



Local Transport Plan Response May 2005

1. Introduction

1.1 Hull Business Forum welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Hull's Local Transport Plan 2006-11. Transport is one of the top priority issues for the local business community and we believe that it plays a central role in the city's regeneration.

1.2 Transport is so important to local businesses for the following reasons:

- Commercial traffic carries raw materials and goods and is essential in a strong economy.
- Employees traveling to and from work. A quicker and more reliable transport system increases the available labour and skills pool.
- Congestion or delays cost money, impact on the environment and reduce the quality of life of our employees.
- Transport infrastructure is a key economic driver in regeneration with the potential to open up new markets and land for development.

1.3 In a recent Chamber of Commerce survey, local businesses believed transport was the 3rd highest local business priority ahead of regulation, tax, education and business rates. Only local regeneration and skills came above transport as a local priority. Transport as an economic driver has also been agreed as one of Hull Business Forum's top priorities alongside education and 'pride in Hull'.

1.4 Many of the themes in this paper are included in the Chamber of Commerce response already submitted. This document includes further thoughts following the exhibitions and further information published in May 2005.

2. Five key comments

2.1 We believe the **Local Transport Plan is an opportunity to think big and be more strategic** about the city's transport priorities. Although the technical 'bidding' part of the document is over a five year time frame, we believe that given the importance of transport issues to the future economic, environmental and social future of our city a more long term strategic approach should also be set out. The document could therefore be more visionary, more creative and more ambitious.

2.2 In many respects Hull is already a **pioneering transport city** in relation to public transport. It is home to EYMS Group Ltd, which has developed ticketing and information technology making the company a UK leader which has invested millions of pounds in its services. Hull also has the country's most entrepreneurial train company, Hull Trains, following the successful lobby from the company, Alan Johnson MP, the Council and the Chamber of Commerce has brought major benefits to the city. We would like to see the city's transport strategy build upon these achievements and encourage us all to be more creative and innovative about our responses to transport issues in the city. The use of technology in managing traffic and incentives for car sharing for the school run are areas where Hull could take a lead in the future.

2.3 The big issue for business in terms of local transport planning is **the relative priority balance between roads and public transport**. Whether we like it or not, cars, commercial vehicles and HGVs will continue to account for a majority of journeys in the future. If Hull's economic regeneration is successful over the next decade we should expect the current low levels of car ownership in the city to significantly increase and this needs to be factored into current thinking. On balance we believe that too little priority is given to essential road journeys in the city and that the priority given to other transport modes on major arterial routes in the city has gone too far causing unnecessary congestion and delay.

2.4 We would like the Local Transport Plan to recognise the **intrinsic links between economic development and transport** and would emphasise the need for the Council to plan for transport with the local economy in mind. The current perception in the business community is that not enough account is taken of the needs of essential commercial traffic in the city. This means investment in rail freight, improved public transport but most importantly measures to ensure smooth traffic flows. Transport should be a vital component of the Community Strategy and other regeneration plans and the links need to be more explicit.

2.5 We would like to see LTP launch a 'war on congestion' and are pleased it is one of the key objectives highlighted in the work to date. Instinctively the business community is pro-road, but not to the exclusion of other modes. However, tackling road congestion should be a key priority for everyone. Reduced congestion supports the economy through shorter and more reliable journey times; enhances the environment as idling traffic is of course a major polluter; and improves local peoples quality of life because every minute wasted on a congested road, either in private or public transport, is a minute unproductive at work or away from family or leisure pursuits. We recognise that in a national context Hull is relatively uncongested – our local economy is not strong enough to throw away this competitive advantage. The measures indicated in the progress so far do not convince us yet that the LTP2 is as serious about tackling congestion as we would like it to be.

