

Comments on Transport Strategy Review (TSR)

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General

We welcome the TSR as far as it goes but the targets for modal shift are not ambitious enough. It contains a good analysis of the current situation and predictions of what will happen if existing transport policies are followed as part of the growth agenda. The statistics are particularly useful because they illustrate how poorly MK is performing in comparison with other similar sized towns in the SE. Some of these statistics are buried in footnotes so we have drawn them out and highlighted them in tabular form.

We note that this is a review of transport strategy, not itself a strategy. We look forward to the production of a transport strategy for MK.

The TSR will not achieve the desired and necessary modal shift and will not achieve the necessary reductions in CO2 emissions from the transport sector. The government's former chief scientist has described climate change as the biggest threat to our society.

There is little or no attempt in the TSR to tackle road transport's increasing contribution towards climate change. The main driver for the review has been the avoidance of gridlock due to traffic growth. It suggests that at most only a 25% increase in traffic can be handled by the road network.

Climate Change

The Climate Change Bill originally proposed a reduction in CO2 emissions of 60% by 2050. This has recently been increased to 80% by 2050. To achieve that reduction by 2050 will require a reduction of about 50% by 2031, the end point of the MK growth strategy. The transport strategy should have policies to reduce CO2 emissions from the transport sector by 50%. Unfortunately the TSR will increase CO2 emissions in absolute terms. Even on a per capita basis the reduction is only likely to be about 10%, whereas 50% is required.

If MK is to be a genuinely Sustainable Community, where all citizens have good access to facilities, the economy is not damaged by traffic congestion and the global environment is not damaged by climate change and pollution, then we will need a much larger modal shift to sustainable transport modes than proposed in the TSR.

Targets

The Sustainable Integrated Transport Strategy (SITS) was adopted as council policy in 1999. It is still council policy although it is largely forgotten. Its targets

included 20% of journey to work travel should be by public transport by 2006 and 25% by 2011. However only about 9% was been achieved in 2006. The council now proposes to drop these targets because it has failed to meet the 2006 target. Instead of dropping the 2011 target the council should be striving harder to meet that target.

Table 1
SITS Targets (1999)

MODE	1997	2001	2006	2011
	%	%	%	%
Car	77	71	62	55
Pub Tran	12	15	20	25
Cycle	3	6	10	12
Walk	7	7	7	7
M/cycle	1	1	1	1

The targets for bus/cycling/walking modal shares are pitifully low and the trend has been downward over recent years. Rather than adjusting the targets downwards to what is being achieved more ambitious targets should be set, eg reaching the UK average within 5 years, and steps taken to ensure that they are met.

Buses

The TSR notes that bus use in MK is much less than that in similar sized towns in the SE. This is highlighted in the table below. The TSR should advocate MK reaching at least the same level as these other towns. If MK is to be a Sustainable Community then the proportion of travel by bus should be above the average, not way below it.

The TSR notes that bus patronage in MK increased by 11% between 2001/2 and 2005/6. However the population increased by about 8% over that period so the increase per capita was only about 3%, ie less than 1% per annum.

The measures of bus use in the TSR are different to those in the Bus Strategy making it impossible to compare them to see if the two strategies are compatible with each other. One of them should be changed to express bus use, actual and predicted, in the same terms as the other so that a comparison can be made.

The aim should be that public transport, bus or train or a combination of the two, offers a convenient way to make most journeys for most people at most times. If this is not the case then people will have to own a car to make many of their journeys. Once they own a car then most journeys are made by car, in order to spread out the fixed costs of car ownership over a larger number of miles. They are then largely lost to public transport.

About half the residents of MK do not have access to a car either at all times or at any time. They are therefore dependent upon public transport. Better public transport helps with social equity.

We will provide more information about bus services in our response to the Bus Strategy consultation.

Table 2

	%
Travel To Work by Bus	
Milton Keynes	4.7
Reading	12
Southampton	12
Oxford	15

Bus services outside London were deregulated by the Transport Act 1985. This has led to a decline in bus use outside London. However bus services within London are still regulated and useage has increased. MKC should lobby government for bus services in MK to be re-regulated so that the council can ensure that the appropriate bus services are provided within MK.

