



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

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14th July 2009

Road Safety Strategy Post 2010 consultation
Zone 2/13 Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DR

Email response sent to: roadsafetyconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Sir/Madam,

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PAPER: A Safer Way: Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is a membership organisation representing over 22,000 spatial planners. It exists to advance the science and art of town planning for the benefit of the public.

This document responds to the DfT consultation *A Safer Way: Making Britain's Roads the Safest in the World*.

The response has been formed drawing on the expertise of members including the RTPI/TPS Transport Planning Network.

If you require any further assistance, please contact Nicola Gough, Network Manager on 0844 232 8083 or email network.manager@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely,

Matt Thomson
Head of Policy & Practice

Enc.

The following responds directly to the questions outlined in the consultation document:

Vision and targets (Chapters 3 and 8)

Question 1. Do you agree that our vision for road safety should be to have the safest roads in the world? (Chapter 3)

The RTPI supports this vision but suggests that it should explicitly encompass all road users. Whilst the UK has made considerable progress in reducing casualties, notably for vehicle occupants, for the UK to become a world leader in road safety we believe that rapid progress is required to improve the situation for other road users, particularly pedestrians.

Question 2. Do you agree that we should define a strategy running over twenty years to 2030, but with review points after five and ten years? (Chapter 3)

We agree that a long term strategy would be helpful to set out the long-term strategic goals however we would also suggest that, as far as is reasonably practicable, all political parties are encouraged to accept ownership of the strategy. This will encourage continued prioritisation and commitment to the strategy over the period indicated.

Anecdotal experience from local authorities would seem to suggest that road safety is seen as an easy target for budget cuts, and in the current economic climate there is even more uncertainty around spending. As such, regular reviews (five years or less) would be very worthwhile. We would suggest, however, that the review does not simply focus on the delivery of the targets, but also the authority's capacity to deliver the targets, both in staff and financial resource.

Question 3. Do you agree that our targets should be to reduce:

- road deaths by at least 33 per cent by 2020 compared to the baseline of the 2004–08 average number of road deaths;
- the annual total of serious injuries on our roads by 2020 by at least 33 per cent;
- the annual total of road deaths and serious injuries to children and young people (aged 0–17) by at least 50 per cent against a baseline of the 2004-08 average by 2020;
- by at least 50 per cent by 2020 the rate¹ of KSI per km travelled by pedestrians and cyclists, compared with the 2004–08 average? (Chapter 8)

The RTPI supports the targets outlined in the document and believes that while these are challenging, they are also achievable. We welcome the continued emphasis on reducing child, cyclist and pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries. The phraseology of the targets is also supported, as it emphasises that this is the minimum expected and that road safety practitioners should look to exceed these. The DfT uses the words 'at least' to highlight this and we would support the approach of exceeding targets where possible. We would ask that DfT ensures that appropriate resources are made available to practitioners to ensure that they are able to address the 'pressing moral and economic problem'.

Question 4. We are proposing a set of indicators in order to help us to monitor performance (Appendix A). Do you believe these cover the right areas? (Chapter 8)

Our only comment would relate to the trend in motorcyclist casualties. This is particularly important in rural areas. As such we would ask that the DfT consider the need to establish a specific target for this road user group.

¹ Expressed as a three-year rolling average

Context (Chapters 2, 3 and 4)

Question 5. We have identified a number of factors that may affect our ability to deliver road safety improvements in the future world we are planning for. Do you think we have taken account of the key risks and opportunities? Are there others you would add? (Chapter 3)

We agree that these factors are appropriate, and welcome the proactive approach the DfT has taken to addressing them.

Question 6. We think that the key challenge for road safety from 2010 is better and more systematic delivery, rather than major policy changes. Do you agree? (Chapter 4)

We agree with this approach. With regard to enabling better delivery, we welcome the move away from silo working and the shift towards a more integrated road safety system. We would also welcome the introduction of 'measures to lead and support' the road safety profession. However, we hope that DfT recognises where the delivery of some disciplines within the profession have been on the decline (for example education and local authority staff resources), and that renewed, more structured guidance can not only assist in increasing our capacity and capability, but also improve the delivery of road safety through a clear monitoring and evaluation strategy that facilitates regular and consistent assessment of road safety activities.

Question 7. This consultation document sets out the current evidence on the key road safety challenges. Do you agree with our analysis? Would you highlight any others? (Chapter 2)

We agree with the analysis published in the consultation document.

