

CHAPTER 2 – THE WIDER CONTEXT

2.1 The LTP must take account of the wide implications of transport and look beyond the five-year period in setting a direction for the longer term. As well as considering transport problems and opportunities, it must recognise the many interests that depend on the effectiveness of the transport system, and thereby influence the demand for transport. How these interests are currently served, and how positions may change over time, are key to seeing transport as a means to an end, and not just an end in itself.

2.2 This chapter sets out a broad view of transport in Leicestershire and how its future development needs to respond both to national and regional policies and to the wider policies and strategies of the County and district councils. The results of consultation are presented, with a summary of the views of the many partner organisations, other stakeholders and many individuals. These influences are drawn together in defining a longer-term transport strategy and setting the overall priorities in transport for the five year LTP period.

THE CURRENT POSITION

2.3 With its central location, the County has good transport connections to the rest of the country and beyond. London is just over an hour away by high speed train, and in the north of Leicestershire the East Midlands Airport provides an increasingly wide range of international passenger and freight connections for the County and region as a whole. The M1 motorway runs north-south through the County carrying high volumes of regional and long distance traffic. In the south of Leicestershire the M1 motorway is intersected by the nationally important M6 and A14 trunk road east - west route.

ROAD AND RAIL NETWORKS

2.4 The main roads and railway lines in Leicestershire are shown in Figure 2.1. The main change in the last five years has been the 2004 de-trunking of the A6 north and south of Leicester and the A47 to the east of Leicester. However, large scale, **multi-modal and road based studies** were completed and major improvements are now programmed for M1 widening and junction improvements from junction 21 south west of Leicester to well beyond the County boundary north of junction 24. The A453 trunk road will be widened to form a dual carriageway from junction 24 to Nottingham, and an extensive new junction layout will be constructed at M1 junction 19.

2.5 The proposed motorway and trunk road schemes are intended to address the increasing problems of congestion on strategic roads, which threaten to damage the local and regional economy. Without action, this congestion would also cause vehicles to divert onto less safe local roads with direct consequences for road casualties and other traffic impacts on local communities. During the LTP period the scheme for M1 junction 19 is due for completion together with widening of parts of the M1 north of Junction 22 where there is currently sufficient space within the motorway boundary.

2.6 The **County road network** has 420 kms of A class (principal) non-trunk roads, which provide the non-trunk routes for most lorry movements in the County. There are 1546 kms of B and C class roads which carry lower volumes of traffic in the more rural areas, but some B class roads are important lorry routes. The local road network is completed by the further 2410 kms of unclassified roads.

Figure 2.1
ROAD AND RAIL NETWORKS

2.7 During the period of LTP1 there has been a countywide programme of vehicle weight restrictions to concentrate lorry movements on a designated route network. This has considerably reduced the impact of lorries on communities, and the structural damage to many roads, largely caused by lorries. In forming the **lorry network**, a number of roads have been re-classified to reflect the revised hierarchy of routes. These changes have been an important part of making better use of the existing road network.

2.8 New road construction has included the **LTP1 major scheme bypasses** for the A511 around Ashby-de-la-Zouch and the A607 past Rearsby. The A6004 Epinal Way Extension major road scheme, funded by development, has provided the missing link in the road network on the south side of Loughborough. The remaining LTP1 major new road scheme is the A47 Earl Shilton Bypass, which has almost completed the statutory processes and is being resubmitted to DfT for early approval.

2.9 The **passenger rail** network consists of the Midland main line running north–south through the County and the strategic east–west line from Birmingham to Peterborough and beyond, via Leicester. The Midland main line carries half-hourly fast trains from Sheffield via Derby, or from Nottingham, to Leicester and London. Further half-hourly semi-fast trains from Derby or Nottingham to London provide a frequent longer distance service from the main Leicestershire stations at Loughborough and Market Harborough, which are also served by some of the fast trains.

2.10 The main east–west train services are the hourly direct trains from Birmingham to Peterborough, Cambridge and Stansted airport. With interchange at Leicester, these provide a range of longer distance journey opportunities from the Leicestershire stations at Hinckley and Melton Mowbray. There are six other stations in the County, which are served by local train services and are described under the Local Public Transport heading below.

2.11 The proposed East Midlands Parkway railway station is currently programmed for the LTP period, and has completed all the statutory processes. This station will be in Nottinghamshire close to the Leicestershire boundary near the A453 trunk road just north of M1 junction 24. This is expected to have frequent bus connections with the East Midlands airport, and will provide a faster overall service than the existing hourly bus link to the airport from trains at Loughborough station.

2.12 Most **freight traffic** in Leicestershire is carried by road on motorways, trunk roads and the County lorry route network, although an increasing volume of freight traffic is being carried by rail, much of it passing through the County. North-south rail freight can be diverted away from the Midland main line at Syston and routed via Melton Mowbray and Corby to rejoin the main line at Kettering. However, the increasing volume of east-west rail freight through the County cannot avoid Leicester and is constrained by the limited track capacity between Syston and Wigston though the Leicester urban area.

