

## **REVIEW: INTEGRATED TRANSPORT**

*Tom Hart*

Julian Hine and John Preston (eds), **Integrated Futures and Transport Choices: UK Transport Policy beyond the 1998 White Paper and Transport Acts**, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, 328 pp, hb, £50, ISBN 0 7546 1991 5.

This book is an addition to the recent interest in reviewing transport and policy developments since Labour assumed power in 1997. It consists of 17 chapters divided between an 'Overview', 9 dealing with 'Issues' and 7 dealing with 'The System and Emerging Patterns of Regulation'. The list below shows the range of contents and contributors:

- Ch 1 Overview (J Hine & J Preston)
- Ch 2 Public Health & Transport Policy (S MacNeill & Paul Cullinan)
- Ch 3 Social Inclusion & Transport (J Hine)
- Ch 4 Changing Nature of Work & Transport (R McQuaid)
- Ch 5 Integrated Traveller Information (G Lyons, R Harman, J Austin & A Duff)
- Ch 6 Replacing Travel: Technology-led Futures (M Grieco)
- Ch 7 Reducing Car Dependence (S Stradling)
- Ch 8 Interchange & Seamless Travel (J Hine, M Wardman & S Stradling)
- Ch 9 Sustainable Freight Distribution (A McKinnon)
- Ch 10 The New Deal for Transport : BEQUEST Protocol (M Deakin)
- Ch 11 Changing Organisational Frameworks & Governance (S Cole)
- Ch 12 Land Use Planning & Transport Demand (P Headicar)
- Ch 13 Bus Regulation (J Preston & P Mackie)
- Ch 14 Rail Regulation & Competition (C Nash)

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- Ch 15 Urban Road User Charging & Workplace Parking Levies (P Bonsall & D Milne)
- Ch 16 Economic Instruments & Traffic Restraint (S Potter, M Enoch & Tom Rye)
- Ch 17 Streets for People (T Bendixson & B Plowden)

There are no chapters on Cycling or Aviation, though the former is mentioned at various points, notably in Ch 17. Aviation is a surprising omission, given the growing debate on the need to link air travel policies with targets for cumulative cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

With such a range of contributors, there are inevitably differences of style and approach. Since most contributions appear to have been completed in 2001, some important subsequent developments are not discussed. These include the actual impact of congestion charging in London, further developments with respect to transport and devolved government, the impact of Alistair Darling's Rail Review announced in January 2004, and the potential outcomes for transport of the Treasury Spending Review in summer 2004.

In the 'Issues' section, several interesting comments emerge. Ch 2 argues that the negative links between transport and health have weaker supporting evidence than most people assume, though Ch 17 does enlarge on the importance of transport (and other) policies in encouraging physical exercise (including walking and cycling as a means of travel) and safer, more pleasant neighbourhoods and communities. Ch 3 focuses on a Castlemilk (Glasgow) case study relating to transport and social inclusion, yet it would have been useful to have had more coverage of issues relating to fares policy, the Disability Discrimination Act and possible alternative approaches bringing facilities closer to people (or retaining existing facilities like shops and schools). Chs 4 and 5 outline the major changes which have taken place in the location and nature of work and speculate on further change arising from 'working by wire' (including increased working from home) and using e-technology to reduce the need for other existing physical trips, for example for shopping, leisure, visits to job centres, post offices. Mention is also made of Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) using e-technology to deliver better physical access to particular facilities. This implies that, as well as replacing some trips, e-technology may also expand trips – as in the internet booking of cheaper leisure and business trips.

