



YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE TRANSPORT ACTIVISTS ROUNDTABLE

Newsletter No.1

October 1999

Welcome to the Y&H TAR

We hope you will be attending or sending a representative to what we hope will be the first meeting of the **Yorkshire & Humber TAR** in York at The Guildhall on Saturday 16th October.

TAR is not about the nasty, sticky stuff on roads (though roads and "blacktop" are likely to feature quite a lot on our agenda) but stands for the Transport Activists' Road Table.

Who is a Transport Activist ? Quite simply it is anyone sufficiently concerned about the state of transport in our region and its impact on our environment and our daily lives, to wish to spend time improving the quality of life of ourselves and our fellow citizens by ensuring the right decisions are taken, at every level, by central Government, regional and local authorities, transport planners and transport providers.

We are not anti-car as such, (indeed probably a majority of transport campaigners in our region own or have access to their own car) and recognise that the car is here to stay. But we also recognise that its almost total dominance in both town and countryside has now reached a stage in which accidents, congestion, pollution and demand for ever more road and parking space are destroying the environment and quality of life for motorists and non motorists alike. But unless non-car based modes of travel such as walking, cycling, bus and train travel are perceived to be safe, reliable and affordable, escalation of car dependency will continue, with eventual catastrophic consequences for both the environment and the people of our region.

Most activists work through their local branch of a recognised amenity or environmental bodies with

an interest in sustainable transport, including Transport 2000, CPRE, Friends of the Earth, W.I.s, CTC, Pedestrians Association, Ramblers Association, YHA, Clean Air Association and other groups. Thus a TAR is a broad coalition of interest groups, prepared to work together for common cause in a region like our own.

Not all groups will agree on all issues. Some are more radical or fundamental than others. But where we broadly share common ground, we shall be working together -

- a) to share information and expertise and
- b) to join forces to make representation, particularly on a regional level, then we can be much more effective both individually and collectively.

Why working Regionally is now so important Following on from the Government's programme of devolution for Scotland and Wales, there are moves to give the English regions at least some degree of self determination, though how far this will extend remains to be seen. This may reflect to what degree there is enthusiasm for accepting some powers away from Whitehall and Westminster within individual regions themselves. The Government has already established new **Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)** in all the English Regions, including within Yorkshire and Humber, known as Yorkshire Forward - which is established in Leeds (Chairman Graham Hall, Chief Executive Martin Havenhead).

In order to monitor the work of the RDAs, the Government has also established what are known as Regional Chambers. These bodies are appointed by Government and are intended to reflect a wide spread of interests from the business community, trade unions, local authorities, and people with wider social, economic and environmental interests.

Originally Regional Chambers were intended to foreshadow elected Regional Assemblies but there is evidence to suggest that the Government is somewhat lukewarm about this idea, in case, as seems to be happening in Scotland and Wales, these new bodies exercise their new powers in which do not entirely accord with the views of central Government.

To some extent, the motivation for setting up RDAs reflects the success stories of the Development Agencies in both Scotland and Wales in encouraging inward investment and economic growth, which it is felt are as badly needed in the English Regions, including our own, as in Scotland and Wales.

Thus RDAs activity will be lead by economic development, though it is made clear in all documentation that what is envisaged is "Sustainable Development" - which of course means very different things to different people.

Each RDA will be producing its own Economic Development Strategy but also, to integrate the Government's environmental and economic strategies, Regional Planning Guidance (RPGs) that will direct this development in ways which do not destroy nor compromise the environment.

As part of the RPG there will also be Regional Transport Strategies. The Yorkshire & Humber Regional Transport Strategy is currently being prepared by MVA, and many members of the embryonic TAR group have already had occasion, as individuals and behalf of the Groups they represent, to make representations on the draft Strategy produced by MVA. It will be essential that the new Y&H TAR has a strong input into this document and ensure that its key recommendations are carried out through careful monitoring.

Regional Transport Strategies could lead the way on major infrastructure development, which could include new roads (and there could be powerful pressures for such schemes based on the naive belief that new roads invariable bring economic growth), a new regional airport, and new rail and LRT infrastructure. Some of these schemes could have massive social and environmental impacts, but once part of a Strategy, and endorsed by Government, they could be very difficult to stop or even modify.

The next level down, and the process by which the Government hopes that the policies within the Transport White Paper will be delivered on a local level, is the **Local Transport Plan (LTP)**, which operates at a County level and or Unitary/Met District. LTPs have been produced in an interim format for 2000-1, but from next year produced as a definitive (and difficult to alter) Five Year programme 2001-2007. It is therefore vital that issues of *sustainability, equality of opportunity and quality of experience* are built firmly into the LTPs, and their progress monitored.

How we achieve these things is to be debated on October 16th at the Guildhall, York. Be there if you possibly can. If you are unable to join us, but want to support our work, let Dorian Speakman know by letter, fax or e-mail, and we will keep you informed.

Thanks to the Countryside Agency Transport 2000 wish to thank the Countryside Agency for their financial support in helping to establish the Yorkshire & Humber Regional TAR.

It is up to all of us to ensure that the new organisation succeeds. See you in York on the 16th!

YHTAR Temporary correspondence address:

c/o Dorian Speakman
69 Seaforth Avenue, Harehills,
Leeds, LS9 6AG.
☎ 0113 248 6827
✉ dstransleisure@sol.co.uk