2.13 High volumes of **rail freight** originate in Leicestershire, consisting mainly of coal and aggregates. The Hicks Lodge terminal near Moira on the Burton-Leicester freight line is the loading point for opencast coal which is sent by rail to power stations. Also on this line are the Bardon Hill and Stud Farm stone quarry terminals near Coalville, which send aggregates by rail for the construction and rail industries in London and elsewhere. The stone quarry terminal on the midland main line at Mountsorrel sends up to 35 trainloads per week to 12 terminals around the country. The similar terminal at Croft on the Hinckley to Leicester line also produces large volumes of rail freight.

Figure 2.2
HOURLY BUS NETWORK AND LOCAL RAIL

LOCAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT

2.14 The main local public transport network is shown in Figure 2.2. During the period of LTP1 there has been a major improvement in the **bus network** to the extent that three quarters of rural households in the County, and 95% of all people in Leicestershire, now have access to an hourly bus service. More-frequent commercial bus services operate in the urban areas of the County, particularly in the County part of outer Leicester for travel into the City. Away from the hourly bus network, many communities are served by less frequent scheduled bus services, or the increasing number of demand responsive connecting services in the most remote rural areas.

2.15 There has been only limited recent progress in developing **park and ride** services into Leicester. The original 500-space site on the A47 just inside the City boundary has been a major success since its opening in 1997 and is now nearly full with County users most of the time. Our plans for a further major expansion were, however, set back by an unfavourable DfT decision on funding in 2004, combined with planning difficulties with one of the three sites, on the south side of Leicester. One of the other two proposed sites, off the A6 north of Leicester, will be built with development funding during the LTP period.

2.16 **Local travel by rail** is partly provided by the longer distance train services running north-south and east-west through the County, described above. These services also provide fast train journeys into Leicester from Loughborough, Market Harborough, Hinckley and Melton Mowbray. Elsewhere, on the line from Hinckley into Leicester there are stations at Narborough and South Wigston which are served by the hourly trains from Birmingham to Nottingham via Leicester. Trains on this line from Coventry ceased operating with the upgrade of the layout at Nuneaton station and are unlikely to be reinstated.

2.17 On the Midland main line, an hourly local train service runs from Loughborough to Leicester stopping at Barrow upon Soar, Sileby and Syston. This service and the three new stations opened in 1994 with special DfT funding as stage one of the Ivanhoe line. This **Ivanhoe line service** sees a year by year increase in passengers and is the fastest way of travelling into Leicester, particularly at peak times. However, the dedicated train service requires considerable revenue support from both the County and City councils. The one remaining railway station is at Bottesford in the north of the County, served by hourly trains on the Grantham to Nottingham line.

2.18 Over the last five years, we have developed a number of **interchanges** on the public transport network in most town centres, at railway stations and at the East Midlands Airport. These have involved the relocation of bus stopping places together with provision of good bus information and attractive waiting conditions. The busiest of these interchanges, at Loughborough railway station, has more than six trains and 10 bus departures per hour, providing frequent connections with the town centre and university, together with an hourly bus service to the East Midlands airport.

2.19 As well as supporting the non-commercial scheduled bus network, and demand-responsive rural services, we support a growing countywide service of complementary public **transport for disabled people** and co-ordinate a considerable number of **schools special bus services**. Local bus travel is also enhanced by County and City Council joint working arrangements, including the main quality partnership with bus operating companies. Other quality partnerships and the countywide concessionary travel scheme operate in partnership with the district councils.

CURRENT TRANSPORT PROBLEMS

2.20 We must look at future transport needs, but much of our future transport strategy must be focussed on dealing with the problems we already know about. These are summarised below. They are not unique to Leicestershire but the degree to which the problems are experienced, and the scope for improvement, give the county its own characteristics. A particular issue is the ability to quantify the problems so that proper comparisons can be made and the effectiveness of solutions can be subsequently gauged.

2.21 **Traffic congestion** is the most widely experienced day to day transport problem for all road users. Apart from the personal inconvenience of travel delays, there are direct financial and network consequences:

- The extra cost of more buses and drivers to achieve scheduled bus frequency and reliability
- The extra cost of goods vehicle and driver time for the transport of road freight and deliveries to shops and businesses
- The extra cost of fuel consumed and the step change in vehicle pollution when traffic moves very slowly or is stuck in queues
- The extra traffic in terms of vehicle mileage, and the increase in fuel consumed, when vehicles avoid congestion by taking detours involving extra distances
- The impact of traffic making detours through communities, particularly at times of day when children are walking or cycling to school

2.22 Whilst drivers and passengers may seem tolerant of congestion, and increasingly prepared to spend long periods in queues, the economic efficiency and environmental impacts of congestion are an increasing concern. Although there is much information, including anecdotal evidence, the true and up to date extent of congestion problems in Leicestershire are difficult to gauge in a measured and comparative way. Only very recently has it become possible to quantify vehicle journey times throughout most of the road network, and at all times of day.

