

Analysis of Information Gathered

1. As a result of all of the information gathered during this review, the Committee have recognised the following:
2. Expected Increase in Traffic in York
Over the period of the City's first Local Transport Plan (2001-2006) peak-hour traffic flows remained very close to 1999 flows which played a part in the council's Network Management Service achieving an 'excellent' grading from the Department for Transport (DfT), for securing the expeditious movement of traffic on its road network. Although the indicator for peak hour traffic showed traffic levels being fairly constant between 1999 and 2006, the indicator hides the growth in traffic levels either side of the peak hour resulting from people commuting either earlier or later to avoid roads running at full (or over) capacity in the peak hour (see figures and graphs in paragraph 7 of final report).
3. Nationally, traffic growth between 1996 and 2025 could be in the range 52-82%¹ although recent actual levels show traffic growth at the lower rate. Officers estimate that York could face a 27% rise in traffic from the 2003-4 position to 2020-21. Due to the geographical and physical constraints within the Authority's area and the city's historic character, it is not possible to provide additional highway capacity at anything like the rate at which demand is increasing, and this has necessitated York's integrated approach to the provision of transport infrastructure since the 1987/88 MVA study, through to LTP1 and LTP2.
4. The property price boom over the past decade, the recent low levels of family housing construction in York, and the dispersion of businesses to the outskirts of the city, have made it increasingly difficult to live near to places of employment. This added to the expansion of car ownership and an historic relative decrease in motoring costs, has led to greater population dispersion. Recent figures show that 22,500 workers commute into York from surrounding areas and 17,000 travel out of the city for work. The need to relocate to more peripheral locations has necessitated longer journeys to work, which are often less suited to non-car options. Outside the main urban area, journeys are becoming increasingly more difficult to serve by public transport due to their varied nature, serving a wider number of origins and destinations, along with reduced opportunities to satisfy needs locally due to a lack of local facilities and funding to provide public transport services.
5. The predictions for York were established on the basis of housing and employment growth contained in the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). These have since been superseded by higher levels of growth, as detailed in the full RSS published in May 2008. Employment growth is now expected to outstrip housing provision, thereby, leading to more and longer commutes into the city.

¹ Source IAM motoring facts 2008

6. The Local Transport Plan 2006-2011 (LTP2)

In March 2006, the Council published its second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) covering the period 2006 – 2011, setting out the council's aspirations and proposed measures for transport over a 5 year period within the context of a 15 year horizon. The strategy in LTP2 for tackling congestion was to build upon the successes already achieved by LTP1 (2001-2006) and deal with the pressures from the growth in the economy. LTP2 predicted that, in the absence of its proposed package of measures, traffic levels would rise by 14% by 2011 with a further doubling to 28% by 2021. The strategy proposed in LTP2 (as summarised in Annex Ag) sought to limit this growth to 7% by 2011.

7. The key proposals identified in the LTP2 are to:

- increase the capacity of the Outer Ring Road (ORR) thereby reducing congestion in the city centre and creating road space to reallocate to buses, cyclists and pedestrians;
- provision of an orbital and cross city bus network – a viable and reliable orbital bus route will only be possible as a result of improvements to the ORR junctions;
- provide additional Park & Ride sites to intercept traffic on all main radials - the Council recently had a £20.8m bid approved by the Regional Transport Board, for inclusion within the Regional Funding Allocation programme to construct two new park and ride sites, one on A59, Harrogate Road at Poppleton and the other on the B1363, Wigginton Road together with a relocation of the Askham Bar site to a new site that will allow additional spaces and facilities to be provided. Each of these sites could also utilise the potential for a tram/train halt. The total cost of the scheme is £26.4m and will take an additional 0.5million car journeys off York's roads within the outer ring road, each year;
- manage demand through parking control and possibly access restrictions in the city centre;
- a further package of soft measures aimed at improving road safety, air quality, accessibility, safe routes to school, health and well being as well as enhancing education and the economy.
- Enable the Council to meet its principal network management duty under the Traffic Management Act to secure the expeditious movement of traffic on their road networks.

8. Impact of LTP2

The maps in Annex A show that even with the congestion tackling measures included in LTP2, by 2011 there will be many principal roads in York where capacity will have reached and/or exceeded 85% during peak travel times, leading to reduced or no free flow. For example, traffic levels on the A1237 which forms the western and northern sections of the outer ring road have increased by more than 50% over the last 15 years which has resulted in heavy

congestion during peak periods, particularly on its junctions with radial routes. Similarly there has been a significant increase in congestion on the inner ring road and its approach roads, and, unless extensive measures are put into place, this inexorable rise in traffic is likely to continue. In addition, off peak and weekend traffic levels are increasing faster than ever before. By 2021, the projections are worse having taken into account the additional traffic from future employment and residential developments in York at University Campus 3, Germany Beck, Derwenthorpe, York Northwest, and Hungate.

