



The Future of Transportation – An Alternative View

A summary of David Whiting's address to the Institute of Highways and Transportation, October 19th in Wakefield.

Transport 2010, the Government's Ten Year Transport Plan, evokes both positive and negative responses from the standpoint I represent. It envisages very significant spending on public transport, which we welcome. It does make reference to reducing the impact of transport on the environment. Yet within the plan are new road proposals, intended to tackle the perceived problem of congestion, but which in our view ignore the greater and longer-term problem of overall traffic volume. The alternative view that I present is based on the ideal that transport should have no negative effects at all on the environment.

Transport 2010 identifies as the problems of Britain's transport system: overcrowding, congestion, delays, pollution and lack of choice. Its vision is for quicker and more convenient travel, which is also safer and impacts less on the environment. I see the two latter factors as fundamental, but the first two, speed and convenience, as more problematical. Road travel is valued by its users because it is seen as the quickest and most convenient mode; previous governments have encouraged its dominance. Economies were made in both rail and bus following privatisation; governments allowed the travel vacuum to be filled by the car and lorry, with retail, industrial and leisure developments appearing out-of-town, assuming road as the only means of travel. The road network

expanded in an attempt to keep pace with traffic increases, though the present Government has reduced the expansion programme, but the result is still congestion. We believe that traffic will increase to and overtake road capacity indefinitely. 'Quick and convenient' must refer to rail, light rail and bus transport.

Although pollution is equated almost entirely with congestion rather than higher traffic volumes, **Transport 2010** does refer to 'smarter, safer, cleaner vehicles' with a pledge to double spending on cleaner vehicle initiatives by 2004 and to encourage gas, electric, hybrid and fuel cell propulsion.

I would have liked to see reference also to phasing out diesel for trains in favour of electric.

The concept of the 'urban renaissance' is also supported, including park and ride schemes, but congestion charging and higher parking charges are confined to the section looking at 'the future'.

I present the following as **alternative priorities**:

1. Civilising traffic
2. Achieving zero emissions
3. Making rail, light rail acceptable modes for all travellers
4. Reducing car and lorry dependence
5. Undermining 'car culture'
6. Reducing the need to travel
7. Giving access to transport for all

Civilising traffic.

We put people rather than road traffic at the centre; within communities, as they walk or cycle, they should enjoy safety, quiet and clean air. We want to see high-quality street design, with traffic-calmed 20 mph or zones on residential roads and near schools, 10 mph 'home zones', 30 mph limits in all villages, with

the needs of disabled people also considered. Traffic access to town centres should be restricted, by further pedestrianisation, park and ride combined with 'congestion charging'. Walking and cycling would then be perceived as safer, particularly on the route to school, which would enable car transport to be reduced. Excessively large cars such as 4 x 4s are intimidating and should be strongly discouraged by a steeply graduated VED rate.

Achieving zero emissions.

Harmful pollutants have been reduced by catalytic converters, but these are inefficient at low temperatures. The occurrence of particulates in diesel has not yet been addressed, negating the ludicrous description 'green diesel'. As pollutant reduction has partially occurred, concern about CO₂ has increased, with its now widely-asserted association with climate disturbance. Oil-fuelled transport, including bus and rail, must go as soon as possible. Oil is expected to run out or become uneconomical, and the new technologies are on the way. Many car makers and oil companies expect the petrol engine to be obsolete in around 25 years.

Making rail, light rail and bus acceptable modes for all travellers.

Rail use is increasing as travellers realise that road travel between and into large towns and cities is becoming impracticable. It compares well with road for speed, allows working during the journey; on cost, it can be on a par with road for the individual but much less so for groups. More group fare deals are needed to remove this disadvantage. Rail has a high social status which is lacking in buses, which are associated by many with the young, elderly or socially disadvantaged. Snobbery may sometimes be overcome if a commodity is notably cheap, but buses even for the individual are often unacceptably expensive for town journeys. Bus travel must receive enough investment for it at least to have an image as the 'cheap mode'. Increased park and ride should help as a wider section of the population is required to use buses.

Reducing car and lorry dependence.

