



Integrated National Transport Strategy

Campaign for Better Transport submission to the Department for Transport call for ideas

January 2025

About us

Campaign for Better Transport is the leading national transport charity working across England and Wales to make transport better, greener and fairer. Our vision is for all communities to have high quality, sustainable transport that meets their needs, improves quality of life and helps protect the environment. With over 20,000 supporters, we work with politicians, civil servants, and industry to influence national and local government to maintain, expand and improve the transport offering for all.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the call for ideas put forward by the department on the Integrated National Transport Strategy.

Summary

Developing an Integrated National Transport Strategy is a vital opportunity to create a long-term plan for a transport system that is integrated, sustainable, and supports the priorities of increasing economic growth, tackling social inclusion, and reaching our net-zero goals. Our submission identifies the following key priorities:

- **Integration across transport modes:** Seamless journeys require joined-up ticketing, timetabling, and infrastructure across modes.
- **Empowering local authorities:** Decision-making and long-term funding should be devolved to local and combined authorities, supported by investment in their capacity and skills.
- **Balancing capital and revenue funding:** Funding should support both maintenance and new public transport infrastructure and operating existing networks.
- **Harnessing data and technology:** Real-time information, open data, and digital platforms should improve journey planning and network efficiency.
- **Integration across wider policy areas:** Integration of transport policy with planning, housing, health, and environmental policies.
- **Growth and planning alignment:** Transport investment should prioritise compact, connected development, avoiding car-dependent housing that drives road expansion.

A well-resourced, devolved, and integrated approach will ensure transport contributes to economic growth, supports communities, and helps achieve the UK's climate commitments.

Introduction

Campaign for Better Transport welcomes the Government's commitment to developing an Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS). This represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to establish a long-term strategic policy framework for the planning, delivery, and operation of a transport system that is truly integrated, sustainable, and fit for the future. It is an

opportunity to ensure better alignment not just between modes of transport but also between government departments and related policy areas.

The challenges facing the transport system and the other systems with which it intersects have all the qualities identified in the Government's Missions: they are long-term, complex, have common causes, are measurable, and require ambitious but attainable goals.¹ The INTS should set out how transport will contribute to economic growth, improving health outcomes, supporting social equity, and reducing carbon emissions. To help support these outcomes, a future transport system must prioritise public transport, active travel, shared mobility, and decarbonisation.

Questions

1. In your opinion, how could the transport network be better 'joined-up'?

The transport system could be better joined-up in several ways: with transport and land use planning, between transport modes and with our policy areas and government departments.

The INTS should adopt the "Avoid-Shift-Improve" framework by prioritising first reducing unnecessary travel and reducing travel distances ("Avoid"), then shifting trips to more sustainable modes ("Shift"), and finally improving the efficiency of remaining motorised trips through wider adoption of electric vehicles ("Improve").

Firstly, in terms of avoiding unnecessary travel and reducing travel distances, it is important to recognise that most travel is a derived demand. Most trips people make are a means to an end – gaining access to goods, services, opportunities, and other people. The closer that homes, jobs, schools, shops, and other destinations are, the shorter the travel required. Access can also be achieved digitally – through remote working, home deliveries, or virtual services. This requires integrating transport with complementary systems and related policy areas, such as "vision-led" land use planning, health, digital transformation, and the environment.

Secondly, where physical travel is required, people need to be able to make seamless, point-to-point journeys using the most appropriate mode. For the sake of the planet, personal finances and wider economic growth, the INTS must enable more journeys to be made by sustainable methods, including public transport, walking, wheeling and cycling – a process known as modal shift. There is already public appetite for improved travel options. Many people are stuck in unaffordable car ownership out of necessity, because of poor public transport provision. It is estimated transport costs push over five million people into poverty.² Research we conducted found three-quarters of drivers want more options than driving and 79% of drivers would use public transport more if it was better.³ Improving sustainable transport options aligns with the Government's pre-election commitment to "set targets for modal shift to lower emissions from the transport sector".⁴

However, to make sustainable transport a viable option in place of private vehicles, significant improvements to public transport services and infrastructure are needed. The INTS needs to ensure that people can make their journeys on a transport network that is safe, accessible, affordable, reliable, integrated and decarbonised. This means integrating between different modes in the planning and delivery of both infrastructure (networks and interchanges) and operations (information, timetabling, scheduling and ticketing). This includes:

- Integrated ticketing and fares: implementing a single ticketing system covering buses, trains, trams and other modes in city regions. Capped daily, weekly or monthly travelcard packages capped contactless payments across modes, similar to London's Oyster card or the Bee Network in Greater Manchester, make travelling by public transport simpler and easier and encourage multimodal journeys.
- Timetable coordination: aligning train, bus and other local transport timetables to reduce

waiting times and facilitate easy transfers, particularly in rural and suburban areas where services are less frequent.