9. Since the production of LTP2, other major land developments have been proposed and these are at various stages of planning e.g. York Northwest (comprising York Central and the former British Sugar works), Nestles and the Terry's site. Individually any one of these would have a significant impact on the local transport infrastructure with citywide effects, but when taken together could result in a major change in the city's travel patterns and demand for transport infrastructure. Therefore, it is clear that any additional development across the city in the coming years will worsen the significant adverse affects of the current high congestion levels, and/or require the curtailment of the scale of those developments and possible negative consequences for the future economic well being of the city (witness the 2008 Terry's factory site application).
10. Developments in the council's response and plans have moved on since LTP2 i.e. toward the end of LTP2 and beyond, the intermediate plans are to:
 - implement 'Access York Phase 1';
 - develop further proposals for the outer ring road
 - investigate the feasibility of utilising tram-train technology.
 - Continue demand restraint measures, including extensive bus priority measures and access restrictions into the city with priority for buses, combined with sufficiently high parking charges at council controlled city centre public car parks and resident parking only restrictions in adjacent city centre residential streets.
11. Beyond LTP2
The Committee recognised that although LTP2 and the Access York measures seek to continue and build upon the measures in LTP1, it is unlikely to be enough in the longer term, as many measures have achieved or are close to achieving their maximum potential for restricting traffic growth at the level of investment to date. In fact, the modelling of the additional measures show they will only palliate and not eliminate the increase in congestion. Therefore additional congestion tackling measures will be required to complement and work alongside those already included in LTP2 and extend beyond, particularly if doubling York's economy by 2026 is to be realised, and the expected rise in congestion levels are to be halted.
12. Policy Driving Changes & Available Funding
Since 1997 central government has sought, through various white papers and the local transport plan system, to promote more sustainable and healthy travel by widening transport choice and reducing reliance on the private car. At a

national level, more expansive programmes, such as the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF), offer significant funding to develop and implement innovative 'package' solutions for tackling congestion (£290m in 2008-09 rising to £2550m by 2014-15). However, the current inference from Government is that a TIF package must contain some form of road user charging measure for it to be considered, as evidenced by the following statement to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Transport on 5th July 2005:

“The Fund will also be used to support local plans which will help tackle congestion. We are looking for proposals which combine some form of demand management such as road pricing, with better public transport. These pilot schemes will contribute to our work on national road pricing”

13. A recent Government discussion paper 'Towards a Sustainable Transport System' (October 2007) endorses the views contained within the Eddington Transport Review, for a targeted approach to the most seriously congested parts of the urban, national and international networks, and that an innovative approach which makes the most of existing networks through good regulation, sending the right signals to users and transport providers, is likely to be just as important as further investment in new infrastructure. Consequently, the Government has reviewed the guidance to local authorities on the preparation of LTPs to ensure that it reflects both the Eddington priorities and the findings from the review of the take up of 'Smarter Choices' in LTPs (published June 2008).
14. The regional and local planning framework is described in more detail in Background Paper: 5 – Summary of Regional and Local Transport Policy.
15. It is extremely unlikely that this authority's future LTP allocations will be sufficient to further develop and implement an innovative package solution. Therefore for this Council to secure additional funding from TIF, we would need to work up a package to address congestion that includes some form of more radical demand management. However, the Committee recognise that even though the inclusion of road pricing is most likely to attract TIF funding and generate a revenue income, there were significant questions to be answered i.e.:
 - the revenue collection and scheme operation costs would need to be accurately assessed to determine if such a scheme was viable and sustainable
 - the various impacts on business and local residents would need to be examined in detail, including any mitigation measures required
 - timing issues of improvements to public transport and other alternatives
 - public acceptability
16. The Committee also recognised that the implementation of any scheme would be unlikely to occur before the middle to end of the next decade from a scheme development and delivery viewpoint alone, which equally highlights the need for advance decision making.

17. Broad Strategic Options Available

In February 2008, the Committee received a paper on the strategic options available to the Council, which suggested a number of scenarios which could complement LTP2 to further reduce congestion in the city. Those scenarios are shown in detail in Annex D in increasing order of complexity, cost and contribution to reducing congestion. For example, the intermediate plans shown above in paragraph 10, would go part if not all of the way to realising scenarios 5, 6 and 10 (see Annex D).