3. Specific comments and recommendations

- Focus clearly on reducing congestion to support the city's economy, environment and quality of life.
- Take a fresh and open minded look at the city's river crossing and start long term planning to meet the city's transport and economic needs.
- Deliver the common sense solution of a Castle Street footbridge.
- Improve real time information for transport users using new technology using variable electronic signs and e-mail.
- Explore options for an outer ring round to help provide an alternative to the A63 for east-west traffic.
- Think carefully about light rail or guided bus options. Ideally we would like to see a light rail system in the longer term but clearly the feasibility needs to be considered.
- Increase the capacity of rail freight facilities to the port of Hull. There should be a quick win by modernising the manual signaling of the current line.
- Rule out the use of road user and work place parking charges in the city during the LTP2 period.
- Improve city centre car parking by ensuring it supports desire for office development, nighttime economy and retail interests.
- Ensure there is adequate car parking to support retail clusters in communities and in areas such as Newland Avenue and Holderness Road.
- Give greater priority to tackle the school run, perhaps by offering incentives for parents to car share.
- Develop a strategy to plan for 'shocks' in the transport system so the city can respond better when there is a major accident or incident on a key route.

3.1 Vision – the vision proposed is a bit too general and the anti private car sentiment seems in our view to be 'swimming against the tide'. We would prefer the vision to talk about radically improving the alternatives to the private car to give people more choice over their journeys.

3.2 Tackling congestion – we welcome the fact that tackling congestion is a key objective in the draft LTP2. We would urge the Council to take further action to meet the objective. Of the measures highlighted; the Castle Street scheme (which we strongly support) is a decade away, and improvements to rail freight (again which we support) are unlikely to have a major effect on congestion across the city, although it may have more effect on the trunk road. We support park and ride and improvements to junction layouts and would like to see them delivered as soon as possible with a real commitment to redesigning highways to remove bottlenecks.

3.3 We have suggested a range of further measures in this paper to tackle congestion including extending intelligent traffic light systems, car share incentives on the school run, use of variable messaging on urban roads, a rebalancing of priorities on key routes, and a much needed system of communications and information using local media, e-mail alerts etc. We would also like to see congestion pinch points being more effectively monitored with clear targets to reduce congestion in the worst areas.

3.4 Parking – we are concerned about parking, particularly in Hull city centre. We accept that appropriate management of parking is required as part of the broader transport strategy for the central area, however, we need to find the solutions that work for Hull.

- Our retail sector is developing but is not as strong as York, Leeds or Sheffield and appropriate parking is needed to make access to city centre convenient.
- The commercial sector in the city centre needs appropriate parking to be attractive to staff. The city's broader policies to support city centre office development must be backed up by parking strategy in the LTP.
- Secure parking is essential to the nighttime economy, particularly as Hull is seeking to improve the variety and quality of its nightlife.

3.5 The problem is not simply about the number of spaces but their location, price and availability throughout the day. We would like the LTP set out some plans for improved parking provision in the old town to support office and leisure developments. Whilst we recognise the limitations on land in the area, perhaps there would be scope on the east bank with new and attractive pedestrians footbridges across the river Hull linking in with the city centre masterplan.

3.6 River Hull Crossings – the closure of North Bridge should be taken as a warning sign about how fragile the city's transportation system is. We commend the Council on the measures taken to keep traffic moving and believe that the partnership work undertaken with local businesses helped in this process as road users clearly changed their behaviour in the weeks following closure. However the impact on some city centre retailers has been significant and it appears many people are simply not traveling into the city centre as frequently as in the past. Good for transport, bad for the city as a whole.

3.7 The repairs to North Bridge gives Hull some breathing space to plan bridge crossings in the medium to long term and we would suggest options are explored for the future. The regular bridge openings are not conducive to efficient traffic flows across the city. Whilst we recognise there is little that can be done to the structure of Myton Bridge without spending millions of pounds, the option of pursuing the Act of Parliament needed to change the navigation rights should be considered in close discussion with businesses using the river. It may be possible to support these businesses to relocate elsewhere in the city in a way which could improve their businesses as well as meet transport objectives.