- Trams and light rail: In larger towns and cities trams, metro and light rail bridge the gap between trains and buses. They can carry large numbers of people quickly over a long distance, providing an affordable, efficient and zero emission mass transit solution.⁵ Once a staple of UK public transport systems, few have been delivered in recent decades. The INTS should promote more new, extended and reopened tram and light rail networks in cities across the country.
- Multimodal hubs: developing well-designed transport hubs where different modes converge, supported by clear signage and real-time information displays, support easy interchange. Hubs should centre around major rail stations and include interchanges with trams, local buses, pedestrian access, cycling infrastructure and parking, micromobility hire, car clubs and electric vehicle charging.
- National integration standards: implementing national standards for modal integration at railway stations. We have developed a categorisation of stations by size and usage with appropriate infrastructure and information provision (e.g. bus bays, cycle parking, wayfinding tools).
- Active travel integration: walking, cycling, and wheeling should be prioritised as modes in their own right for local utility and leisure journeys, and as key 'first and last mile' connections to public transport hubs. These modes are healthy, zero-carbon, and support thriving communities.
- Shared mobility: enabling and promoting car clubs, peer-to-peer vehicle sharing, taxis, private hire vehicles, and micro-mobility solutions such as e-scooters and bike hire schemes have an important role to play in supporting an integrated public transport system and reducing reliance on private vehicles.
- Local transport coordination: coordinating local transport to create a joined-up system, achieving efficiencies and cost savings. At the moment there can be a range of local transport services, including commercial buses, local authority supported (tendered) bus services, home-to-school transport, non-emergency patient transport (NEPTS), demand responsive transport (DRT), community transport, etc. These can all play a vital role in connecting different groups of people to specific destinations, but they are planned and delivered by different types of providers with little coordination between them. By reviewing local transport needs as a whole and planning a joined-up network to deliver on these needs, operators and authorities can achieve efficient use of assets and cost savings.
- Freight integration: integrating the movement of goods through ports, airports, and logistics hubs into the wider transport strategy, ensuring that freight needs do not undermine the goals of decarbonisation and modal shift. Rail freight plays a critical role in reducing pressure on the UK's road network, lowering road maintenance costs, cutting congestion, and improving air quality, while delivering essential goods efficiently and sustainably. Greater focus is needed on unblocking bottlenecks on the rail network and rebalancing fiscal measures to facilitate rail freight growth. Faster electrification of vans and trucks and enabling smaller electric vehicles, such as cargo bikes, for first and last mile in city centres is vital, alongside delivery consolidation to reduce vehicle miles.

Finally, integration between modes and policy areas will also require integration across government departments, between different tiers of government, and between public and private sectors. Furthermore, integration must apply to capital and revenue investments to ensure that both infrastructure and operational services work seamlessly together. We discuss

this in our response to question 4.

2. Data in the context of the next question can mean having better information about journeys, such as but not limited to departure times, journey planning, traffic information and accessibility information. How could data be used to improve the transport network?

Good use of data can significantly enhance the efficiency, accessibility, and user experience of the transport network. Examples include:

- Real-time information (RTI): Providing real-time updates on bus and rail arrivals and departures, and traffic conditions via mobile apps and displays at stops and stations significantly improves the passenger experience. Our recent report on bus infrastructure and information provision highlighted RTI's role in improving certainty, the feeling of safety and accessibility – thereby increasing bus use. However, it revealed only 16% of people say their nearest bus stop has RTI.⁶ While the bus open data provision is in place, there needs to be statutory guidance with appropriate infrastructure and information standard for different categories of bus stops and sufficient capital funding for local authorities to implement improvements over a reasonable time frame.
- Digital connectivity coverage: While some bus stops provide QR codes or links to online bus timetables and live arrival information, people are unable to access this without having a smartphone and without reliable mobile phone signal coverage. This is also required for using smartphone payment platforms. Unfortunately, poor mobile network coverage is an issue for many, particularly in rural areas. Improving network coverage is critical to give rural users confidence in their transport options.
- Mobility as a Service (MaaS): Data is central to enabling MaaS digital platforms providing journey planning and on-route assistance for passengers. They can help improve the passenger experience for multi-modal journeys. Integrating accessibility data (e.g., step-free access, lift status) into platforms can help disabled passengers plan their journeys confidently. Encouraging transport operators to share open data is key enabling third-party journey planning services (e.g., Citymapper, Google Maps) to offer accurate, multi-modal travel solutions.
- Transport planning and traffic management: Data can be used to understand travel patterns, plan service alterations, optimise bus routes and managing traffic more effectively. For example, Transport for West Midlands' use of data to monitor congestion and tailor bus priority measures led to a 15% reduction in bus journey times along key corridors. Collecting passenger satisfaction data can help to identify service gaps and improve journey experiences.