Britain is one of the most car-dependent countries in Europe, and road haulage dominance is also one of the highest. The most important factor in changing car dependence is to divert people towards public transport. The measures outlined in

Transport 2010, but carried even further, are the way forward. People also need to be urged to make less environmentally costly use of cars, through car sharing, which employers should be encouraged fiscally to organise. Taking children to school is now being questioned, and a wide range of alternatives is offered, including 'safe routes', walking buses or actual school buses. Rural car dependence is linked to lack of public transport; there are innovative schemes involving community-based small-scale transport. There is an increasing case too for restricting traffic in rural tourist destinations such as National Parks, where forms of park and ride could be offered. The pattern of out-of-town retail complexes and leisure attractions, all with free and plentiful car parking, is now deeply entrenched. It has been allowed by planning regimes over the last decade and would be difficult to reverse. Even this however could be subject to congestion (note the separate Meadowhall lane on the M1), particularly if further expansion is prevented by planning rules, so bus and rail travel from population centres, with enhanced home deliveries, could be foreseen.

Undermining car culture.

On top of all the factors that make car travel seem essential for many, 'car culture' is unnecessary and utterly unhelpful in reducing car use. Car ownership is associated with pride, a badge of social status. Advertising, television programmes and magazines convey beguiling messages associating cars with personal attractiveness, or with size and power, or to feed an obsession with speed. Despite a national speed limit of 70 on motorways and 60 elsewhere, most cars on sale are capable of far higher, with speedometers showing up to 140 rather than any indication of speed limits. There are three approaches to counteracting car culture which could be strengthened, which I refer to as health, safety and guilt. There is growing interest in personal health; publicity needs to raise awareness further of the link between health and lower car use, cycling and walking being the alternatives, and to include young people. Many people are ready to condemn cars as threats to safety, especially of children; most are likely to be drivers too, and it is feasible that they may broaden their beliefs about curbing the car to themselves as well. Very few people now deny that cars harm the environment, including the air we breathe (again applying to children); car use needs to

be more associated with guilt, in which we question the necessity of every we make.

Reducing the need to travel.

As well as retail, leisure and industrial developments being increasingly out-of-town and therefore road transport based, housing has encouraged more travel because of the desire for a 'place in the country'. Yet local services and shopping facilities in rural areas have declined, banks being a recent example, as rural residents rely more on larger facilities on the edge of towns. Employment too has become more car-based in that most job-seekers apply for jobs within road travelling radius of their home. Employers do not consider the road travel implications of their appointment decisions; I suggest they should as part of their environmental audit, or by adjusting business taxation to reflect it. Employers should also be urged to reduce the requirements on employees to travel at work (this could apply to all modes of travel, since rail is already overcrowded). The overall level of freight journeys needs to be questioned too; the 'just in time' principle where stocks are kept low results in more need for frequent deliveries and disadvantages slower modes. The concept of 'food miles' is important, and large retailers need to be encouraged to purchase locally (Sainsbury's have a scheme of this kind).

Giving access to transport to all.

A minority of the population do not have car access and can only use public transport. The needs of the disabled are not given a high profile in **Transport 2010**, though new disability legislation is likely to ensure that public transport is more accessible. Within the field of accessibility, however, there are questions to which there are not easy environmental answers. One of the reasons the Government gives against reducing car ownership is that lack of car access is an element of social exclusion, which it aims to eliminate. Another area of growth in car use and access is that people are living and enjoying good health later in life, and therefore they are driving longer. Grandparents are well-represented on the school run. My responses would have to be these. If we accept that less advantaged or less fit people have more need of car access, the pressure on those who can use alternatives should be greater. In the longer term, society should aspire to a much higher level of physical

health, starting with the young. The young are at least much more likely to be aware of the environmental damage that road transport causes, compared with the older generation whose view of pollution is smoky chimneys.

Conclusion.

The obstacles to reducing car and lorry use, given the deeply-entrenched patterns of location of destinations for employment, housing, retail and leisure used by the vast majority of the population, are very great. On the other hand, awareness and acceptance of the link between oil-fuelled transport and pollution, both local and global, has never been higher. Of the seven objectives identified, 'civilising traffic' is widely desired and readily achievable. Undermining car culture comes up against vested economic interests, though I believe a lot could be achieved with a higher priority and awkward questions in the right places. We must maintain the view, however, that pressure for road capacity in towns and country will not be removed with emissions; I quoted from 'Natural Capitalism'¹ here: 'mobilising the ingenuity to create a better car must be matched with the wisdom to create a society worth driving around in – but less often'. The remaining objectives are the more intractable ones; the recent fuel protests show how public opinion has immense power when lifestyles are threatened. Present patterns of living and location are unlikely to be changed until they are replaced by those based on visions of entirely new green communities. The seeds have been sown and are growing, but fruition will take much of this new century.