Car Parking

The TSR notes that MK has more car parking in its town centre than in similar sized towns in the SE and the cost of that car parking is either free or much less. The table below, with figures from the TSR, shows that MK has about 4 times as much car parking as in similar sized towns in the SE and that the cost in MK for those with annual season tickets is less than a quarter of that in similar sized towns in the SE. We believe that the fact that MK has about one third of the bus

usage than in similar sized towns in the SE is due to the fact that MK has 4 times as much parking at a quarter of the cost.

Table 3

City Centre Car Parking	Spaces	Daily	Annual
Milton Keynes	25000	£0/£4	£225
Northampton	5000	£5	£1140
Southampton	10000	£7	£1650
Reading	7000	£6	£935

Obviously if bus usage is to be increased then the surfeit and cheapness of car parking has to be addressed.

There should be no free car parking spaces. These distort people's travel expectations. People assume that because there are some free spaces they will be able to park in one. Consequently they drive to CMK. Even if there are no free spaces left and they have to pay they have already taken the decision about travel mode. If people know from the outset that they would have to pay to park in CMK they may make different travel choices.

All day car parking charges should be increased to at least the level of a day pass for the buses (currently £3.20, but less if purchased weekly, monthly or annually). Thus for anyone living within MK it would always be cheaper to travel to work in CMK by bus than by car.

Car parking charges of the order of just £1 per day (ie £225 per year) are so low that they do not even cover the cost of the provision of the space. This is typically at least £500 per year per space. The council is effectively subsidising those who drive into CMK and park there all day. Those who travel in by bus receive no subsidy, having to pay a commercial fare. It is absurd to subsidise car use but not bus use when both council and government policy is to encourage people to travel by bus rather than car.

The TSR notes that there are currently about 25000 parking spaces in CMK. This is already too many. Adding 8000 CP spaces, as is planned, will just make the situation worse.

We support the comments by MK Forum on parking in CMK. There is clearly a mismatch between the numbers of workers proposed to arrive in CMK by car and the number of parking spaces available to them.

Peak Oil

The TSR fails to address the issue of Peak Oil. The global rate of oil extraction is expected to peak within the next few years, if it has not already done so. Together with the increase in demand for oil from developing economies in countries such as China and India this will lead to significant increase in the cost of oil. That will change the economics of transport and will lead to a modal shift away from those modes, such as the car, which are heavily dependent upon oil. The TSR should take account of this.

Modal Shift

Modal shift requires a 'carrot and stick' approach. Faber Maunsell confirmed this in the LTPTV.

LTPTV1 Faber Maunsell

"Without measures to discourage car use, the public transport system would have to be of fantastic quality to persuade car users to leave their car at home."

"Restraint on parking and other measures can bring the quality requirement to within more reasonable limits."

MKC seems to only be willing to consider carrots. Some sticks are needed too if modal shift is to be achieved.

LTPTV1 stated clearly that to get modal shift on to buses parking charges had to apply to all sites in CMK and had to be higher.

Consideration should be given to a light rail/tram network for MK in the longer term. The grid road reserves and the wide boulevards in CMK mean that construction costs in MK would be considerably lower than in conventional towns. A decision about light rail needs to be taken before any decision about building closer to grid roads as part of increasing density within the city.

Walking and Cycling

The proportion of journeys made by Walking and Cycling, the most sustainable of all modes, need to be increased. This can be helped by improving facilities for these modes but also by planning decisions which provide facilities nearer to where people live and work. The closure of local facilities such as sub Post Offices is the opposite of what is needed.

Roads and cars

The Work Place Parking Levy should be introduced in MK to raise funds to improve public transport, cycling and walking.

Grid road speed limits should be reduced from 60/70 mph to 50 mph to improve safety, improve bus reliability and reduce pollution and CO2 emissions. The grid roads encourage car use and so they should not be extended into the expansion and growth areas.

Most estates and residential areas should have 20 mph speed limits to improve safety.

Rail

MK has fairly good rail connections to the north and south, although there is scope for timetable improvements for services to stations in MK. However it has limited connections to the east and nothing to the west. The East West Rail Link scheme should be fully implemented, not just the western section as is currently under consideration.

Rail fares are rising by more than inflation each year, making rail travel more expensive in real terms each year. This is government policy and needs to be challenged. Rail fares should be reduced in order to encourage more travel by rail.

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