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The transformation of transport policy in Great Britain?
'New Realism' and New Labour's decade of displacement activity

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Abstract

In a 1999 paper, Goodwin announced 'the transformation of transport policy in Great Britain'. His central point was that consensus was emerging among policy makers and academics based on earlier work including *Transport: The New Realism*, which rejected previous orthodoxy that the supply of road space could and should be continually expanded to match demand. Instead a combination of investment in public transport, walking and cycling opportunities and – crucially – demand management should form the basis of transport policy to address rising vehicle use and associated increases in congestion and pollution / carbon emissions. This thinking formed the basis of the 1997 Labour government's 'sustainable transport' policy, but after 13 years in power ministers neither transformed policy nor tackled longstanding transport trends. Our main aim in this paper is to revisit the concept of New Realism and re-examine its potential utility as an agent of change in British transport policy. Notwithstanding the outcome of Labour's approach to transport policy, we find that the central tenets of the New Realism remain robust and that the main barriers to change are related to broader political and governance issues which suppress radical policy innovation.

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Introduction

In 1999, Goodwin (1999) announced the ‘transformation of transport policy in Great Britain’. His central point was that after several years of discussion and development there appeared to be emerging a new consensus among policy makers and those academics/commentators who had been arguing for radical change in transport policy. This consensus was built around the multi-modal policy prescription reported in *Transport: The New Realism* (Goodwin *et al*, 1991), which rejected the previous orthodoxy that the supply of road space could and should be continually expanded to cater for increased demand for road transport (the so-called *predict and provide* approach). As principal architect and author of the New Realism, Goodwin accepted the role of lead advisor on transport to the 1997 Labour government and was instrumental in translating his policy approach into what would become the contents of the 1998 White Paper *A New Deal for Transport*.

The New Realism represented the first wholesale intellectual re-appraisal of the objectives, roles and implications of UK transport policy since that underpinning Barbara Castle’s 1968 Transport Act. Its far-reaching implications were couched in terms designed to engender broad appeal, and Goodwin’s tactic of casting radicalism as a means of promoting change for the good – as he put it, to promote policies that “make things better rather than just slow down the pace at which they get worse” (Goodwin, 1997, unpaginated) – ran through the pages of *A New Deal for Transport*. This resonated with Labour’s broader electioneering claim that ‘things can only get better’. By the 1990s, predict and provide was untenable both in theory and in practice. In *Transport: The New Realism* Goodwin and his co-authors contended that no amount of road building could be able to match supply to demand, and so the only ever feasible role for policy would be to effect the reverse. In government the Conservatives were struggling to deliver the “largest roads programme since the Romans” (DfT, 2007: para 1.7) in the face of mounting environmental protests and increasing constraints on public expenditure. Although fully aware of the political difficulties associated with opposing the status quo (Goodwin *et al*, 1991), Goodwin was by his own admission optimistic about the potential for real change in the transport sector (BBC, 2010); while there remained “a number of real problems in implementation, research and methodology,” he saw Labour’s “policy shift as genuine and firmly grounded in [a fair amount of his own] research” (Goodwin, 1999, 655).

By the time the Labour Party was replaced in government by a Liberal Democrat / Conservative coalition in 2010, the rhetoric of radicalism had disappeared, the consensus between policy makers and academics had weakened and Goodwin's erstwhile optimism seemed at best misplaced (he in any event confirms that it had later been put under severe strain – BBC, 2010; Goodwin, 2008). Indeed, in looking back generally at Labour's achievements in transport, and more specifically at the role and influence of the New Realism since its 'in principle' adoption by Labour in government, it is clear that there was only limited progress towards the kind of transport policy and, crucially, *policy delivery* that campaigners for change had envisaged (Docherty and Shaw, 2003, 2008; Goodwin, 1999). Successive ministers' retreat from the vision articulated in *A New Deal for Transport* can easily be discerned from any review of the content of subsequent policy documents or the net result of government policies; Labour largely failed to meet even its own rather undemanding targets let alone more optimistic expectations (see below). There were, of course, exceptions, and perhaps most interesting is the experience of the devolved administrations. Although *A New Deal for Transport* was a United Kingdom White Paper, following devolution in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London, transport in these jurisdictions is generally no longer a matter for UK ministers (see Smyth, 2003; Tomaney, 2000). Characterised by Labour as providing the opportunity for 'local solutions to local problems', devolution led (and continues to lead) to some widely supported transport policy innovations, such as the renaissance of the railways in Scotland and the globally-significant introduction of congestion charging in London. Because our focus in this paper is the strategic policy context established in *A New Deal for Transport*, we do not explore in depth the trajectory and outcome of developments in the devolved territories (see instead the analysis in Mackinnon *et al.* (2008)), although key lessons from London and Scotland are referred to later in the discussion.