The questions from my audience (with my replies) included:

- By-passes are favoured by residents and improve conditions locally, why not build them?
(Each should be judged on merit but they make resulting roads quicker and therefore attract more traffic elsewhere e.g. A56 proposals)
- How can rail cope with greater capacity if a lot is taken off road – do we build new railways, and isn't that bad for the environment too?

¹ 'Natural Capitalism' Hawken, Lovins and Lovins (1999)

(We must maximise existing capacity, re-open routes, no plans for extensive new building)

- You are saying that zero emissions are on the way, so what are you calling for – just bringing them in sooner? (Yes – fuel cell could be available in 10 years)
- How do we convince the ‘man-in-the-street’ of the need to reduce road transport?
(I accept that mine is a minority view but so was CND at one time; we provide a constant reminder to decision-makers of an argument whose time is coming)
- Are people aware of the implications of car use for the environment?
(Even if CO₂ emissions are not visible, congestion certainly is)
(The event took place before the unprecedented floods)

David Whiting

YHTAR website: now online

The YHTAR website is now online, and has lots of useful information about YHTAR, latest news and useful links to associated groups and information. The address is <http://www.yhtar.org.uk> Check it out today!

In Praise of Perfect Timing

Our railways are arguably in crisis – speed limits required emergency timetables plus there has been flooding and mud slides to add to the perception of poor public confidence due to slow end to end journey times and crashes (even though far more people die on the roads!) Ten people are killed every day on the UK's roads - a disaster on the scale of the Paddington Rail crash every three days, yet do we ever hear much about the road accidents?

So what's the solution? A National Strategic Timetable – a revised catalogue of the railways - would do a lot of good. Swiss people rate it as the best feature of their rail system! This is where trains run at regular clockface times (e.g. 10 and 40 minutes past the hour), have symmetry in both directions, identical running times both ways and numerous hubs with regular connections. It would be much more

understandable, reduce ‘hassle’ and waiting times, increase reliability, be easier to market and raise effective capacity. Regular services could generate an extra £30m revenue and raise single-leg passenger trips by 10m a year even within current resources (approximately £900m is the total UK rail industry value per year). All that even before its assistance in channelling investment to the real pinch points in the timetable – rather than the London-centric capital schemes we see now. But, at present only around 70% of the train operating companies are convinced of the benefits of regular interval timetables. Interestingly, though, emergency timetables (e.g. GNER) have been set at a regular interval. It's the easiest way to fix timetables in a hurry!

Who could implement perfectly timed rail services? The Strategic Rail Authority. It would need to have a vision which informed its decisions regarding pathing priorities. I suggest a rail user hierarchy with regular interval passenger services always ahead of irregular services and freight or special trains. The Hierarchy would be similar to those some Local Transport Plans have for road users.

In setting any kind of timetable, public transport providers (whether rail, bus, tram or whatever) should all make times regular interval if they are to attract people who would otherwise use a private car and activists should insist on this. For further advice, read Perfect Timing, a report of the Railway Reform Group (May 2000). A printed summary is available at £5, or you can be sent the whole document by e-mail (566 kB) for £7.50 (or £10 for both). Please write, with a cheque, to:-

**Passenger Transport Networks
49 Stonegate, YORK. YO1 8AW**

Anna Semlyen

EU publishes Noise Directive...

The European Commission published its draft directive on noise. It will drive forward new noise legislation across the EU over the coming decade.

Plans for a European-wide legislation were first set out in a European Green Paper in 1996. It revealed that 20% of the EU's citizens were exposed to excessive noise.

The contents of the final directive will be decided under the EU's "co-decision" procedure: jointly by EU ministers and the European Parliament.

The Draft Directive contains big new ideas which would significantly change the way governments approach noise matters. It would require governments to draw up Noise Maps for conurbations of more than 250,000 people by 2005 and for places with a population over 100,000 by 2010. Action Plans would then be required to deal with the problem areas identified in the maps.