2.23 DfT has obtained the new vehicle journey time data from the satellite tracking of major fleets of vehicles throughout the country. This gives a large sample of vehicle journey times experienced throughout the day, all week and on most roads in the County. For 2003/04 this DfT data covers the City and outer Leicester and extends outwards to include most of the urban areas and County towns. Although there is not yet a standard way of analysing the information, the data has been used to calculate provisional baseline figures for congestion in the combined City and outer Leicester area, and also in Loughborough.

2.24 **Social exclusion and rural isolation** continue to be a problem for people who do not have a car available. The numbers of people affected reduces each year, and access to public transport has much improved with the hourly bus network and connecting services reaching nearly all parts of the County. However, there remain significant numbers of people who have real problems gaining access to essential facilities. This is particularly an issue in geographical areas of multiple deprivation in the County as illustrated in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3

2001 CENSUS AREAS OF DEPRIVATION

2.25 With the recent availability of the 2001 census data, it has become possible using modern mapping methods to show where most people without car access are living. By assessing these locations against the provision of local facilities, we can quantify the degree of travel difficulty that may exist. Amongst the many ways in which access difficulties can affect people's lives:

- People on benefits cannot reach job vacancies, and employers may experience difficulty in recruiting, retaining or expanding their workforce
- Travel to hospitals and GP surgeries can be difficult and unreliable, resulting in missed appointments and increased health service costs
- Travel problems to and from school or college can reduce the uptake of education opportunities, and after class activities, and in some cases contribute to truancy.
- Limited access to competitive shops selling fresh foods can result in poorer diets, health problems and greater care needs

2.26 We are analysing the true extent of these problems in Leicestershire using new map-based methods. These take account of the up to date bus and rail network timetables, together with the locations of the many types and locations of destinations which people need to reach. This is a new area of work, and it will be some time before we can assess comprehensively the situation in Leicestershire and compare ourselves with other areas.

2.27 Our work in **improving road safety** has been based for a long time on up to date information on all personal injury casualties supplied to us by Leicestershire Constabulary, and taking action to reduce such casualties has been a statutory duty of the County Council for over 30 years. During this period there has been much progress in reducing the numbers of **killed or seriously injured casualties** due to the combination of police enforcement, safer vehicles, road safety education and casualty reduction schemes.

2.28 Significant progress has been made in reducing the most serious road casualties, but there are still unacceptable numbers of people injured in the County each year. The number of **slight casualties**, those generally not requiring hospital treatment, has not gone up with traffic growth and has indeed reduced overall by 3% during the LTP1 period. The geographical pattern of these casualties continues to show concentrations on certain routes and at particular locations, giving scope for carefully devised schemes or actions to be implemented.

2.29 Although overall casualty trends are very encouraging, and there has been a dramatic reduction in child casualties, we are increasingly concerned over the **safety of motorcyclists** and their disproportionate numbers of KSI casualties. This has particular implications for the role that motorcycling could have in tackling congestion. A switch from car driving to motor cycling could potentially help tackle congestion, but would not be encouraged if it was thought that more road casualties would occur.

2.30 **Air quality problems** due to pollution from local traffic are not widespread in Leicestershire. In 2004 the district councils as environmental health authorities reported nitrogen dioxide levels above the limit value due to local traffic pollution in three statutory Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), in Loughborough, Lutterworth and Kegworth. Similar or more severe local traffic air quality problems exist in Central Leicestershire but inside the City Council boundary. Three other transport related AQMAs in the County are due to traffic pollution from the M1 motorway.

2.31 Most of the nitrogen dioxide pollution in the local traffic AQMAs is due to goods vehicles and buses, particularly where they spend time stationary with engines running or need to move slowly uphill. Goods vehicles and buses are typically responsible for two thirds of the pollution, particularly the older vehicles which fall short of the increasingly stringent European emission standards for new vehicles. Generally across the country, as older goods vehicles, buses and cars are replaced, nitrogen dioxide levels are expected to fall by about 3% per year despite typical annual traffic growth of about 2% per year across the road network as a whole.

2.32 The **impact of traffic** in towns and villages continues to be a problem, despite good progress with bypass construction and the concentration of lorries onto the most suitable routes. For example, the village of Great Glen south of Leicester has benefited considerably from the A6 bypass completed by the Highways Agency prior to de-trunking but Kibworth, further south, still suffers substantial traffic nuisance.

2.33 Some of the affected locations are on the lorry route network but many villages and residential areas are severed by busy roads where the speed and volume of traffic is a deterrent to walking and cycling, as well as affecting the quality of life in general. These problems can be of particular concern in village shopping streets, on routes to school and in otherwise quiet residential areas. Over the last five years we have used small-scale traffic schemes to reduce traffic speeds in such areas, but there is a continuing need for more to be done elsewhere.