Against this background, our main aim is to revisit the concept of New Realism and re-examine its potential utility as an agent of change in British transport policy. Of particular interest to us is the meaning and use of the term 'realism', and our reading of events leads us to focus on two separate but inter-related realisms that shape, facilitate and constrain policy outcomes. First is the *transport* realism that many key problems – congestion, pollution, poor quality public transport and so on – remained unresolved after

Labour's tenure, with some of the issues originally identified as requiring action actually having got worse. Second is the *governance* realism associated with why *A New Deal for Transport* was not delivered. What were the political and governmental realities that prevented the delivery of a more sustainable transport system in the UK? It emerges that the New Realism was possibly too much a product of its time – fêted as it was when substantive change in public policy seemed possible or even likely (BBC, 2010; Smith, 2003) – and ultimately its radicalism led ministers to distance themselves from its policy prescriptions when the need to fall back on 'familiar' approaches in order to appease an apparently hostile electorate was all-to-quickly required.

Nevertheless, it remains our view that there is merit in advancing a normative position with regard to the need to promote radical transport policy change in Britain¹; indeed, we find that the policy prescriptions of the *New Realism* remain largely robust. We are aware that in the UK, government and society at large seem to place rather limited emphasis on transport, often underplaying its significance to a whole range of wider public policy imperatives, and that this will impact upon the extent to which a concept such as the New Realism can be deployed (Docherty and Shaw 2008; Ipsos MORI 2010). But lessons from the devolved territories and certain localities where the governance, financing and political conditions are more favourable teach us not only that more can be done, but also that it is possible to build a workable coalition of interests – political, technical, electoral – in support of wide-ranging change in transport policy and policy delivery. As such, it remains possible and desirable to conceptualise, implement and sustain an approach to transport that builds upon New Realism as originally advanced.

The paper proceeds as follows. The next section outlines the principal characteristics of the New Realism and the transport realities that remain after Labour's approach to policy between 1997 and 2010. Discussion then turns to the governance realities of what was and was not possible to deliver, and why. The remainder of the paper considers the extent to which the New Realism remains a credible basis for transport policy in the UK (and, by extension, other developed European countries).

¹ We are attracted to the longstanding view that a key role of academics active in applied social science research, and especially in policy analysis, is to act as mediators of the wider discourse attempting to "minimise unproductive political debate on the pressing political issues of the day" (Fischer, 2003, 39).

Transport realisms under Labour: policy aspirations and outcomes

The Conservative government's *Roads to Prosperity* White Paper in 1989 was the culmination of many years' promotion (by both Left and Right) of the idea of a car-owning democracy. The 'right to mobility' supported by ready access to the private car was part of a much broader discourse of freedom, choice and competitive markets, but those supporting the New Realism argued that perpetuating a predict and provide approach could serve only to undermine these ideals, primarily because of the impact of congestion (Goodwin *et al*, 1991). In Goodwin's (2008, 234) words:

unrestricted traffic growth would grow faster than any feasible road programme, hence without demand management the choice between a large road programme and a small one would be the choice between conditions getting worse quickly, or getting worse slowly.

Focusing on urban areas, this argument rested on seven main propositions:

1. There is an intolerable imbalance between expected trends in mobility [i.e. Department of Transport traffic growth predictions of 143%] and the capacity of the transport system.
2. This is causing problems to industry, to the environment and also to the ability of people to lead comfortable and fulfilling lives.
3. The main problem is the growth in reliance on car use, which no longer succeeds in realising its own objectives.
4. It is not possible to provide sufficient road capacity to meet unrestrained demands for movement.
5. It is necessary to devise systems of managing demand which are economically efficient, provide attractive possibilities for travel for both car owners and non-car owners and give priority to 'essential' traffic (including emergency services, freight, buses and limited categories of need).

6. Policies to accomplish this are technically possible, provided they are properly harmonised... Expansion of road infrastructure will not be the core of transport policy.
7. Institutional arrangements must enable a coordinated and consistent treatment of all of the different parts of the transport system and a 'level playing field' in planning and implementation (Goodwin *et al.* 1991, 3-4).