New performance framework (Chapters 4 and 8)

Question 8. We are proposing a number of measures to support the effectiveness of the road safety profession. Do you think they will be effective? What else might need to be done? (Chapter 4)

We welcome the DfT's acknowledgement that in order to deal with non-compliance of road traffic laws there is a need to understand the motivations and characteristics behind dangerous road user behaviour. Improving road safety encompasses a range of disciplines and these all have a valuable role to play in achieving the next round of challenging targets. However, certain disciplines, such as education, have suffered from a lack support and commitment in recent times due to limited understanding about its impact. Integration with other disciplines, whilst having merit and providing an opportunity for maximising impact, could result in a further reduction of commitment, with engineering and enforcement for example given greater importance.

We support DfT's desire to improve skills and capacity in local highways authorities in order to facilitate the integrated road safety system and are pleased to note DfT's efforts to be at the forefront of developing technologies to assist in improving road safety.

However, we believe that the strategy could make it clearer to those directly and indirectly associated with road safety *who* can influence success, and of the channels required for joined up working. We believe that the road safety system can reduce casualties further by working in a more co-ordinated way, but equally that those involved need to understand what works and what doesn't, as ultimately this will allow professionals to become more effective together. We would recommend that the DfT assist road safety professionals in the evaluation and monitoring of all disciplines to highlight

how equal levels of commitment and resources can bring about a greater reduction of road casualties. We believe that there is a role for the DfT in actively promoting this approach at Government level.

Question 9. Do you agree that an independent annual report on road safety performance, created on an annual basis, would be a worthwhile innovation? (Chapter 4)

Yes, we agree that this should be how road safety performance is evaluated and reported.

Question 10. Do you agree that the Road Safety Delivery Board should be tasked with holding Government and other stakeholders to account on the implementation of a new national road safety plan? (Chapter 8)

We wholeheartedly agree that accountability is as important as any discipline in ensuring the effective delivery of the strategy and welcome the Road Safety Delivery Board being tasked with challenging appropriate authorities. Roads and local authorities (Chapter 5)

Question 11. Do you agree that highway authorities reviewing and, where appropriate, reducing speed limits on single carriageway roads will be an effective way of addressing the casualty problem on rural roads? Are there other ways in which the safety of rural roads can be improved? (Chapter 5)

If we can learn anything from observation of actual driver behaviour, it is that changing speed limits alone does not necessarily have an impact on speeds travelled. There is an argument that having lower speed limits may lull non-car users into a false sense of security. The variety of different speed limits now applied to rural roads that are, to all intents and purposes, the same, is also confusing for all road users. It should also be noted that reducing speed limits can have an impact on an area's economy as it affects the accessibility (actual or perceived) of the area to commerce.

Speed limits on any road should reflect what is appropriate in creating an environment where people can feel safe walking, cycling or driving. From time to time environments change including on rural roads, for example due to a new development, new road design or new employment/retail centre. Roads must, therefore, be under constant review to ensure that all roads reflect the most appropriate speed. But this will not be successful on its own. Police enforcement and/or self enforcement through road design will need to support any reduction to ensure that drivers comply with the safety requirement. This improves identifying innovative ways in which this can be achieved for motorcyclists (WYLIWYG is an example of innovation in this area).

It is important for DfT to ensure that road users understand that any speed limit is a maximum – it is not a requirement to drive *at that speed*. Not all sections of a road are safe to be driven at the speed limit, even where the limit is 30 or 40 mph.

Furthermore, the Institute suggests the DfT develop the work carried out for Appendix E of the strategy to identify the most appropriate speed limits. In addition, we believe that better information for road users is also required to increase understanding of any change in speed limit that improves compliance through acceptance. Education through the media to gain public support could be a way of achieving this.

Question 12. How can we most effectively promote the implementation of 20 mph zone schemes in residential areas? What other measures should we be encouraging to reduce pedestrian and cyclist casualties in towns? (Chapter 5)

The RTPI believes that the most effective way to promote the use of 20mph zones would be to make all residential and town/city streets, away from the strategic highway network, 20mph zones unless stated. This will probably require a

change to the legislative process but with such gains to be realised, we suggest that perhaps a change to the current system would be worthwhile.

We believe that appropriate measures could include better provision for pedestrians and cyclists, education of the public and enforcement of speed limits, supported by appropriate funding.