3. Technology in the context of the next question means new and innovative ways to complete journeys, for example but not limited to the use of autonomous vehicles, electric scooters and e-hailing rides. How could technology be used to improve the transport network?

Technology, particularly the move to electric and other zero emission vehicles (EVs), is frequently portrayed as being at the core of transport decarbonisation. Zero emission vehicles are indeed a large part of the answer for reducing carbon emissions in transport, but they are but not a silver bullet. Evidence by the Climate Change Committee demonstrates that significant traffic reduction – through a combination of reduced demand (travelling less overall), modal shift to active travel and public transport and increased vehicle occupancy (car sharing) – is also needed meet the balanced carbon reduction pathway.

Estimates suggest at least 20% overall traffic reduction by 2030,⁷ yet we are not on track to achieve this. Indeed, the move to EV's is only going to make traffic worse, as driving will

become comparatively cheaper. The Government's own projections show there is no scenario under which traffic reduces in future, and the technology scenario (high EV uptake by itself) produces the most traffic.⁸ EVs will also make no difference in addressing congestion, air pollution and road danger. Therefore, the INTS should prioritise investment in public transport and active travel to enable more journeys to be made sustainably, while also improving access to EVs, particularly for low-income households, for residual journeys.

Other technologies can help or hinder the creation of a sustainable and integrated transport system:

- E-bikes and e-scooters: micromobility options including e-scooters and e-bikes can be an important part of the mix in a multimodal system, opening up access to active travel for people who may physically struggle to use traditional pedal cycles. However, the Government needs to address the regulatory gap in the areas of unsafe battery imports and e-bike modifications, e-scooter legalisation and manufacturing requirements, and their safe usage on public roads.
- Car sharing: Car clubs and peer-to-peer car sharing can enable more people to live car-free in areas of good public transport provision by providing access to vehicles for any infrequent journeys that require them. The INTS should enable and encourage car sharing as part of the transport ecosystem.
- Autonomous Vehicles (AVs): AV technology is being developed as a way to improve safety, open up access to private mobility for disabled people and reduce operation costs for public transport operators. However, there is the potential for AVs to increase congestion and Government should limit their use to shared mobility options rather than risk them becoming a premium, private vehicle option for those who can afford it.

4. How, if at all, would you improve the way decisions are made about the transport network?

The way decisions are made about the transport network must reflect the Government's missions-led approach, which includes:

- Organising government around a shared vision
- Focusing on real-world impact
- Focusing on the ends, with flexibility and innovation on the means
- Devolving decision-making away from Westminster to those with the experience, knowledge and expertise
- Injecting more accountability into government and
- Approaching problems with a long-term, preventative approach.⁹

The INTS should set out how this approach will be delivered for transport. There must be greater integration both within and across government departments and policy areas to ensure transport policy aligns with wider objectives, as well as integration between different tiers of government and between different forms of investment.

Integration within and across government is needed to achieve cross-government synergies, including:

- HM Treasury (HMT)

Public transport and active travel investment is a major contributor to local and regional economic growth, and they are better value for money than road building. For every £1 spent on the rail system, £2.50 of value is delivered in the wider economy.¹⁰ For every £1 spent on bus services and infrastructure, £4.55 of value is delivered.¹¹ By comparison, road schemes

tend to generate as little as £1.10 for £1 invested and can even have negative overall value for money, when the full externalities of road schemes are considered. Public transport generates £1.4 billion in time saving benefits every year for commuters from the reduction in congestion, as well as increasing their productivity.¹² In contrast, road traffic creates congestion costing the economy £29 billion a year.¹³

Despite the benefits, investment in public transport infrastructure and services is seen as a cost on the balance sheet by HMT. There is a huge potential to grow bus and rail patronage for the benefit of the economy, society and the environment, but an investment mindset is needed to unblock current issues of affordability, reliability and capacity.¹⁴ The Department for Transport should work more closely with HMT to promote these benefits and embed a mindset of prioritising public transport investment ahead of road building. This would grow patronage and fare revenue and reduce the need for government funding support in the medium term.