The originality of the New Realism was not in its advancement of any particular policy, but in the way it fashioned a series of complementary actions into a coherent whole (Table 1). Headicar (2009, 113) suggests that the "appeal of the report lay in presenting a practicable package as an alternative 'brand' to rather tired conventional wisdom at a particularly fortuitous time."

Table 1 here

Goodwin *et al.* (1991, 4) noted that while "not one single sentence of [the above] outline could command complete unanimity... the argument as a whole is close to attracting a degree of consensus that has not previously been part of the transport scene." By this 'scene' they meant academics, practitioners, a variety of different stakeholder groups and, crucially, politicians: a significant proportion of the text of the New Realism report was devoted to quotations from their respective policy statements demonstrating this convergence. Although some commentators attribute the support of MPs and their advisors to a recognition that cutting road building was an easy means of reining in public spending in the midst of recession (BBC, 2010), the Labour Party's pre-election transport document bore the title *Consensus for Change* (Labour Party, 1996) and emphasised the need to move towards a more sustainable transport approach.

Once elected in 1997, work started on a new White Paper, the first multi-modal document of its kind for over 20 years. Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Transport John Prescott was keen not to alienate motorists suspicious of a transport agenda predicated on sustainability and spoke of a genuine choice of modes for transport users. Indeed, the mantra of choice was employed as in any number of

other instances to appeal simultaneously to market, environmental and social welfare understandings of the term, and it is important to note that this can have significant impacts on transport activity: obviously there is the influence on transport policies themselves, but ‘choice’ in schools and ‘choice’ in hospitals, etc., has the potential to significantly increase vehicle miles and in this sense is largely incompatible with the idea of sustainable transport (see also Docherty and Mackie (2010) on the incompatibility of transport and land use planning policies under Labour). Nevertheless, Prescott’s deputy, Gavin Strang, warned that there were likely to be cuts in the road programme because “we see new roads as a last resort rather than a first” (DETR, 1997, 1). The alignment of expression with the New Realism report – “it is sensible to consider the need for new road construction last instead of first” (Goodwin *et al.* 1991, 139) – is particularly noteworthy.

Prescott was famously bullish about his ability to secure modal shift (Friends of the Earth, 1997), and commonalities between *Transport: The New Realism* and *A New Deal for Transport* went considerably beyond turn of phrase. Right from the Foreword, the emphasis was on “persuading people to use their cars a little less – and public transport a little more” (DETR, 1998, 2) and a hugely ambitious agenda of integration (within and between transport modes, and with environmental, land use planning, education, health and wealth creation objectives and policies) capable of “increasing prosperity,” “tackling traffic fumes” and creating “quality places to live where people are the priority” was advanced (DETR, 1998, 9). Great play was made of improving public transport and information systems, but policies such as motorway tolling and retail parking charges did not feature in the final document despite strong hints during its gestation that they would. And while local authorities would be able to hypothecate revenues from their own road user charging initiatives to fund public transport improvements, a national charging scheme was not forthcoming.² This led to debate about the extent to which the White Paper was genuinely radical: Goodwin (1999) was an enthusiastic champion, but some thought of it only as a “radical around the edges” (Mackie, 2009, pers. comm.) version of what the Conservatives had already proposed

² This demonstrated a lack of leadership – local authorities effectively being left to deal with the political difficulties of introducing this particular ‘stick’ – and twelve years on only London has an operational congestion charging scheme. At the same time we should restate that *Transport: The New Realism* focused on towns and cities – as such it never suggested national road charging.

in 1996 – John Major’s Conservatives had by this stage moved away from predict and provide (see Goodwin, 1999) – and still others accused it of “lacking the promised radicalism and vision” and being “a poorly focused and indecisive document” (Glaister, 2001, 3).