UKNA [UK Noise Association] has welcomed the draft directive as a significant step forward. However, it did raise some concerns. UKNA argued the Directive should:

- *cover all forms of noise pollution - at present it seems only to apply to road, rail, aircraft noise and some industrial noise;*
- *require noise maps and action plans to be drawn up for the entire country, not just larger conurbations;*
- *be very clear how it defines problem noise levels - it needs to include more than loudness: it is constancy and low frequency that can also be the problem. Annoyances to individuals and communities should be the key to defining acceptable noise levels.*

from Noise News 1, Autumn 2000

BETA's [Bingley Environmental Transport Association] Complaint to the European Commission Has Been Officially Registered.

BETA's complaint to the Commission that the Bingley 'relief' road contravenes the law due to an inadequate Environmental Impact Assessment by the UK Government has now been officially registered.

The letter from Françoise Brunet for the Secretary General of the Commission says that 'I am pleased to inform you that your complaint has been registered.' This means that the 'Commission's services will consider your complaint in the light of the applicable Community law' and that BETA 'will be informed of the findings and of the course of any infringement procedure opened.'

The Road Could Still be Stopped: This success does not mean that BETA's complaint has yet been upheld but it does mean that WE ARE BEING TAKEN SERIOUSLY and that WE ARE IN WITH A CHANCE to stop this mad road project.

What is the Complaint?: It is that the Highways Agency's claim that the Bingley 'relief' road is environmentally beneficial has not been validated according to the procedures of the European Directive. In simple terms this means that BETA's consistent view that the road will impose damaging air and noise pollution, devastate the South Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest, seriously harm the heritage site of the Leeds/Liverpool canal, and not achieve its claimed objective of bringing peace to the Main Street, all at a cost of \$60m, has not been shown to be wrong.

Other Groups Have Submitted Complaints: A reliable source at the European Commission said that five complaints have been received. We know that amongst these are complaints from the Aire Valley Conservation Society and the Riddlesden Action Group.

THIS ROAD DOES NOT HAVE THE SUPPORT CLAIMED FOR IT BY MP LESLIE, BRADFORD COUNCIL OR THE BETTER BINGLEY CAMPAIGN

Consideration Will be Legalistic: The essential point is whether due procedures have been used in arriving at a conclusion rather than that the right conclusion has reached by the UK Authorities.

Whatever the outcome of this complaint is everyone should be aware that this is the first real challenge to the results of the 1997/98 Roads Review. There is little doubt that an EIA should have been conducted for ALL road schemes in that Review. We have an admission from the Highways Agency that an

EIA was not done for the Bingley 'relief' road. We also have a 1993 letter in response to our complaint in 1992 that an EIA was not conducted for the 1990 Public Inquiry and that the EC considered that an infringement had taken place. Although the EC told the UK authorities that they would not take action on that occasion, but that they would if there was any future infringement, there has now been a further infringement and we are therefore calling upon the EC to take infringement proceedings against the UK.

Does anyone have an cause to believe that there are other schemes in that Review which did not have an EIA conducted? Has anybody actually enquired? It would be a good idea to do so. And this should be done nationally and not just regionally. Perhaps this message could be passed around other networks.

People also need to be aware that the ploy of the Highways Agency is to claim that, although, "a full Environmental Impact Assessment was not undertaken specifically for that Review" (ie for the BRR) the "review of the environmental impacts was, however, undertaken using methodologies developed in consultation with the Government's statutory advisers English Nature, English Heritage, the Environmental Agency and the Countryside Commission." (letter of 8 June 2000). This statement sounds superficially as if the UK has complied with the Directive. When you probe a bit deeper you find gaps - for instance, not all the agencies were necessarily consulted at the time of the Review. All they say is that the methodologies were developed.

Could anyone let me have information on this? Does anyone have contacts who could be asked? It would help all our causes to know. We could develop a more systematic way of examining all road schemes.

This now becomes especially pertinent following the UK Government's pre-election announcement that they are putting so called bypasses and other road schemes into the roads programme. There is, of course, a long way to go before these get through the Public Inquiry system. The issue of whether EIAs have been done properly would figure large in this process.

It would be a good idea to let me know, at least initially, privately. Please email me at r.j.butler@bradford.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from anyone with any useful information.

Richard Butler

Labour launches huge new road programme

The government is to embark on the most ambitious road programme since it came to power after a U-turn over the pledge to cut car journeys.