The two departments should also review values and formulae used in the Green Book, which tends to over-value journey time savings from road capacity expansion and under-value the social and environmental benefits of public transport investment. Better capturing the value of sustainable transport investment would enable more vital projects to progress. National policy statements, like the National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS), also need to be reviewed to fully account for the damaging impact of road building and to enable prioritisation of sustainable transport.

DfT should also work with HMT to rebalance pricing signals in favour of public transport rather than driving and flying. For too long bus and rail fares have increased at a faster rate than the cost of motoring, while it can frequently be cheaper to fly between cities in the UK than to take the train.

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

The Government has announced ambitious plans to build 1.5 million new homes in England by the end of the current parliament, through reforming the planning system and delivering a programme of new towns. However, the planning and delivery system has tended to overlook the importance of sustainable transport connectivity, leading to building in car dependency into new developments.¹⁵ The revised National Planning Policy Framework's move towards a vision-led approach to transport planning is welcome. However, DfT must work with MHCLG to make sure that sites with good existing or planned rail and bus connectivity are prioritised and that developments are planned so that they are served by sustainable transport from the outset. Involving transport operators in the planning process as statutory consultees will help in this regard.

Most travel is local, and local authorities are also central to delivering transport and planning policies on the ground. Devolution of decision-making and resources is important to develop integrated strategic transport plans and to deliver transport improvements targeted at local needs. However, this requires addressing the significant capacity and capability gaps in regional and local authorities. The local government reorganisation process undertaken by MHCLG can potentially be hugely disruptive for local policies and projects. Investment in capacity building and skills development will be critical to enable newly established unitary and combined authorities to deliver the INTS effectively.

- Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)

Sustainable transport investment creates benefits and savings for the DHSC. Improved physical activity levels and reduced air pollution through greater use of active travel and public transport have measurable impacts on people's health, saving the National Health Service substantial sums. Public transport also improves people's ability to connect with family and friends and the wider community, which boosts mental health.¹⁶ However, these benefits are not always recognised and accounted for. The Department of Health should support public

transport and active travel investment, and behaviour change schemes at the national and local level.

Public transport is also fundamental in enabling access to healthcare services. Yet many people struggle to access hospitals within a reasonable travel time. Our research found that 34% of already deprived areas (clustered in coastal areas like Tendring in Essex and former industrial towns like in Northumberland and County Durham in the North East) have longer travel times by public transport to a hospital than the England average.¹⁷ Through the INTS, the Government should require NHS trusts and other health providers to work with local authorities and transport operators to coordinate investment and provision of NEPTS and other local transport services.

Integration between different tiers of government is needed across these policy areas. As mentioned, local authorities will require support and capacity building to deliver the INTS effectively. Devolution of funding and decision-making for local transport will enable local leaders to better address local needs, while moving towards long-term settlements will provide certainty to plan for the future. Yet there is still much uncertainty about what devolution will mean for different areas and whether underserved communities will see much needed improvements.

In the absence of funding pots ringfenced to specific modes, the Department for Transport should put in place appropriate outcomes frameworks to ensure alignment with national priorities and targets and meaningful improvements to sustainable transport locally. This includes cascading national decarbonisation pathways from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) down to the regional and local level. Making funding partly conditional on meeting specific economic, social and environmental objectives will improve accountability. Sub-national transport bodies also have a crucial role to play in coordinating policies and delivery at the regional level, as well as supporting local authorities with additional expertise and capacity.

Finally, there needs to be better **integration between different forms of investment**. capital road investment should focus on maintenance and future resilience of existing networks rather than capacity expansion, while prioritising investment in rail, trams and local buses. In addition, capital investment must be better balanced with a greater proportion of revenue funding to support ongoing operations, service improvements and fare schemes such as rail fare improvements and the bus fare cap.

5. Any other comments?

The development of the Integrated National Transport Strategy must consider the Government's broader 'growth' agenda, particularly the intersection between transport infrastructure, planning reform, and housing delivery. Transport investment should prioritise supporting well-planned, compact, and connected development that reduces car dependency and enables access to jobs, services, and amenities through walking, cycling, and public transport.

In addition to investing in and improving local bus services, the INTS should promote new tram and light rail infrastructure as well as a new generation of rail reopenings. The Dartmoor Line between Exeter and Okehampton was the first to reopen in November 2021 through the Restoring your Railway Fund programme, which we campaigned for. It was completed in just nine months, £10 million under budget. It has been hugely popular, with more than 250,000 journeys made in its first year, more than double the number predicted, which resulting in the frequency of services being doubled.¹⁸ The Northumberland line between Ashington and Newcastle that opened in December 2024, with six new railway stations, has proved equally popular.¹⁹ This demonstrates the huge potential and public appetite for public transport travel. Investment to grow public transport use should be at the core of the INTS.