Question 13. How can we provide better support to highway authorities in progressing economically worthwhile road safety engineering schemes? (Chapter 5)

In response to this question, it is perhaps worth reflecting on the fact that not all highways authority road safety engineering schemes are delivered by qualified engineers. Many are designed and delivered by technicians with lesser qualifications (in part driven by efficiencies). To ensure quality and compliance with design standards, local authorities in part employ the services of engineering consultants. Whilst this may assist in ensuring the delivery of cost efficient schemes, local authority technicians are unable to act as an intelligent client due to limited understanding. Technicians require the knowledge to ensure that all road safety engineering schemes are economically sustainable. As such, the RTPI suggests that the DfT may wish to facilitate training/guidance for technicians.

Vehicles (Chapter 6)

Question 14. What should Government do to secure greater road safety benefits from vehicles?

We believe that one approach could be to provide incentives to car manufacturers.

Question 15. Do you agree that, in future, crash avoidance systems will grow in importance and will have the potential to greatly reduce casualties?

Potentially, yes. However, there is a need for caution with regard to (a) the failure of systems and (b) the potential for drivers to become reliant on such systems and therefore drive more recklessly.

Question 16. How can we best encourage consumers to include safety performance in their purchasing decisions?

No response.

Behaviours (Chapter 7)

Question 17. We have highlighted what we believe to be the most dangerous driving behaviours. Do you agree with our assessment?

Yes. This also reflects the need to engage with those not immediately associated with road safety, but who can influence improvements in road safety, for example the probation service.

Question 18. What more can be done to persuade the motoring public that illegal and inappropriate speeds are not acceptable behaviours?

The DfT are encouraged to continue with its support of driver improvement programmes, providing rehabilitation opportunities. However, within the integrated road safety system a combined approach of engineering (self enforcing infrastructure), education and enforcement is required that brings about a culture reflecting that the speed limit is the

maximum speed a driver should be travelling.

Question 19. What more can be done to encourage safe and responsible driving?

We are supportive of DfT's approach to deliver an integrated road safety system and believe that the use of traditional road safety disciplines and the introduction of work areas not immediately associated with road safety will take a positive step in the right direction. We are generally supportive of the approach taken by DfT in this consultation document. However, we suggest that approach that could be taken could be to create the visible impression that a road is not only for motor vehicles by making pedestrian and cycle road space highly visible (one example would be use of red/green tarmac where a pedestrian/cycle route crosses the road).

Question 20. Should more be done to reward good driving? If so, what?

There is a clear need to understand the motivations and characteristics behind those people who offend and re-offend. Until these are known, it is extremely difficult to know what will affect a change in behaviour. Therefore, it is suggested that the DfT follow up on their commitment to bring about a better understanding of motivators and characteristics. Until we know what are the motivators and characteristics behind compliant and non-compliant road users, it is difficult to understand what rewards would generate good driving behaviour.

General Comments

In general, the RTPI supports the aims of the consultation document and the overall vision, which is laudable. However, we would like to raise some additional points for your consideration.

Firstly, we note that references to 'traffic calming' are surprisingly low key. There seems to be a tendency within the document to float some bold ideas without the necessary actions to deliver them, resorting to the relatively unambitious suggestion that the key challenge for 2010 is merely "better and more systematic delivery" (q6) – i.e. business as usual. Too often in the document, beneficial measures are unduly hedged in with restrictive caveats, which should be deleted. For example, 20mph zones are supported (p89) - but only on roads "that are primarily residential in nature and which are not part of any major through route" p52. Single carriageway speed limits are to be reviewed - but only where "the risks are relatively high and there is evidence that a lower limit would reduce casualties" p89 - yet the same document quotes (Appendix E) modelling evidence that it would result in 250 fewer fatalities per year.

Road safety forms part of the DaSTS goal of 'safety, security and health', and it is in the interests of health to increase travel by active modes, particularly walking and cycling. The "annual account of progress on road safety" (p90) should include levels of walking and cycling, and average speeds, rather than only casualty figures. Making rural roads more suited to walking and cycling is vitally important to improve accessibility as well as opportunities for healthy travel. Under 'business as usual' they will become less suited as the volume of traffic grows on rural roads and it continues to travel at inappropriate speeds. It is unsatisfactory that the document ends up proposing no change in the national speed limit for these roads. We should encourage a bolder approach than this.