A proposed list of 77 local road building schemes, costing £600m, will cause uproar among Labour's environmental supporters. Another £1 billion has been set aside next year for trunk roads, with local authorities urged to bring them into the programme quickly.

Among the proposals are a section of the Salisbury bypass, which the government pledged would never be resurrected, a £30m relief road through an area of outstanding beauty in Dorset and an M6 link road in Lancashire through a site of special scientific interest.

The road programme leaves deputy prime minister John Prescott's original transport policy in tatters. He said in 1997 that he would have failed if he did not cut the number of car journeys and urged the voters to "hold him to it". The policy also calls into question Labour's environmental credentials after the party's pledge that "there will be no more Twyford Downs".

"Some of these roads will cause enormous damage to the countryside," said Tony Burton, assistant director of the Council for the Protection of Rural England, which has obtained the list of proposed schemes. "This is going to be a huge blemish on the government's environmental credentials."

At least half of the 77 local schemes, costing at least £300m, are expected to be given the go-ahead when the government unveils its transport settlement for local authorities this month.

A Prescott aide said: "The policy hasn't changed -- there's just more money available for new schemes. They still have to meet the government's environmental criteria."

The government is so intent on building more roads that it urged local authorities to submit more proposals, even though the deadline had passed. Ten more road projects were added as a result. "I think few will be against this except a few Greens," said one minister.

The proposals include 14 bypasses in Suffolk, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Devon and Yorkshire. One scheme where local authority officials are optimistic of government approval is the Weymouth relief road. The route cuts through a designated area of outstanding natural beauty with neolithic and Bronze Age burial mounds. It will also endanger one of the few remaining breeding sites of a rare bird, Cetti's Warbler.

Michael Ross, who has been campaigning against the relief road for six years, said: "They seem to have returned to the Tory idea of building their way out of trouble."

Even more controversial are proposals for three relief roads around Salisbury, which will include a stretch of a notorious bypass route abandoned after protests.

Other schemes include a bypass on the A57, part of which would cut through the Peak District National Park, a bypass at Cudworth, South Yorkshire, and the A47 from Great Yarmouth, which would cut through the The Broads in Norfolk.

Prescott faces further problems over the first of a series of reports - called multi-modal studies - into plans for the 40 trunk roads. A leak of a report into the proposed £120m Hastings bypass failed to come to a conclusion.

The draft report, seen by The Sunday Times, says the road could potentially boost the depressed local economy but warns that if ministers go ahead with the bypass they will have abandoned government policy over building roads in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Yorkshire & Humberside schemes:

- Barnsley Cudworth Bypass
- Leeds East Leeds Link Road
- Leeds Inner Ring Road Stage 7
- Rotherham A631 West Bawtry Road Improvement
- Sheffield Inner Relief Road - Stages 2 & 3
- Wakefield Glasshoughton Coalfields Link Road
- Wakefield Hemsworth-A1 Link Road

Jonathan Ungeod-Thomas and Jonathon Carr-Brown, The Sunday Times, 3 December 2000

CLIMATE TREATY 'ALMOST IRRELEVANT'

As the UN climate conference here inches towards a deal, [note: this was written before the break up of the talks!] a UK expert has said it is going nowhere fast. He is Dr Andrew Dlugolecki, director of general insurance development at CGNU, one of the world's six largest insurance groups. Dr Dlugolecki told a briefing that climatic instability would inevitably worsen for at least another 40 years. And he said the developed countries had scarcely begun to see its effects.

Dr Dlugolecki has contributed to the report due out early in 2001 from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the group of several thousand scientists whose findings have prompted governments to take the issue so seriously. "Property damage is rising very rapidly, at something like 10% a year," he said. "We've still not yet really begun to see the effects of climate change in the West. What we are seeing so far is largely the result of more people living in areas which are becoming more dangerous. "But once this thing begins to happen, it will accelerate extremely rapidly, as the IPCC report makes clear."

Low-carbon future

Dr Dlugolecki told BBC News Online the European storms of December 1999 and the terrible wet weather in the UK over recent weeks were just two examples of what could happen. "Both are absolutely typical of what we should expect. And I think we'll also get some surprises. Remember how Auckland in New Zealand was affected during a heatwave - the central district lost power for six weeks."