Much has been written on the trajectory of UK transport policy under Labour, and in general terms the story is one of retreat from or weak application of New Realist principles and a failure to deliver on the ‘bottom line’ components – i.e. cutting congestion and carbon dioxide emissions – of *A New Deal for Transport* (see, for example, Bulkeley and Rayner, 2003; Docherty and Mackie, 2010; Docherty and Shaw, 2003, 2008; Headicar, 2009; Hine, 2000; Hine and Preston 2003, House of Commons, 2010; Hull, 2005; MacKinnon *et al*, 2008; Marsden, 2005; Shaw *et al*, 2006, 2009; Vigar, 2001; from a different perspective see also Glaister, 2001). This is despite increased transport spending (HM Treasury, 2009; see also Shaw *et al*, 2009), and is certainly not to say that the Department for Transport (DfT) failed to keep itself busy. Outputs included an array of ‘strategic’ documents, key among these being an outline of spending plans adding detail to the 1998 White Paper, *Transport 2010: The 10-Year Plan for Transport* (DETR, 2000), a further White Paper, *The Future of Transport* (DfT, 2004), a ‘discussion’ document, *Towards a Sustainable Transport System* (DfT, 2007) and finally *Delivering a Sustainable Transport System* (DfT, 2008a). Interestingly, although these documents (augmented by a welter of supporting texts and studies) share similarities in their overarching aims and objectives, giving the impression of a continuity of discourse using the language of the New Realism and the 1998 White Paper (Table 2), their full discussions reveal considerable shifts in opinion about how best to pursue desired outcomes. Perhaps most glaring is the conclusion – reached less than two years after the publication of *A New Deal for Transport* – that cuts in congestion and carbon emissions should be achieved more by increasing road (and other transport) capacity and making the most of improved technology than by promoting modal shift or other behavioural change.

While the DfT may argue that such a range of publications was necessary in order to update its policy thinking in relation to changing circumstances, the combined – but certainly unintended – effect of the documents was to highlight the deficiencies in policy delivery against the government’s original objectives.

That these objectives never really changed implied they were not being met, and the sheepishly-titled *Towards a Sustainable Transport System* all but confirmed this in an eyebrow-raising passage in which the then Secretary of State for Transport, Ruth Kelly, “*begins* a process of debate about how we best ensure that our investment and policies result in real-world improvements that are both sustained and sustainable” (DfT, 2007, 6, emphasis added). This is an especially ironic statement given that the *raison d’être* of the *Ten Year Plan* was to underpin a decade of delivery, rather than (even) more debate.

Table 2 here

A New Deal for Transport (1998, 29) noted that part of the approach to “[m]aking a difference” would involve “extending the range of targets” and the “draw[ing] up of new targets – for example, for promoting public transport” against which Labour’s delivery of a more ‘integrated’ (by now the blanket term of choice rather than ‘sustainable’) transport policy could be measured. Alongside plans to build 100 new bypasses and fund up to 360 miles of motorway widening in addition to 40 road schemes already on the books, these targets were published in *Transport 2010*. Tellingly, targets to reduce either the number of vehicle journeys or the number of passenger kilometres were absent – instead only targets relating to *congestion* appeared. Goodwin (2001) was himself particularly critical of the way in which these congestion targets had been formulated – he recalculated the somewhat obscure indices to show that the suggested improvement would be invisibly small at best – and began to distance himself from the government’s transport policy trajectory. Any quantification of the contribution transport might make to reducing carbon emissions was also avoided. References to carbon dioxide also ducked the thorny issue of international shipping and aviation emissions, which some estimates suggest increase the UK’s emissions by up to 25% when accounted for (Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT), 2007). All of this was in stark contrast to Prescott’s claim just three years earlier that he would have failed if by 2002 there was not a large reduction in journeys by car (Friends of the Earth, 2000). The Secretary of State had also asserted that he should be judged on whether or not there was a large increase in the number of journeys by public

transport, and here targets to increase rail passenger kilometres (not journeys) by 50%³ and bus use by 10% were included. There were also quantified targets referring to a range of other matters including quality of service and information, cycling, safety and social inclusion.

The outcome of Labour's performance against the key targets in *Transport 2010* is shown in Table 3 (see also House of Commons, 2010). A point to note about all these targets is that in large part they relate only to England, excluding London: following devolution, the Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government, Northern Ireland Executive and Greater London Authority have formal competence over most 'domestic' transport policy issues (see Smyth, 2003). We have included Prescott's 1997 claim as an 'overall' target because, although by this stage it was something of an embarrassment to officials (and possibly to Prescott himself), it represents the essence of what Labour was attempting to achieve by adopting the fundamental thrust of the New Realism. While reducing congestion and relying on technological advances may produce economic and environmental benefits, a 'one step forward, two steps back' scenario is likely to arise without behavioural change to reduce private vehicle use: not only is there the problem of 'induced traffic' to contend with, but also the scale of carbon dioxide reductions required is seen as being far greater than can be delivered by technology alone (Anable and Shaw, 2007; Goodwin, 1996; Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (SACTRA), 1994).