2.34 Road traffic impact in towns is also a problem where there is no bypass and the road network is such that significant volumes of through traffic use town centre streets. We have tackled these problems in the County towns of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, Coalville, Hinckley and Market Harborough using relief roads, bypasses and complementary town centre schemes. However, the problems of through traffic in town centres have yet to be tackled in Loughborough, Lutterworth and Melton Mowbray.

2.35 The **maintenance of transport assets** is a major activity covering an extensive network of carriageways, footways and road bridges, and the 3000km network of public rights of way. There is also the very large number of electrical installations consisting of street lighting and traffic signals at junctions or crossings. All have to be kept in a safe and satisfactory condition.

2.36 Over the last five years we have increased the rates of asset renewal following years of under-investment. Methods of gauging deterioration and the timeliness of intervention are being developed to the point where long-term asset renewal, in the most cost-effective way, can be planned with confidence.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

2.37 LTPs are vital to the delivery of much of the national transport agenda and it is therefore necessary for them to reflect properly the various national and regional priorities. Regional government, in particular, is becoming increasingly influential, with a new role in advising Government on transport spending in the region on roads and railways.

2.38 The regional transport strategy is one of several parts of the regional spatial strategy for land use and development. It incorporates the spatial and transport aspirations of the regional economic strategy and highlights the regional components of Government transport strategy, emphasising the proposals and actions required of LTPs. Regional spatial strategy is set out for the medium and longer term and has an important influence on county and district council local plans and development frameworks.

NATIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

2.39 National transport strategy is set out in the Government white paper of July 2004 entitled "The Future of Transport". This is supported by the December 2003 white paper "The Future of Air Transport" and the second July 2004 white paper "The Future of Rail". Government policies for local transport are further developed in the December 2004 "Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans" and supporting documents.

2.40 The Government transport strategy is centred on three themes:

- **sustained investment over the long term** to continue to deliver improvements to transport networks
- **improvements in transport management** to get better value from expenditure on existing and new infrastructure
- **planning ahead** to deal with the long term trends in travel, and establish how road networks might best be managed to accommodate the needs of road users

2.41 The Future of Air Transport white paper sets out Government strategy for aviation growth and airport expansion throughout the UK. For the East Midlands Airport, near the M1 in the north of Leicestershire, the strategy supports the major forecast growth in air passenger numbers and air freight, but with stringent controls on night noise and its mitigation. Although the aviation issues are outside the scope of LTPs, the national strategy expects airport operators to produce master plans for airport expansion in some detail up to 2015, including proposals for surface access.

2.42 The Future of Rail white paper is mainly concerned with medium term problems relating to recent rail industry performance, reforming the structure and getting costs under control. Whilst there has been recent growth in passengers and freight, it is unclear what the long term will bring, and to what extent the railway will be able to accommodate the increasing demand for passenger and freight transport. For the LTP period, the strategy for passengers by train has been much influenced by the Strategic Rail Authority's Route Utilisation Strategy. For the County and its surrounding areas, this envisages a period of consolidation in the medium term with no significant changes to local or longer distance train services.

2.43 For local transport the Government strategy envisages a number of outcomes to be delivered by this and future LTPs as follows:

- freer flowing local roads, delivered through a range of measures including congestion charging, and powers under the new Traffic Management Act 2004
- more, and more reliable, buses, enjoying more road space (with Leicestershire quoted as an example on the Leicester - Loughborough - Shepshed corridor)

- demand responsive transport services using buses, car sharing, minibuses, taxis and private hire vehicles to provide accessibility to areas, and to sections of the community, where conventional transport services are unsuitable
- looking at ways to make services more accessible, so that people have a real choice about when and how they travel
- exploiting the potential of existing and new technology, for example in managing demand for transport services, improving the capacity of existing networks, improving safety, and providing better and more reliable transport information
- joined-up transport and land use planning so that new developments do not cause congestion to worsen
- promoting the use of school travel plans, workplace travel plans and personalised travel planning to encourage people to consider and use alternatives to their cars
- creating a culture, and improved local environment, so that cycling and walking are seen as attractive alternatives to car travel in both urban and rural areas

2.44 In July 2002 the Government and Local Government Association agreed seven shared priorities, covering a range of local government functions, including the raising of standards across schools, transforming the local environment and meeting transport needs more effectively by:

- tackling congestion
- delivering accessibility
- safer roads
- better air quality

REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY

2.45 The Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) is part of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8) produced in March 2005. The importance of transport was also raised in the regional economic strategy “Destination 2010” of March 2003. This strategy was formulated by the East Midlands Development Agency (**emda**), and its longer term planning framework and transport needs are provided by RSS8 and the RTS contained within.

