking or cycling instead of travelling by car....."¹⁰
- 1.16 In our view, a key document from within the UK is the guidance published in 2007 by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) on physical activity and the environment. NICE acknowledged **the crucial role of the physical environment** in supporting or deterring physical activity, and in a typically thorough evidence review looked at over 94,000 published papers. The strongest evidence base NICE could find came from active travel – walking and cycling – and as a result the majority of the recommendations in their guidance relate to intervention in this area.¹¹

Economic prosperity

- 1.17 While road transport plays a crucial role in delivering economic prosperity to the UK economy it is now widely recognised that the building of roads generates extra traffic with resulting negative congestion, health, social and environmental effects. Sustainable transport solutions lay in improving transport choice and creating local environments that encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport.
- 1.18 Making improvements to walking and cycling networks and of behavioural programmes to encourage increased uptake of walking, cycling and public transport are highly cost efficient, providing significantly better cost benefit ratios than road building schemes.
- 1.19 The three English Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns of Darlington, Peterborough and Worcestershire shared a £10 million fund established by the Department for Transport 2004-2008 to tackle car use and traffic congestion. At the end of the five-year project, car use had fallen by up to 9 per cent across the three towns. As car travel fell, use of more active and sustainable forms of transport has increased across all three demonstration towns.¹²
- 1.20 Furthermore Sustrans has carried out research with the English Universities of Bolton and Leeds on the Safe Routes to Schools programme which shows a typical benefit to cost ratio of up to 38:1 compared to a typical ratio of 3:1 for other transport schemes such as road or rail¹³.

⁹ Northern Ireland Health and Wellbeing Survey, 2005/06, available at <http://archive.nics.gov.uk/dfp/070129b-dfp.htm>

¹⁰ *At least five a week; the Chief Medical Officer's report on physical activity, 2004*

¹¹ National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity. London. NICE 2007 <http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/PH8/QuickRefGuide/pdf/English>

¹² Sustrans press release <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/about-sustrans/media/news-releases/car-use-down-in-english-towns>

¹³ Sustrans <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/resources/research-and-monitoring/economic-appraisal-of-cycling-and-walking-schemes>

- 1.21 The above demonstrates the value of investment in walking and cycling schemes and behavioural programmes in comparison to other forms of transport investment.

2. To identify the policies, attitudes and technologies likely to underpin a move to more sustainable transport in Northern Ireland.

- 2.1 Modal shift away from car use to walking, cycling and public transport has been proven in a number of projects in the UK. For example:
- 2.2 The Sustrans Rural Safe routes to Schools project worked with 18 schools to encourage walking and cycling. The results are very impressive with:
- 49% of children driven to school compared to 64% before the project
 - 33% of pupils now walking to school compared to 20% before the project
 - 7% of pupils now cycling to school compared to 5% before
- 2.3 Sustrans Bike it programme in schools sees pupils cycling at least once a week rise in one year from 14% to 26% and cycling everyday rise from 4% to 8%. Sustrans recommend every child has a Safe Route to School so they can chose to walk and cycle.
- 2.4 Sustrans TravelSmart programmes have achieved reductions in car trips averaging more than 10% together with significant increases in levels of walking, cycling and public transport use. The programmes are based on a process known as Individualised Travel Marketing (ITM) and works with households offering tailor-made information and support, enabling people to walk, cycle and use public transport more often. It delivers measurable and sustained reductions in car use by encouraging people to make a few changes to their daily travel choices when and where it suits them best.
- 2.5 On road cycle training amongst young people encourages more cycling. Bikeability is the brand name for the UK National Cycle Training Standard. It involves 3 levels of cycle training including "on road" training whereas in NI Cycle Proficiency is usually carried out in playgrounds. The results of Bikeability are most encouraging¹⁴:
- 17% of trainees now cycle regularly to school - more than double the regional average
 - More than 97% of parents and guardians saw an improvement in their child's cycling safety, 75% noted "a lot" of improvement
 - 37% of trainees cycle for transportation reasons
 - 92% of trainees are cycling for leisure at least once a week
 - 56% report a "real increase" in leisure cycling in the family
 - 30% report a "real increase" in "utility" cycling
 - 56% increase in other family members cycling was reported
- 2.6 Climate Change should now be considered as a key consideration when determining transport policy. The UK Government's Stern Review calculated that the dangers of unabated climate change would be equivalent to at least 5% of GDP each year. However, when more recent scientific evidence is included in the models, the Review estimates that the dangers could be equivalent to 20% of GDP or more. In contrast, the costs of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change can be limited to around 1% of global GDP each year. The central message is that reducing emissions today will make us better off in the future: one model predicts benefits of up to \$2.5 trillion each year if the world shifts to a low carbon path.