Table 3 here

In the absence of a demanding overall target, the remainder, to borrow Peter Mackie's phrase, seems only 'radical around the edges'.⁴ Setting out to increase rail and bus use was certainly welcome and represented a break from the past – the Conservatives had largely been managing decline on the railways and bus use had been falling for years – but the bus target was hardly ambitious even given the history of decline, and in any case increasing public transport patronage simply adds to the problem if there is no

³ This distinction is important because an increase in passenger kilometres travelled can reflect *less* sustainable journey patterns, such as longer commuting.

⁴ This perhaps exposes the contradictions in Tony Blair's more general position statement that his administration would govern from 'the radical centre'.

corresponding decrease in private vehicle usage because the net result is an overall increase in travel. As it happens, both targets will be missed, and even then there is debate over the extent to which rail patronage increases are attributed to the general expansion of the economy rather than to the positive effects of any government intervention (Preston, 2008; Wardman, 2005). Quality of service targets for rail and bus appear to have been met, and rail punctuality/reliability targets were *eventually* met after serious disruption to services for many years following a fatal crash at Hatfield that was attributed to poor rail conditions in 2000. Any reduction in the number of KSIs is obviously to be applauded and the longstanding general trend of safety improvement on the roads was maintained. Perhaps the biggest missed opportunity was that walking and cycling remained 'Cinderella' modes. Given that around 60% of car trips are under five miles in length, the chance to increase significantly the modal share of the active modes surely is there for the taking (see Banister and Gallent, 1998).

Thus, 12 years after the publication of *A New Deal for Transport*, there was little movement towards either the kind of policy prescription advanced or the kind of policy outcome envisaged in both that document and *Transport: The New Realism*; notwithstanding a few modest successes (some of which, such as the 'Smarter Choices' pilot aimed at promoting modal shift without the need for significant capital investment – see DfT, 2005 – do not show up in aggregate statistics), the transport realisms of rising vehicle use and carbon dioxide emissions remained resilient and unresolved. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the DfT might have more effectively deployed its resources by actually delivering policy rather than continually seeking to rework it. The House of Commons' Transport Committee (2010, 22) is of the view that the DfT has "established a new direction in its longer term strategy. However, much remains to be done, including supporting economic growth, integrating local transport and tackling climate change." We would suggest that the MPs are pulling their punches: under Labour the Department achieved little more than displacement activity.

Governance and political realisms: why Labour failed to deliver

The journalist and author Christian Wolmar has described transport as the domestic policy area in which Labour "least exerted itself" (Wolmar, 2008, viii) during its period in office. With post-financial crisis

hindsight, this might be seen as damning with especially faint praise, but his jibe is not in any way partisan: over the decades, governments of all political complexions – with the most notable exception of the Thatcher administrations – which pursued a wide-ranging agenda of privatisation and deregulation – have found it difficult to intervene significantly in the transport sector for a variety of reasons. Some of these are technical, but more usually they are related to an inability to overcome a number of longstanding governance and political realisms that together have created, or at least have been perceived to create, a formidable barrier to progress.

Throughout Labour's term in office, but especially in the first eight years of large parliamentary majorities underpinned by robust opinion poll support, there was an undoubted window of opportunity for John Prescott's much vaunted 'transport revolution' (Bonsall, 2000; BBC, 2010) to bear fruit. Certainly the negative consequences of established transport trends and the range of policies available to tackle them were well understood even if *Consensus for Change* had only formally appeared in 1996: the economic consequences of the congestion arising from unfettered traffic growth had been debated since at least the work of Reuben Smeed in the 1960s (Dudley and Richardson, 2000; Smeed, 1964; see also Rajé, 2003; Raux and Souche, 2004); the impacts of the steady polarisation of society into 'mobility-rich with access to a car' and 'mobility-poor dependent on declining public transport' became very visible from the 1970s (Church *et al*, 2000; Kenyon *et al*, 2002; Schaeffer and Sclar, 1975); and the centrality of transport emissions to global environmental sustainability emerged very clearly following the seminal 1989 Conference of the European Ministers of Transport (ECMT, 1989, Docherty, 2003).