Thank you for considering our submission. We would be very happy to elaborate on any of the points made in this submission and provide additional evidence as required.

References

- ¹ Labour Party (2023), 5 missions for a better Britain, <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/5-Missions-for-a-Better-Britain.pdf>
- ² Social Market Foundation (2023), Getting the measure of transport poverty: Understanding and responding to the UK's hidden crisis, <https://www.smf.co.uk/publications/transport-poverty-hidden-crisis/>
- ³ Campaign for Better Transport (2023), <https://bettertransport.org.uk/media/survey-finds-79-per-cent-of-drivers-would-use-public-transport-more-if-it-was-better/>
- ⁴ Labour Party (2024), Getting Britain Moving, <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/GETTING-BRITAIN-MOVING-Labours-Plan-to-Fix-Britains-Railways.pdf>
- ⁵ Campaign for Better Transport (2025), Time for trams: the smart solution for sustainable cities, <https://bettertransport.org.uk/policy/9904/>
- ⁶ Campaign for Better Transport (2024), Better Bus Stops: Creating a national bus stop standard, <https://bettertransport.org.uk/research/better-bus-stops-creating-a-national-bus-stop-standard/>
- ⁷ For example, the [6th carbon budget report](#) showed that approximately 9% of car miles can be reduced or shifted to lower-carbon modes by 2035, increasing to 17% by 2050. A [report by Green Alliance](#) estimated we need between 20% (with medium EV uptake) and 27% (with slower EV uptake) traffic reduction by 2030 compared to 2019 baseline. [Substantive modelling](#) from CREDS showed overall vehicle mileage needs to reduce by 25% to 2030 and 32% by 2050 in a Transformative scenario or by 16% to 2030 and 26% by 2050 in a Shift scenario. Modelling by Greg Marsden suggests "the only pathways which align with the CCC's assessment of the necessary contribution from surface transport include a 20% traffic reduction by 2030".
- ⁸ Department for Transport (2022), National road traffic projections 2022, p. 27, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-road-traffic-projections>
- ⁹ Labour Party (2023), 5 missions for a better Britain, pp. 4-5
- ¹⁰ Rail Industry Association (RIA) & Oxford Economics (2021), The economic contribution of UK rail, https://www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/RIA/Newsroom/Publications%20Folder/OE_2021.aspx
- ¹¹ CPT & KPMG (2024), The economic impact of local bus services, <https://www.cpt-uk.org/campaignsreports/economic-impact-of-local-bus-services/>
- ¹² RIA & Oxford Economics (2022), The economic, environmental, and social opportunities that rail brings to the UK, https://www.riagb.org.uk/RIA/Newsroom/Publications%20Folder/OE_2022.aspx
- ¹³ CPT & WPI Economics (2022), The decarbonisation dividend: the economic, environmental and social benefits of more bus and coach journeys, <https://www.cpt-uk.org/media/fc0bzccy/decarbonisation-dividend-report.pdf>
- ¹⁴ Please see Campaign for Better Transport's 2025 Spending Review submission for more details.
- ¹⁵ Royal Town Planning Institute and LandTech (2024), The Location of Development 4, <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/news/2024/november/new-housing-fails-to-move-away-from-car-dependency-report-finds/>; New Economics Foundation (2024), Trapped Behind the Wheel, <https://neweconomics.org/2024/11/new-housing-developments-forcing-people-to-rely-on-cars/>; Transport for New Homes (2022), Building Car Dependency, <https://www.transportfornewhomes.org.uk/the-project/building-car-dependency/>
- ¹⁶ Campaign for Better Transport (2023), Better transport for better health, <https://bettertransport.org.uk/research/better-transport-for-better-health/>
- ¹⁷ Campaign for Better Transport (2021), Connecting communities: improving transport to get 'left behind' neighbourhoods back on track, https://bettertransport.org.uk/research/back_on_track_report_mar_2021-pdf/
- ¹⁸ The Dartmoor Line (2022), Dartmoor Line passes 250,000 journeys on its first anniversary, as rail minister visits, <https://dartmoorline.com/2022/11/dartmoor-line-passes-250000-journeys-on-its-first-anniversary-as-rail-minister-visits/>
- ¹⁹ Northumberland Line (2025), <https://www.northumberlandline.uk/post/passengers-make-50-000-journeys-on-northumberland-line-services-in-first-month>