2.46 The LTP has been developed to help deliver the RTS and is set in the context of wider objectives and policies for developing the economic, social and environmental well being of the region. The core 10 objectives for RSS8 are:

- to address social exclusion, through regeneration of disadvantaged areas and reducing regional inequalities in the distribution of employment, housing, health and community facilities
- to protect and where possible enhance the quality of the environment in urban and rural areas so as to make them **safe and attractive places to live and work**
- to improve the health of the region’s residents, for example through **improved air quality**, the availability of good quality well designed housing and access to leisure and recreation facilities

- to promote and improve economic prosperity, employment opportunities and regional competitiveness
- to **improve accessibility to jobs, homes and services** across the region by developing integrated transport, ensuring the improvement of opportunities for **walking, cycling and the use of high quality public transport**
- to achieve effective protection of the environment by avoiding significant harm and securing adequate mitigation where appropriate, and to promote the conservation, enhancement, sensitive use and management of the region's natural and cultural assets
- to bring about a step change increase in the level of the region's biodiversity, by managing and developing habitats to secure gains wherever possible, and ensuring no net loss of priority habitats and species
- to promote the prudent use of resources, in particular through **patterns of development and transport that make efficient and effective use of existing infrastructure**, optimise waste minimisation, reduce overall energy use and maximise the role of renewable energy generation
- to take action to reduce the scale and impact of future climate change, in particular the risk of damage to life and property from flooding, especially through the location and design of new development
- to promote good design in development so as to achieve high environmental standards and optimum social benefits

2.47 The RTS part of RSS8 has six core strategy and regional transport objectives:

- Support sustainable development in the region's principal urban areas and sub-regional centres.
- Promote accessibility and overcome peripherality in the regions rural areas.
- Support the regions regeneration priorities.
- Promote improvements to inter-regional and international linkages that will support sustainable development within the region.
- Improve safety across the region and reduce congestion, particularly within the region's principal urban areas and on major inter-urban corridors.
- Promote opportunities for modal shift away from the private car and road based freight transport across the region.

2.48 Policy 43 specifies sub-area objectives. Most of the County is in either the Eastern sub-area or the Three Cities sub-area. The objectives applicable to Leicestershire are:

- Developing opportunities for modal switch away from road based transport in the nationally important food and drink sector.
- Reducing peripherality (particularly to the east of the A15) and overcoming rural isolation for those without access to a car.
- Reducing the number of fatal and serious road traffic accidents.

- Reducing the use of the car in and around (Nottingham, Derby and) Leicester and promoting a step change in the quality and quantity of local public transport provision.
- Improving public transport linkages between Derby, Leicester and Nottingham and to London, and other key national cities.
- Improving public transport surface access to East Midlands Airport.
- Developing opportunities for modal switch away from road-based transport in the manufacturing, retail and freight distribution sectors.
- Reducing congestion and improving safety along the M1 corridor and the highway network generally.

2.49 The RTS specifies a further 12 transport policies, 10 of which are of particular relevance to the LTP. These mainly reflect DfT guidance on LTPs and other national transport policies, including development of East Midlands Airport. Policy 54 is for the development of a **regional freight strategy**, and a consultation document for this was issued by the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) in February 2005. The draft RFS seeks to influence the commercial freight market through a series of policies implemented by regional and local partners. Key amongst the partnerships is the proposed Regional Freight Advisory Group which will co-ordinate implementation and monitoring of the RFS action plans.

CORPORATE AND DISTRICT PLANS

2.50 (To be written)

LONGER TERM TRANSPORT STRATEGY

2.51 Our longer term transport strategy must ensure that the transport system can meet the many demands placed on it in the future, reflecting the aspirations of our stakeholders and particularly our Community Strategy aim of making Leicestershire “ **a vibrant and thriving county in which to live, work and play, where people have access to quality services and which looks to the future by maximising opportunities for its young people.**”

2.52 To achieve this will require a continuing balance to be drawn between the need for mobility and good access to services on the one hand, and environmental damage and road safety on the other. Our main themes for the long term, as we see the picture now, are:

- **Providing the right transport conditions to help economic growth.** This will require continued work to reduce congestion, improve local and longer distance access and provide properly for new housing and employment development.
- **Improving access to facilities for all.** This will require continued investment in bus services, walking and cycling, as well as effective management of land-use planning decisions.
- **Reducing transport’s impact on the environment.** This will include not only local pollution and traffic nuisance issues but also increasingly our contribution to national efforts to reduce global warming.
- **Keeping transport safe.** Improving road safety is a priority for the long-term as well as the short.
- **Making sure that our highway assets are properly maintained and renewed for the long term.**

2.53 In pursuing these themes we will need to follow national and regional guidance as it develops, and currently particularly that in the July 2004 White Paper “The Future of Transport”. This calls for a transport system in 2030 with:

- The **road** network providing a more reliable and freer-flowing service for both personal travel and freight, with people able to make informed choices about how and when they travel
- The **rail** network providing a fast, reliable and efficient service, particularly for interurban journeys and commuting into large urban areas
- **Bus** services that are reliable, flexible, convenient and tailored to local needs
- Making **walking** and **cycling** a real alternative for local trips

2.54 25 years ahead is a very long time to plan for, and the longer term transport strategy that follows can only indicate our plans in outline terms. Our more immediate plans for the next five years need to be guided by this strategy but also shaped by the immediate concerns to which we must respond. The longer term strategy needs to have enough definition to ensure that we can be confident that the link to the LTP strategy is properly made.