3.8 In the medium to long term we would like to see thinking and plans be developed for the replacement of North and Drypool bridges (although we accept this will not now be in the LTP2 period given the current repairs). We would also like to see either a new bridge, increased capacity of Chapman Street bridge or the bringing back into use of Scott Street bridge. Perhaps these developments could form part of a wider vision for the regeneration of the river Hull corridor including the impoundment of the River Hull. We do not expect immediate firm commitments on river crossings; we would however like to see a serious and genuine attempt to forward plan for the longer term.

3.9 Planning for 'shocks' – another learning point from North Bridge and the occasional paralysis of traffic caused by accidents on key arteries is that the city perhaps needs to think about how the transport networks responds to major shocks or incidents. One accident on the A63 can for example bring traffic to a standstill across huge parts of the city and this pattern is followed to a lesser extent by some roadworks and more minor accidents. We would like to see the LTP clearly set out how the city can deal quickly with such incidents, either intelligently through managing traffic better or providing better and quicker information and alternatives.

3.10 The best, but most expensive and difficult option, would be some form of major alternative route to get across the city. An outer bypass has long been suggested and was looked at as an option in the HUMMS study. Whilst it was rejected as a solution for the A63 problem through HUMMS, we believe there would still be potential to progress such an option seriously in its own right. A significant part of the route alignment is in place to the west and north of the city and such a scheme is an example of how we would like LTP to think big.

3.11 'School run' – various measures have been proposed in previous transport plans to tackle the 'school run' with little apparent success. Everyone would surely agree that tackling this problem would be a good thing in principle and we would like to see a higher priority being given to this objective. One option would perhaps be attractive incentives for parents to car share and pick up other pupils on the way to or from school. Such a scheme would seem to be relatively simple to promote and set up and could deliver real reductions in traffic.

3.12 Information and technology – smart transport systems have real potential for the future. We welcome the greater use of intelligent control of traffic lights recently to encourage a smoother flow of traffic and we would like to see this extended wherever practical and useful. There are other things that could be done to improve real time information using a range of mechanisms. Local radio traffic bulletins are too often unhelpful. They need to be accurate up to the minute to help combat congestion. Is there scope for the Council to be more proactive in monitoring traffic and using 'live' media to get clear messages out to travelers.

3.13 Electronic information boards on trunk roads are a good idea in principle. Could the concept be adapted to provide real time information on urban roads as well as bus stops for public transport? Proactive traffic information bulletins could also take advantage of the greater use of e-mail in local employers. Could regular e-mail bulletins be provided throughout the day when traffic levels peak to advise of any significant factors that will influence peoples journeys e.g. accidents, bridge opening, congestion etc. The use of information in this way would be relatively straightforward and could help transform peoples travel choices and help manage traffic.

4. Where we are now

4.1 Since the last Local Transport Plan the city has seen static if not reduced road capacity, increased priority to public transport, no solution for the A63 Castle Street but a new and improved Hedon Road, Hull Trains rail services, the closure of North Bridge and the opening of one of hopefully three new park and ride sites.

4.2 We recognise that traffic congestion in Hull is relatively low compared to many other parts of the country. This largely reflects the economic strength of the area, which we hope will change as a result of Hull's economic regeneration in the coming years. We should see this relative lack of congestion as a major strength for the city – it is competitive advantage given that quality of life in Hull and the surrounding area is also good. We believe LTP2 should seek to build on this advantage by focusing on reducing congestion to increase the city's competitiveness.

4.3 The Hull lobby for the 'cut and cover' solution for Castle Street has been a major plus point and should be built upon. Bringing together business, the Council, Citybuild and local politicians in a united cause has formed a very powerful voice for the city which has moved Castle Street up the Government agenda. A similarly successful lobby was also used to gain track access for Hull Trains, and we should be thinking about other key priority areas where we can lobby in the future.

4.4 It is clear that there is an emerging regional agenda around transport and planning issues. How this will affect Hull remains to be seen but it is important that Hull punches its weight in the regional structures which emerge. That means the city being proactive and positive in its regional engagement and ensuring that key organisations take the same lobbying messages to the region where appropriate. Greater use of LSP or similar structures to develop joint working should be considered.