¹⁴ <http://www.letstravelwise.org/newsarticle.php?articleID=1078>

- 2.7 A review of the planning system in Northern Ireland is currently being conducted while a revised policy for development in rural areas was recently released. We must increase the density of housing in major settlements and concentrate future rural development in established settlements to reduce individuals' need to travel by car and to provide a larger customer base for public transport operators. Environments that encourage walking and cycling must be created and public transport links should be incorporated into new developments, with new bus stops and services provided in growing villages and towns in a pro-active and innovative manner.

3. To make recommendations arising out of the above investigations, and report to the Assembly.

We would recommend the Inquiry ensures the DRD Regional Transportation Strategy:

- 3.1 Sets targets for the percentage of trips made by each travel mode, specifically aiming to reduce car use, set ambitious targets for a growth in walking and cycling and public transport – and ensure they are met.
- 3.2 Publishes a coherent strategy for growth in walking and cycling, based on experience of what works; monitor and performance-manage progress; give transport departments a clear public health objective, and make clear the roles of other government departments and other partners.
- 3.3 Commits 10% of transport budgets to walking and cycling immediately, and in future ensure that transport funds are allocated proportionate to the new, ambitious target levels.
- 3.4 Sets targets to reduce CO2 emissions from transport, starting immediately and increasing over time, with measures identified to ensure meeting these targets.
- 3.5 Delivers land use planning that discourages car use and facilitates sustainable travel.
- 3.6 Reappraises our road network setting a hierarchy of roads users, with active and public transport at the top and single occupancy private car use at the bottom. Roads need to be redesigned to reflect this.
- 3.7 Creates safe, attractive walking and cycling conditions, with coherent high quality networks linking all everyday destinations, so that walking and cycling are faster and more convenient than motor travel, backed up by individualised travel marketing, school and workplace travel plans, practical walking promotion programmes and high quality cycle training
- 3.8 Completes the National Cycle Network. The National Cycle Network consists of over 12,000 miles of routes across the UK, a third of which is traffic-free. 55% of people now live within a mile of the Network with many parts of the network extending into the heart of communities throughout the UK, giving people the choice of healthy, environmentally friendly travel for many more of their everyday journeys. 2008 was the ninth consecutive year that the number of trips across the National Cycle Network had increased.
- 3.9 Makes 20mph or lower speed limits the norm for residential streets and those used by shoppers, tourists and others, close to schools or public buildings, or important for walking and cycling or children's play. In urban areas only the busiest strategic traffic routes should now qualify for higher speed limits
- 3.10 Offers Bikeability on road cycle training to every child in Northern Ireland.

- 3.11 Tackles bad driving, through improved driver training and awareness campaigns, backed by stronger and better enforced traffic laws
- 3.12 Works with DOE to ensure reduced road casualties rates are linked to increases in walking and cycling.
- 3.13 'Health checks' every transport and land use decision, focusing on the potential impact on levels of walking and cycling and other aspects of health; invest public money to the benefit of public health, and reject proposals whose impact on walking and cycling will not be positive
- 3.14 Invests in a national 'smarter choices' programme. Smarter choices are proven successful techniques for influencing people's travel behaviour towards more sustainable options such as encouraging school, workplace and individualised travel planning. They also seek to improve public transport and marketing services such as travel awareness campaigns, setting up websites for car share schemes, supporting car clubs and encouraging teleworking.
- 3.15 Encourages a partnership approach (both cross-departmental and linking to communities, NGO's, private sector) to facilitate active travel.
- 3.16 Sustrans feels that active travel should be included as a key policy goal to ensure that all investments support rather than undermine it. Sustrans has joined over 100 organisations in the 'Promote Public Health: Take Action on Active Travel' policy call¹⁵

Sustrans views transport as a crucial issue as the NI Assembly aims to deliver a prosperous, healthy, safe, inclusive Northern Ireland. We think there is a major change necessary in the priorities for transport and we would be pleased to offer oral evidence to the Committee's Inquiry.

¹⁵Take Action on Active Travel http://www.adph.org.uk/downloads/policies/Take_action_on_active_travel.pdf