2.55 Sections of the longer term strategy cover each of the themes listed above. It is impossible to predict how much government investment will be made available for transport so far ahead, but probably wisest to assume that there will be little significant change from present levels. This means that there must be a continued emphasis on modest incremental change and value for money, building cumulatively over the long term to produce large scale overall change.

HELPING ECONOMIC GROWTH

2.56 The Regional Economic Strategy is geared to making the East Midlands one of the top 20 regions in Europe, a position already attained by the London, Eastern and South East regions of the UK. In 2003 the East Midlands was rated 35 out of the 77 regions in Europe and the following initiatives are identified for improving the rating:

- **Employment and skills:** to create high quality employment opportunities and drive up skill levels.
- **Enterprise and Innovation:** to develop a strong culture of enterprise and innovation within which entrepreneurs and world class business can prosper.
- **A Climate for investment:** to improve the quality of the region's physical infrastructure

Basic requirements

2.57 For these improvements to take place, we need a transport system that ensures people with the right skills can access appropriate jobs and that freight can move freely. There will be important building blocks for this:

- Continuing emphasis on managing our existing road system effectively so as to reduce congestion and maximise capacity, with the focus on high technology information and control systems rather than new road construction
- Continuing emphasis on developing bus services both as a means of providing access for all and as an alternative to the car in combating congestion
- Working with the rail industry to ensure that rail services, local and intercity, play their full part, with some hope that in the longer term further expansion of service levels will again be possible
- Again working with the rail industry to maximise the use of rail for freight, and closer association with the road freight industry to plan improved HGV access with minimum nuisance, using control systems which may depend on future technology for implementation

Rail Passenger Services

2.58 The rail industry has been going through a period of considerable difficulty, with the result that nearly all efforts are focussed on the maintenance and renewal of existing assets rather than on expansion. This means that previous County and City Council plans for expanded local passenger rail services do not look realistic for the foreseeable future and our efforts must go to securing the best value from the existing rail network and services. In the medium term, therefore, our focus will be on improving interchange, information and through ticketing and pressing for proper integration of local rail services including the stage 1 Ivanhoe service between Leicester and Loughborough.

2.59 Although a significant expansion of local rail services appears unachievable, we do plan a further local rail station at Blaby, an important railhead location which can contribute significantly to reducing congestion and improving access to Leicester, and which can be readily served by an existing local rail route. We will also safeguard the route of the Leicester to Burton railway, against the possibility that in the longer term a cost-effective passenger service reinstatement on that line may be achievable.

2.60 In the longer term we hope that the rail system will again be capable of expansion. Higher frequency local services, and potentially more local stations, could offer much as means of combating congestion.

Rail Freight

2.61 The draft Regional Freight Strategy has set a target for an additional 30 freight trains per day starting or terminating in the East Midlands region. We will use our best endeavours to support this target in the medium term, and see scope for a significant Leicestershire contribution towards the additional trains. This would involve increasing volumes of aggregates being carried by rail over long distances from the existing stone quarry terminals. In the longer term there is likely to be further emphasis on the environmental advantages of rail freight for bulk haul and we will work with the industry to promote this.

Road user charging

2.62 The question of road user charging is likely to be faced early in the period, as a potentially effective way of managing demand. National charging for lorries is due for introduction soon and there is increased government interest in a national system for all vehicles. We will need to respond to changing circumstances, but the County Council's view remains that, at present, no scheme of road user charging would be acceptable to the people of Leicestershire and nor would any local scheme be justified by the current levels of congestion on our roads.

Increased employment

2.63 We expect economic growth to lead to increased overall levels of employment. New allocations for employment sites have already been made in the Structure Plan for the period up to 2016 and more will be required thereafter. The relationship between employment locations and transport provision will become increasingly critical, to the extent that transport will become an increasingly important factor in location decisions. This will require fully integrated planning with the district councils and Leicester City, and a further emphasis on ensuring that new development fully compensates for the transport problems it may cause. The issue will be particularly critical for new employment located in Leicester city centre.

New housing

2.64 Similar considerations will apply to new housing. House building in Leicestershire in the present Structure Plan period is expected to proceed at the annual average rate of 2100 homes. Based on historic experience this could give rise to additional traffic movements totalling 21,000 vehicles per day somewhere on the county road network in each future year. Whilst we expect that much of the new housing will be near to main centres, and only partly dependent on car travel, this scale of development will place considerable pressure on the transport system. Again, only the closest possible integration of planning and transport decisions will ensure proper provision as pressure on the transport system grows.

