



Background

Britain's city regions are key to the rebalancing of the economy and the UK's wider economic success. Transport is both an enabler of growth and a way of ensuring that the benefits of that growth are shared because transport provides access to opportunity – be it jobs, education and training or healthcare. The recognition of the key role that transport plays is reflected in the emphasis given to transport measures by Local Economic Partnerships.

To fully deliver on their potential, the city regions need efficient and effective local transport networks as well as good connectivity with each other and the wider world. Efficient and effective local transport networks support city centres with their clusters of high value jobs, retail and cultural offerings. Connectivity with other cities, and with the wider world, attracts investment and skills and enables access to domestic and international markets. Cities need to be smart too and embrace and facilitate transformative social and technological change like the electrification of transport, the growth in cycling and the way in which open data and smart devices can revolutionise transport information, access and planning. This in turn will draw in investment and skills whilst also reducing carbon footprints, improving air quality and making cities more attractive and dynamic places to be.

To ensure transport provision facilitates and keeps pace with the city regions' growth ambitions there is a need to be able to plan long-term for transport in a way that will secure inward investment, shape housing markets and support entrepreneurial start-ups. This in turn requires greater certainty over ongoing capital and revenue funding; greater devolution of decision making; and for more synergies to be realised between policy areas (such as housing, economic development and transport). These approaches have been a key factor London's continuing success.

What this means on the ground

Long term local investment needs

- + Investing in commuter rail networks with modern trains offering the capacity needed to accommodate growing demand. In the North in particular the local commuter rail fleet is outdated and has too little capacity. Growing numbers of passengers are using rail to access high value city centre jobs and the train fleet is too small to cope. A larger and improved train fleet can also mean investing in supporting infrastructure like track capacity, signalling and stations.
- + Investing in light rail, tram and bus services that are able to move large numbers of people quickly and efficiently.
- + Getting the most from the highways network by striking the right balance between the needs of freight, motorists, public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians.

Long term connectivity investment needs

- + HS2 represents the biggest re-writing of the inter-city rail network since it was built by the Victorians, offering brand new capacity as well as the opportunity to get more out of the classic existing long distance network. Northern Hub, planned and potential upgrades to Trans-Pennine corridors, electrification of more long distance routes and the Birmingham New Street overhaul all play into this wider opportunity to ensure that HS2 is more than a stand-alone new route but forms part of a wider transformation of the rail network's ability to shrink journey times between cities and create new synergies between urban economies.
- + Cities also need good access to ports, airports and the national highways network.

Revenue spending

Capital investment to enhance the extent, quality and capacity of transport systems is essential but so is adequate revenue support for urban transport as this ensures the provision of services which use capital-funded infrastructure.

Revenue support is needed in particular for bus services (which are less capital dependent than rail). The bus is the main form of public transport. It gives people access to employment and opportunity and is a relatively low cost and rapid way to enhance transport provision, for example to serve new development areas.

Revenue support is also important for local rail services. It also pays for the planners and staff that develop and implement capital projects.

However, at present there is a growing discrepancy between capital and revenue funding with Government supportive of capital spending on infrastructure but placing transport revenue support on a steep downward trajectory. The consequences of this include cuts in bus services and challenges around the capacity and capability of local government to deliver capital schemes.

Devolution of powers on local transport

The way in which transport is planned, managed and run in the cities outside London is complex and fragmented. Whereas London (and indeed most cities in the developed world) are able to determine, plan, regulate and specify its own bus and mass transit systems, this is not the case in the cities outside London. This in turn means that the outcomes for passengers and local businesses can be fragmented including on issues like fares and ticketing and the simplicity of structures in terms of who is responsible for what.

The cities need more powers on buses in particular – including a simpler legal framework for introducing London-style bus provision (through franchising networks of routes). They also need meaningful devolution on local rail services. This would allow cities to deliver:

- ‘Oyster-style’ smart and simple ticketing.
- Single integrated networks: one brand, one network, one ticket.
- Provide a clearer interface with the public, local businesses and investors on service delivery and development.

Supporting smarter and more sustainable cities

All around the world, leading cities are responding to transformative social and technological change in a way that keeps their economies growing and dynamic whilst simultaneously reducing carbon footprints and making their cities greener, more attractive and vibrant places to live and work.

One of these key trends is the growth in cycling. Supporting and promoting active travel like cycling and walking is good for public health and tackling preventable diseases (like obesity); for reducing traffic congestion; and for opening up access to opportunity. A mix of capital and revenue support is needed in order to invest in road layouts that better meet the needs of cyclists and pedestrians but also to support ‘soft’ measures around building public awareness of, and confidence in, active travel alternatives for some of the journeys they currently make.

A clear national policy framework, backed up by good coordination with the cities and appropriate funding streams, is needed in this area but also in other complex areas where there are both national and local dimensions such as air quality; freight and last mile deliveries; open data; greener vehicle technologies and the electrification of transport; and smart ticketing.

The opportunity

A clearer city region dimension to national transport policy, more long term funding certainty, and greater devolution of transport powers all offer an opportunity to ensure that our cities become smarter, greener and make an even greater contribution to the nation’s overall prosperity.