Some authors argue that the principal governance realism to be confronted is that the long term nature of transport investment, from conceptualisation through design and finance to project delivery, does not align well with electoral cycles (Banister, 2003, 2004; Banister *et al*, 2007; Cullingworth, 1997). The same minister is unlikely to both sanction and 'cut the ribbon' of a large-scale investment scheme and therefore quick wins – such as privatisation or providing free bus travel for the over 60s (Baker and White, 2010) – are often favoured. But further analysis suggests a number of important factors beyond the rhythm of the electoral cycle that have constrained the government's scope for action. In Table 4, we have collated a

range of the pressures that influence the formulation of UK transport policy, using the standard PESTEL approach which focuses on political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors. The table is by no means exhaustive (the technique itself having obvious limitations – there is no ranking of the importance of each individual factor given that they overlap with one another, for example), but even using only those factors we identify it is clear that changing the direction of transport policy is a challenge of considerable complexity, with forces acting on the policy system from all possible directions. Space permits us to dwell here on only some of the factors listed in the table, although discussion of these should illustrate our argument.

Table 4 here

Undoubtedly a significant factor is the ingrained culture of risk aversion that pervades the British civil service (Chapman and O'Toole, 2009; Maddock, 2002; Vandenabeele and Horton, 2008). Whitehall has hierarchical structures, recruitment and employment policies constructed around the notion of civil servants as 'generalists' who frequently move between posts since their transferable skills are considered applicable across numerous policy disciplines. This militates against deep subject knowledge and understanding among 'high flyers', despite the negative connotations of the so-called 'cult of the generalist' having been apparent for more than 40 years since the Fulton Committee's *Report Into The Civil Service* (Fulton, 1968; see also Bovaird and Russell, 2007; Murray, 2008; Robson, 1968; Wilson, 2008). Not unconnected is that the civil service is subject to customs and practices based on incremental policy development, such that there are 'no surprises, minister'. This discourages 'putting ones head above the parapet' – at least in policy terms – among those in search of career advancement, and any lock-in effect is amplified given the preponderance of economists and engineers supporting 'traditional' (i.e. pro-road) approaches to transport policy in the DfT (Bovaird, 2007; Vandenabeele and Horton, 2008). Frequent political reorganisations of departments and their responsibilities are also unhelpful since they distract staff needing to acquaint themselves with new institutional arrangements and working practices from their principal business (Better Government Initiative, 2010). In this context it is unsurprising that there is little appetite to support and deliver significant change; even enthusiastic and seemingly powerful

Ministers such as John Prescott find it hard to align their policy objectives with the practices of UK public administration given the number of voices urging caution whenever substantial moves away from established arrangements are proposed (Horton, 2006; Pierre, 2000; Rhodes, 1996).

The other side of this coin is the extent to which politicians themselves display caution when mindful of upsetting the electorate – especially motorists, since they represent the largest constituency in relation to transport matters – and losing votes (see Begg, 2003). A good example is the impact of the fuel tax protests of 2000 on public attitudes not just to transport policy but to the government in general (Crossen, 2005; Lyons and Chatterjee, 2002). To this day politicians of all parties remain extremely wary about raising the price of petrol explicitly – according to former CfIT Chairman David Begg, “the fuel duty protest... is still burnt on the memory of people like Gordon Brown... you cannot have a dispassionate conversation with the (former) Prime Minister on road pricing, congestion charging, the fuel duty escalator, without memories of that 2000 protest” (BBC, 2010, unpaginated) – with political parties including the SNP and latterly the Conservatives calling for price regulation in pursuit of electoral advantage (*The Times*, 2008; Scottish National Party, 2010; Conservative Party, 2010).

Important in constructing, articulating and promoting motorists’ concerns is the motoring lobby, which despite being characterised by Barbara Castle on becoming Minister of Transport in the 1960s as “the most vociferous lobby in the country” (Hamer, 1987, 5) had nevertheless become a critical set of ‘stakeholders’ in wider economic development for New Labour by the late 1990s. The special strength and power of the motoring lobby emerges from its structure as two distinct but complementary groups. The first is the network of producer interests, from car companies and their suppliers in the engineering, design, vehicle service and finance sectors, that enjoys direct links to government via specialist representatives (such as the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders) and at the corporate level through the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors and other well-resourced lobbyists. Also active in this network is a range of other groups including the Road Haulage Association, the AA, RAC and the motoring press, itself a large and highly profitable part of the media, and well versed in the art of public relations.