East Midlands Airport

2.65 The most intense growth in transport movements in Leicestershire will arise at the East Midlands Airport, where passenger numbers, freight volumes, and employment levels are expected to double or triple in the longer term. Policies regarding aircraft movements are outside the scope of the LTP, but road traffic expansion and better access by public transport are of current and longer-term importance, as highlighted by the regional strategies. Proposals for this will be a vital component of the airport's Master Plan with its revised Surface Access Strategy.

2.66 An encouraging start has been made with recent decisions by the airport, with EMDA funding, to improve radically the direct bus service to Loughborough and hence by bus or rail connection to Leicester. We will need to work with our partners to improve this further, so that high quality bus transport compensates for the otherwise entirely car-dependent access to the airport. The new East Midlands Parkway station will help with this objective and, in the much longer term, there may be a case for a fixed rail link direct to the terminal building and other airport employment locations.

IMPROVING ACCESS TO FACILITIES

2.67 The progress we have made so far with our hourly bus services network and other initiatives must be just the starting point in a longer term strategy which makes a stable network of frequent and high quality bus services as essential a piece of infrastructure as are electricity cables or gas mains. Only by securing this will we provide the excellent access which is necessary now to combat social exclusion and will be necessary increasingly in the future to provide a less polluting alternative to using the car. Within this, we must ensure continued sensitivity in planning so that bus services are particularly suited to those who remain in need.

2.68 Similar arguments apply to our networks of safe cycle routes, footways and footpaths, all of which need to be a fundamental part of the infrastructure.

2.69 Decisions on the location of new housing and employment development, and other facilities, have little impact on the ease of access in the short term but in the long term their cumulative impact can be considerable. We therefore need to ensure that criteria for maximising ease of access are built into all future land use planning through the local development frameworks.

REDUCING TRANSPORT'S IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Pollution from transport

2.70 There is evidence that legislation for cleaner exhausts and other measures will, before many years have passed, make local exhaust pollution a problem which is substantially solved, though we need to take effective action for probably the next ten years to ensure this is achieved. The wider issues of transport CO₂ emissions and their contribution to global warming is, however, another issue.

2.71 Many of our other investments will help reduce the impact of transport on the wider environment, particularly improvements to public transport, cycling and walking as alternatives to car use, and land use planning which places people and the facilities they need to use closer together. The more fundamental issues around controlling CO₂ emissions are more difficult to predict, and it is likely that government and European Union initiatives will be central in improving vehicle performance in this respect and perhaps tightening fiscal incentives for cleaner cars. Whatever happens, we will have to deal with the local consequences, which could in the longer term place much more pressure on public transport alternatives if car travel becomes significantly more expensive. Action now to produce strong and stable networks for bus travel, cycling and walking will provide effective preparation against this eventuality.

Nuisance from transport

2.72 Although vehicles may become quieter and less polluting, the problems they create for local communities will remain. We see effective speed management as a necessity for the foreseeable future, though perhaps in the longer term, high technology solutions will be introduced to control vehicles to appropriate speeds and avoid the necessity for the crude if effective techniques of traffic calming.

Rural bypasses

2.73 With continued traffic growth, we are convinced of the case for a continuing modest programme of bypass construction over the long term, as an alternative means of reducing traffic's adverse effect on the local environment. Following the construction of bypasses for Ashby de la Zouch and Rearsby as part of LTP1, our immediate priority is to gain DfT approval and funding for the Earl Shilton Bypass. This has nearly completed all the statutory processes and will bring relief from the major current traffic problems in the town centre.

2.74 We believe there is a strong case for a number of further bypasses to be delivered in the longer term:

- For **Kegworth**, as part of the Highways Agency's proposals for M1 widening
- For **Melton Mowbray**, probably with significant developer funding and as the first stage in creation of a full ring road
- Possibly for **Kibworth**, the only community not bypassed on the A6 south of Leicester and one which suffers considerable traffic nuisance.
- Possibly for **Lutterworth**, through the completion of the Lutterworth Western Relief Road to take heavy lorries and other traffic out of the town centre.
- Possibly for **Wymeswold, Sharnford** and perhaps other communities which, like them, cannot be excluded from the lorry route network yet suffer from considerable HGV nuisance.

2.75 In all cases the bypasses would reduce the adverse impact of large volumes of traffic passing through the built-up areas and would improve road safety. All proposals will be examined and developed to ensure that the environmental impacts of the new road, and their mitigation, will be outweighed by the community environmental benefits. Strong local public support will be a pre-requisite for promoting any scheme.

KEEPING TRANSPORT SAFE

2.76 We have achieved a great deal with our partners in reducing the number of road accident casualties, but numbers are still unacceptably high and this must remain a priority for the long term. We will continue to develop our long-established approach to road safety measures involving education, engineering and enforcement.