4.5 Whilst we recognise the importance of making public transport more attractive, we do not believe that it should be an objective to make road journeys less attractive. We accept journeys need to be managed in an appropriate way, but feel that the seemingly relentless pursuit of bus lanes, cycle lanes and traffic management has now tipped the balance too far.

5. Responses to questions from Key Issues Discussion Paper

Q1. Is this vision for transport in Hull still relevant? Does it miss vital aspects? Are some aspects overstated? Have you a different vision for transport in Hull? Have the activities released economic potential?

The vision set out is not particularly meaningful but is generally acceptable. The vision should recognise the role of transport as a key driver of economic development which needs to be appropriately balanced with social and environmental considerations.

The vision could emphasise other important areas. It is now less easy than five years ago for example to work in the city centre, traveling in by car and parking. We recognise that Government policy is about discouraging commuters to travel by car, and that is a noble aspiration particularly in areas of relatively high congestion and with many public transport alternatives. The reality in Hull is very different. Whilst bus provision is generally good (despite the appalling bus and rail station facilities which are thankfully now being put right), in itself current public transport provision is not a good enough alternative for people to travel into Hull. Moreover, the reduced road capacity has negative impacts on the movement of essential commercial journeys, which support thousands of jobs in the city.

Q2. Do these objectives adequately cover all aspects that you would like to see the Hull LPT2 address? Which issues do you feel are missing? Where would you place a different emphasis within defined objectives?

The objectives are generally sound, but we believe there is too little emphasis on the importance of transport as an economic driver. This means excellent public transport systems allied to an efficient road network with a clear focus on reducing congestion. The objective must then be measured and backed up by action.

Q3. How much importance do you believe should be attached to providing access to key services in Hull? What particular accessibility problems are you aware of in Hull? What problems are associated with access to: (i) schools and further education; (ii) health centres and hospitals; (iii) local shops and facilities; (iv) major shopping areas; (v) jobs and employment areas; (vi) other destinations that you think are important?

We accept that accessibility is a major issue, particularly but not exclusively for those without access to a car. Think for example of the prohibitive city centre parking charges for those employed and with a car but on low incomes perhaps in the retail or leisure sectors which are set to expand if the city centre masterplan is delivered. Their accessibility is also important. Access to employment opportunities from public transport is a major business competitiveness issue. Put simply, the larger the potential labour pool that can get to and from a place of work, the better range of skills available to the employer.

It is relatively simple for major employers to put in place transport plans in place for their employees where there is a big enough critical mass for public transport services to be viable. However, many of Hull's industrial estates are predominantly made up of small and medium sized businesses and are poorly served by public transport provision. If Hull's wider objectives to get local residents from deprived wards into work, better public or community transport facilities are needed to help them access jobs.

It does not appear that much progress has been made on tackling the 'school run' in the five years of the current LTP. It is obvious to any road user how much better the network is during school holidays. With greater choice in schools and cultural/social changes making it less likely that pupils will walk or cycle to school, more effort is required to tackle this problem. The LTP should therefore seek to work more closely with the LEA and schools to develop appropriate and effective transport plans.

Q4. Do you support the Council's continued focus on tackling road safety problems? Are there specific locations where you believe road safety can be improved? Do you support the Council's focus on awareness and training to help tackle road safety? Are there particular initiatives that you'd like the Council to start, or expand? What further measures can be taken to encourage more walking and cycling to school and less car use?

We support the focus on road safety and commend the Council and its partners on a successful record of reducing casualties on our roads. In addition to the human costs of accidents, incidents cause congestion and delay and so a reduction in such incidents has benefits wider than safety.

We would make two specific further suggestions in this area. Firstly, the Road Safety Camera Partnership must not become the only means of enforcing the laws of the road. The cameras are placed at a limited number of sites and seemingly at only certain times of the day. Effort also is needed to tackle poor and dangerous driving standards. Standards of cycling also need to be improved – both visibility and following the rules of road.