18. Before considering the evaluation of the scenarios, it is worth noting that a partly similar exercise² was commissioned by the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Assembly, in the context of the Climate Change Agenda. This modelled a series of interventions to identify 'practicable, deliverable measures within the scope of regional transport policy that would deliver a reduction in the emissions of carbon dioxide from transport across the region.' In doing this however, no resource limitations were applied, and no adjustments for political will were made (in passing, it concluded that even with an extensive package of interventions, any change of direction in carbon emissions would not come close to achieving the desired level of reduction). For the purposes of this review, a similar outcome is likely, in that although the apparent inexorable rise in congestion can not be reversed, it can only be stemmed.

19. It is recognised that the effects of these scenarios on congestion are only officer's considered opinions at the present time and do not have the benefit of rigorous analysis. In order to confirm these effects (or otherwise) the scenarios will need to be subjected to further modelling and evaluation. Therefore a recommendation of this review will be that the Executive release sufficient funding for the optimal solutions to be worked up and tested.

20. Long Term Vision for Transport In York

The Vision' for York as contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy states that we will make our mark by:

- Building confident, creative and inclusive communities
- Being a leading environmentally friendly city
- Being at the forefront of innovation and change with a prosperous and thriving economy
- Being a world class centre for education and learning for all
- Celebrating our historic past whilst creating a successful and thriving future

21. The Committee, whilst recognising and supporting this overall vision, note that transport is almost omitted from it. The Committee strongly believe that given the massive challenge of rising traffic and congestion levels, the scale of response required, and residents high priority for tackling congestion, the City should have a complimentary long-term vision for transport as suggested below:

'A city which has transformed itself in traffic terms and reasserted its human scale and environmental credentials, through its residents being able and

² Achieving low carbon and sustainable transport systems in Yorkshire and the Humber

positively choosing to travel less by car and more by bicycle, foot and public transport with little delay, so as to be individually healthier and collectively to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve local air quality, noise levels and quality of life, and where business, leisure and other activity is thriving because of good affordable quality and easy access by a choice of travel modes”.

22. At the end of this review, the Committee intend to make a recommendation to the Executive that they adopt this long-term vision, bearing in mind that York is part of the Leeds City Region and York’s vision may ultimately be influenced by the Leeds City Region Vision and/or Multiple Area Agreement.
23. The Committee have also recognised the key importance of a vastly improved public transport service within this and suggest the following subsidiary vision for public transport:

‘By 2026 York is benefiting from one of the best and most popular local bus services in the country outside London, offering a seamless passenger experience, with a single competitively priced ticketing system, high frequency daytime services to all key destinations in the city, recognised interchange points with well timetabled connections where bus transfer is required, non carbon fuelled fully disabled accessible vehicles, friendly and welcoming staff who drive considerately of passengers and other road users, good bus stop facilities and reliable interactive timetable information.’

24. Survey of York Residents

The committee considered the findings from the city-wide residents survey in terms of a long term strategy, which showed that Option C (as detailed in Annex D) was the most favoured. It was however noted that the options with varying elements of charging (A, B & D) received more support between them – see analysis at Annex E. They were concerned to see that both men and women in the over 55 age group were not open to radically changing their behaviour in relation to modes of travel. This highlighted the Committee’s view that a major cultural change in the city is required, and the council would need to address that as they had previously recommended.

25. The Committee recognised that without significant government funding many of the more expensive individual elements within Option C would not be deliverable, but the less expensive elements could be fed into future Local Transport Plans, and, priority should be given, in line with resident’s views given in response to the question, with top priority for investing in supporting local bus services to improve their availability, quality and frequency for travel around the city. The Committee acknowledged that the rail element of Options C & D were particularly costly, had low benefit, and should therefore have low priority if funding fell short.
26. The Committee agreed that the Council should seek to progress Option C – Restricting Congestion without charging (based round encouraging walking, cycling and travelling by bus for journeys less than 5 miles, including improving cycle routes in the City and expanding the cycle network, investing in supporting local bus services to improve their availability, quality and frequency for travel

around the city, investing in rail services for longer distance commuting, including new technologies such as tram-trains, including more restrictive parking policies and access restrictions and reallocating road space to buses, cycles and pedestrians, investing in additional park and ride on Wetherby road, establishing a freight transshipment depot on the outskirts of the city, investing in the northern and western outer ring road junction improvements to relieve through city traffic). In order to develop Option C further, the Committee agreed that further work on both the scope and delivery of the individual elements within that option and the optimum overall package should be initiated, in on-going consultation with York residents and businesses, leading up to an application for government funding to whatever major funding arrangement the new Government eventually agreed.

27. Should any application for funding fail, the Committee agreed that officers should be instructed to examine other innovative and creative ways in which to deliver this strategy to obtain maximum traffic reduction.