MAINTAINING AND RENEWING TRANSPORT ASSETS

2.77 Funding restrictions have in the past made it difficult to plan long term to maintain assets in good condition at minimum cost. This should now be changing with the introduction of transport asset management planning. We will work over the long term to ensure that our asset management planning remains effective and that adequate finance is made available. For the medium term, we already plan to spend a high proportion of LTP capital funding on the renewal of transport assets including carriageways, footways, rights of way, bridges, street lighting and traffic signals. We will do this in the light of increasingly sophisticated analysis of maintenance requirements as we develop our first asset management plan.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

2.78 We devised our draft priorities for the next five years firstly from the analysis of longer term requirements in the longer term transport strategy and secondly from our knowledge of immediate pressures, both influenced by government and regional guidance and the views of other external stakeholders. In producing the LTP priorities we need to draw a careful balance between these, solving today's problems perhaps, but in a way which is consistent with what we need to do over the longer term.

2.79 Our draft priorities were included in consultation conducted in autumn 2004 and the positive results of that consultation have given us the confidence to confirm these. This final section gives an outline of the consultation findings, then sets out our six priorities for the LTP.

FINDINGS OF INITIAL CONSULTATION

2.80 Our initial consultation was based on an outline draft LTP strategy contained in a widely circulated consultation document. This included the six aims for transport as a set of objectives and described in outline many of the schemes and actions we would need to undertake in meeting the aims. We raised awareness of the consultation through:

- the County Council newsletter delivered to all households in Leicestershire
- press releases which resulted in articles in local newspapers
- a discussion on Radio Leicester early on in the 12 week consultation period
- a series of presentations and discussions with stakeholders

2.81 A report of consultation is given as Appendix C, but the main findings are summarised here. The majority of respondents gave all the draft strategy objectives either a medium or high priority as shown in the following table:

Objectives	High priority	Medium priority	Low priority	Not a priority	No response
Tackling congestion	74%	18%	3%	2%	3%
Access to facilities	33%	41%	16%	3%	7%
Road casualty reduction	52%	31%	9%	2%	6%
Air quality and traffic impact	60%	24%	6%	3%	7%
Maintain transport assets	40%	43%	6%	1%	10%

The highest priority was given to tackling congestion, and the lowest to improving access to facilities.

2.82 The consultation also sought views on whether the schemes and actions we proposed to undertake were the best way to achieve the objectives. The results are shown in the following table:

Objectives	Agree or strongly agree	No opinion	Disagree or strongly disagree	No response
Tackling congestion	59%	15%	15%	11%
Access to facilities	43%	36%	9%	13%
Road casualty reduction	53%	22%	12%	13%
Air quality and traffic impact	47%	25%	14%	14%
Maintain transport assets	57%	24%	6%	13%

The highest degree of certainty was expressed with regard to congestion, and the lowest related to access to facilities, but this was the least developed part of our draft strategy and the concept of accessibility may not yet be well understood.

2.83 A number of possible larger transport schemes were described in outline. Although these schemes were local in nature at least 40% of respondents considered them to be of medium or high priority, and generally only about 10% considered they should not be given priority within our scheme programme.

2.84 Finally, respondents were invited to make any further comments on the outlined proposals. The most frequently stated views on the general approach were:

- support for continued improvements to the bus network
- the need to include the position of rail in the LTP
- support for improvements for walking and cycling
- concern over the use of vertical features in traffic calming
- need to include motorcycles and mopeds in the strategy
- concern over the impact of lorries on communities

2.85 There was significant support for a bypass to Melton Mowbray and more recent consultation has taken place on this, as well as on our proposals for Loughborough. This has shown strong support for completion of the Loughborough Inner Relief Road and for further work to develop proposals for a Melton Mowbray bypass. The results of consultation have given us confidence in our priorities for the LTP and in taking forward many of the proposals to the programming stage.

SIX PRIORITIES FOR THE LTP

2.86 On the basis of that consultation, we have confirmed the priorities for the LTP set out in the following paragraphs.

2.87 Given current congestion problems, particularly in the City and urban Central Leicestershire, and also in Loughborough, we need to give priority to **tackling congestion**. With the scale of land development proposed, we also need to tackle potential congestion in our transport planning work on local development frameworks with the district councils. This will be a major task early in the LTP period, and in addition will require the testing of land-use options in terms of quantified **access to facilities**. Our other work on improving access to facilities must include quantified action plans to help people from deprived communities with improved access, as well as a continued development of our work to improve access more generally. These first two of the six priorities will also be at the forefront of our involvement with the master plan for the East Midlands Airport.

2.88 We will continue our work in **reducing road casualties** and **improving air quality**, noting the strong linkage between reducing congestion and improving air quality. **Reducing the impact of traffic** remains a strong local concern and our longer term transport strategy bypass proposals will all require investigation and consultation during the LTP period if they are to become contenders for construction in the subsequent LTP. We also need to continue our programmes of speed reduction and other measures to reduce traffic's impact.

2.89 During the LTP period, our LTTTS approach to **transport assets** will be developed in detail and taken forward by the formulation of our first Transport Asset Management Plan. This will take a fully strategic and long-term view of renewal options and arrive at an optimum programme for the whole-life maintenance of each type of asset.

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