Secondly, safety for pedestrians crossing the A63 Castle Street is a critical issue both for transport and regeneration. We want to see short term measures introduced quickly – they have already taken too long. We would like to see the common sense solution of a pedestrian footbridge brought back for consideration and would hope that partners could work together to ensure a successful planning application this time around. Such a measure would improve safety and probably road capacity.

Q5a. Is traffic congestion a problem within Hull? Where do you suffer particular problems? Are there congestion problems in the area immediately outside the City boundary that cause particular difficulty? What measures do you favour to tackle the congestion you experience?

We fundamentally disagree with the statement in the issues paper on tackling congestion which seems to suggest LTP1 has been successful on this measure because car trips in Hull have fallen by 0.4%. A fall in the number of car trips is not the same as a fall in levels of congestion but instead reflects the city's relatively weak economy. Despite the welcome improvements to Hedon Road, it is our view that congestion in the city has not been reduced during the LTP1 period and we would like the new plan to set out clearly how congestion at key pinchpoints can be reduced. This means developing a clear picture of where congestion is in Hull, monitoring it, and targeting reductions at priority sites.

For example, the improvements to the junction layout at Mytongate have helped reduced congestion; particularly from Ferensway we would like options to be explored at junctions such as Cottingham Road/Beverley Road to try to produce similar results.

Q5b Is the current road network sufficient to accommodate the needs of the city both today and in the future? Is the existing ring road useful? Do we need an improved ring road and, if so, where should it be? Should we upgrade Great Union Street to complete the orbital box in the city centre? Should the existing at-grade railway crossings (e.g. Spring Bank) be upgraded to alleviate congestion?

Given that whether we like it or not car traffic is still the dominant transport mode in the city, this question is in our view the most important in the LTP. In the medium term Hull needs a solution for Castle Street and we very much welcome the partnership approach between the Council, the Chamber of Commerce, ABP, Citybuild and others who have built a powerful lobby on this issue.

The current ring road is not particularly useful. We understand that options for inner and outer ring roads were tested in the HUMMS study. Despite the fact that they were rightly rejected as the primary solution for the A63 in the HUMMS context, we believe there would be real merit in developing a further outer aligned route around Hull. Some of the route is in place to the west of the city but further work around the north and the east linking Kingswood ultimately around to Hedon Road should be a long term ambition. One of the key benefits of such a scheme would be to provide a much needed alternative route should there be a major incident in the road network. At present an incident in a particular place such as the A63 can cause gridlock for the entire city. Clearly this would require joint working with the East Riding of Yorkshire but the potential for economic development by opening up land around the city would be a significant further benefit.

We would support further measures suggested such as the removal of at grade rail crossings and improvement to the orbital box, however clearly all of these options would have to be modeled, assessed and costed. Obviously any scheme should provide value for money and we appreciate that there will be limited resources available. We would further suggest however that the North Bridge issue has highlighted how vulnerable the city could be with the given set of bridge crossings. Now that the city has some breathing space with North Bridge repaired, we would like to see the city thinking long term about transportation across the river Hull which may mean new, improved and possibly extra bridge crossings to ensure we have a transport system ready for the economic growth we are all working to achieve in the city.

Q5c Do you support the improvements to public transport services such as more Park and Ride sites and more bus lanes? Should the Council be putting more money into subsidising bus routes? Should the provision of evening bus services be extended to support the nighttime economy? Should we be more ambitious and consider higher quality public transport systems such as guided bus or tram systems?

We support the development of high quality park and ride facilities and commend the Council on the excellent Priory Park facility. We also support more evening bus services to support the nighttime economy and indeed extended city centre car park opening hours to support this agenda. We welcome the open minded approach the Council has adopted in this area and hope it continues in the future.