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Looking at possible cuts in car dependency, Ch 7 concludes that there is scope for encouraging multi-modal attitudes but argues that policies should concentrate on those types of trips where car users already have some inclination to change. Stradling expects most passenger miles to continue to be by car but points out that only 1 in 125 drivers travel exclusively by car. 30% of Scottish drivers would like to use their cars less and, in his view, are more likely to do so if policy delivers measures attracting people to alternatives rather than pushing them out of cars. Examining prospects for freight and distribution, Ch 9 considers it unlikely that earlier predictions of freight rising more slowly than economic growth will be fulfilled. Water transport remains by far the most energy efficient form of freight movement, but quality considerations and geography point to a continuing dominating role for lorries and vans within the UK. Lorries can become both more efficient and environment-friendly. Even with considerably higher road user charges, shifts from lorries to rail and water would be marginal. On one reading, similar marginal conclusions could be drawn from Chs 5 and 8. These examine information and interchange measures to encourage modal shift from cars. On the other hand, it is a recurrent theme that an integrated package of measures can have a larger impact on influencing both total movement and shifts away from car use.

This theme is expanded in the 'Systems' section. Ch 12, enlarging on an EU style jargonistic Ch 10, warns against exaggerated expectations of the ability of land use planning to reduce movement and shift modal share. But it does suggest that a review of greenbelt policies to allow fringe of city expansion and close links with revised pricing and fiscal policies could bring benefits. Chs 13, 15 and 16 consider options for bus regulation, road pricing, parking levies and fiscal policies as part of future integration. Comparing London and the rest of Britain, bus quality contracts and greater financial support are favoured as a means of ensuring 'provincial' bus growth closer to the London experience. Congestion charging gets lesser support as impacts could be double-edged and the process slowed by political considerations – but is seen as more feasible than workplace parking levies. The main emphasis falls on the importance of tax and regulatory reforms aligning delivery instruments with sustainable and integrated transport objectives. Stress is placed on a return to higher levels of fuel taxation. Ch 14 highlights the major factors weakening rail performance from 2000 and uncertainty over the best means of integrating rail delivery in a cost-effective manner.

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Ch 11 offers valuable insights on changing governance under devolution. It deals particularly with Wales post-devolution, because of the longer history of administrative/electoral devolution to Scotland and Northern Ireland. Cole sees a continuing process of extended devolution and diverging policy packages within the UK. He was writing just before the surprising Scottish Executive delivery aspiration announced in 2002 to stabilise road traffic over the years to 2021 – contrasting with policy priorities and relaxations anticipating higher growth in Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

The various contributors are clearly sympathetic to the concept of integrated action to advance sustainable development and social inclusion, yet they recognise that actual priorities have reflected an ambivalent position with respect to the targets in the Ten Year Transport Plan of 2000. Despite market imperfections, integration via markets and consumer choice remains a strong rival to ‘planned’ integration. The authors argue that planned integration can offer better value in relation to policy objectives but will require higher public spending and reformed taxation, not just restructured spending. Yet they admit that objectives can be conflicting and that increased spending – notably in the rail sector – has failed to deliver expectations. Both the Hatfield rail accident and the fuel tax protest of 2000 are recognised as incidents which worked against delivery of the Ten Year Transport Plan of the same year. Political doubts about voting impacts hampered this Plan from the start and influenced a softer approach linking congestion reduction with somewhat larger increases in road spending, reduced road taxation and fiscal/regulatory measures to reduce pollution while still allowing some rise in traffic. More movement, including the rapidly expanding aviation sector, was interpreted as good for the economy despite evidence – influencing the Scottish Executive aim of road traffic stabilisation – that economic growth could be decoupled from overall rises in movement by car.

A longer introduction and more co-ordination between authors might have produced a stronger focus on what were seen as key issues and potential solutions. To take just one example, the comparison between bus-regulated London and deregulation elsewhere fails to develop the point that Northern Ireland also retained bus regulation (and rail public ownership) but has now been considering reforms to encourage innovation and competition as a means of ensuring better delivery against objectives. The nature of links between transport and the economy and related issues of financing and financial allocations to devolved governments (including any possible regional assemblies within England and a related reduction in SRA powers)

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deserved greater attention. To be fair, however, these issues have assumed greater importance in the period after most contributors had completed their chapters.

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