We accept that along certain routes bus lanes can help public transport provide a real alternative to the private car. However, support for bus lanes should not be done with blind faith. Options should be carefully examined and not put in unduly at the expense of reducing road capacity thus increasing congestion. The LTP should also review the impact of bus lanes and be prepared to remove them if they are not working. We do support the enforcement of bus lanes to ensure that they work properly. In principle we would like to see the capacity of key arteries of the city's road network increased (A63, Hedon Road, Holderness Road, Beverley Road, Anlaby Road, Willerby Road/Spring Bank).

We are not convinced there is a viable business case for a tram or light rail system in Hull, as much as we would like to see one. If the option is rejected we should therefore concentrate our collective efforts on the achievable projects. Guided buses may be a better option, but the city has been talking about them for more than a decade, we would like to see LTP2 conclude this debate. Either go for trains or guided buses and deliver or focus energies elsewhere. In the spirit of seeking to improve the alternative of public transport, perhaps a limited implementation of guided buses just at appropriate major junctions or pinchpoints where at present buses are stuck in the same congestion as cars. We would support such measures if they could be achieved without increasing congestion.

Q5d. (Cycling and Walking) Do you support the Council's continued focus on promoting facilities for pedestrians and cyclists? Is there more that can be done to promote cycling and walking?

We support the improvement of such facilities.

Q6. Are there transport-related air quality problems that the Council should be tackling in LTP2, either generally across the city or at specific locations? Is there more that the Council could do to encourage the use of non-car modes, as part of a strategy to reduce transport related emissions?

We believe the key improvements around air quality from transport emissions will come from international and national improvements in motor technology. It should also be stressed that reduced emissions can be achieved by reducing congestion – there are therefore environmental as well as economic benefits to pursuing such a strategy.

Q7. What particular points do you wish to raise in conjunction with the quality of life issues? Are these areas where you believe streetscape improvements are urgently needed? Are there pockets where personal security on transport is a major problem? Is road traffic noise a persistent problem in certain areas? What links should we focus on between transport and health?

Quality of life is an important issue and we believe the streetscape improvements in the city centre particularly have been beneficial. The new interchange should also make a major improvement in quality of life. Delivery of the city centre masterplan will help the environment and LTP2 should include the measure to deliver the transport elements of the plan.

Quality of life in a transport context should also include congestion. Every minute a local person is sat on a bus or in a car is wasted time. It is unproductive for businesses, families and communities. Shorter journey times should therefore be a priority in the quality of life context. We welcome this recognition in the progress documents.

Q8. Where are significant cross-boundary transport problems experienced with Hull and ERYC? What improvements to joint working arrangements could deliver a better solution to these problems? Are there major transport investment schemes needed that could tackle significant transport problems across the City and Beyond?

This question isn't just about the East Riding. As a major port city, the confluence of strategic and local traffic, particularly on the A63 is the key transport problem for Hull. The LTP should also recognise that Hull's economic strategy is based around the development of the port of Hull – the impacts on transport must be factored into planning.

Specifically, Hull and the East Riding Council's could work closer together on park and ride (although we suspect Hull City Council are not at fault on this matter). Afterall, some of the major beneficiaries of park and ride are likely to be East Riding residents. Irrespective of the practical difficulties, we would hope that in the LTP2 period park and ride facilities at the north and east of Hull would be in place.

Q9. Does the regional agenda for transport adequately meet the needs of Hull, or should the LTP2 seek to pursue a different course to deliver the best transport network for the City?

At present, the regional transport agenda has not added anything to Hull's transport offering. It has produced priorities and strategies, but has achieved very little to date. We strongly believe that it is about time regional agencies with either responsibility or interest in transport must start to make a difference, for example by making the 'cut and cover' Castle Street plans a reality. The 'cut and cover' scheme is right in line with regional priorities about opening up access to the ports and regenerating cities around key transport corridors. If these fine words in RTS, RES, RSS and the Northern Way are to mean anything, these agencies must now deliver.

In reality, once regional funding pots for transport are in place, it would be nonsensical for Hull's LTP2 to follow a hugely divergent path to what funding agencies will pay for. That said, Hull should be bold and ambitious in its transport plans and should then make the case to appropriate regional agencies as well as DfT.