The second group is the diverse yet cohesive and politically sensitive coalition of libertarians, enthusiasts, car-dependent school-run parents and others that mobilises upon sensing that the government is ‘waging war on the motorist’. Take the Association of British Drivers: for this subset of ‘Middle England’, a motorist is always a motorist – rather than sometimes a car driver but also sometimes a bus or train passenger and/or pedestrian (Sloman, 2006) – and the appropriate role of the state is reducible to providing those public services that are needed for motorists’ daily lives to be made as straightforward as possible whilst levying taxes at a sufficiently low rate and in such a way that they are not ‘unfair’ to those who consume the most. Behaviour change, a largely neutral term in the travel planning and transport policy literatures (see, for example, Anable *et al*, 2006; Chatterjee and Bonsall, 2009; Taylor and Ampt, 2003) is translated into the negative language of ‘social engineering’, perhaps on the basis that intervention that redistributes wealth or opportunity beyond currently privileged groups is by definition ‘unfair’ compared with the peculiar path-dependent combination of market and policy forces that shapes the status quo.

As much as politicians’ wariness to take on such groups and the public opinion they purport to represent is damaging, it is also intriguing. Whilst empirical research on attitudes to transport and travel behaviour framed within a *policy* context often suggests that the negative externalities of the British transport system are a significant everyday concern – see, for example Goodwin and Lyons (2010) and CfIT’s (2002, 10) report on *Public Attitudes to Transport in England*, which notes that “three in ten members of the general public in England spontaneously identify transport as a main problem facing Britain today” – *political* attitudes research, especially that which seeks to identify influences on voting intention, relegates transport to a much lower level of priority (Table 5 and Figure 1).⁵ Even companies, notwithstanding the now received-wisdom status of CBI’s estimate of the annual cost of congestion being £20-25 billion (DETR, 1998), view transport as relatively inconsequential in relation to other, more substantial obstacles to doing business such as competition, regulation and recruitment (DfT, 2009e).⁶ One explanation for this

⁵ This comparison is particularly interesting given that the same polling/research company – Ipsos MORI – carried out the fieldwork for both the CfIT study and the longitudinal attitudes research cited.

⁶ The authors note the methodological difficulty of discerning ‘the views of business’ since there is little control over who fills in the questionnaires.

dichotomy is that transport only registers in most people's minds when there is an immediate crisis or major event – such as an air or train crash that attracts substantial news coverage and as such filters into general consciousness – to which they can directly relate their own everyday journey experiences. With specific reference to congestion, Goodwin and Lyons (2010) suggest that people have come to accept traffic jams as a fact of life but are also aware of the views of government and others that they have negative consequences (they characterise this as “well, I am not bothered myself, but it must be serious because everybody else says so” (7)).

Table 5 here

Figure 1 here

Either way, it is unfortunate that ministers became scared of appearing ‘anti-car’ when in the broader scheme of things the scope for them to swing the balance of transport policy towards more sustainable approaches without affecting voter intentions may be greater than is often thought. And, ironically, the potential for ministers to keep backing away from ‘difficult decisions’ is only increased if they start to perceive that motorists have largely given up worrying about congestion (Goodwin and Lyons, 2010). Perhaps with its electoral success dependent on attracting and retaining the votes of the skilled manual and middle classes, the *politics* of the New Labour project were always likely to trump radical *policy* innovations. To put it mildly this is disappointing, since majorities of 179 and 167 in the 1997 and 2001 general elections should have provided ministers with enough confidence to take at least some of the action necessary to promote more sustainable transport. But ignoring a problem generally doesn't make it go away and sooner or later the transport realities of even worse congestion and increasing emissions will have to be faced; perhaps they will become electoral liabilities – political realities – in their own right. That current policy is not working is recognised by some at the highest levels of government: fully 45 years after Smeed's (1964) report on road pricing, and 19 years after the publication of *Transport: The New Realism*, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit conceded that “road pricing is likely to be a highly effective way of resolving congestion in major urban areas” (Cabinet Office, 2009, 59).

Importantly, though, the extent to which Labour could have brought about sweeping reform even in the absence of the above factors is open to some question because of the complexity of British governance arrangements. Successive rounds of local government reform and the 'hollowing out' (Jessop, 1990) of the central state have resulted in extensive fragmentation of the institutional landscape in which many policies have to be delivered. Aligning the now vast array of public, private and voluntary sector actors and institutions even for relatively modest action is extremely difficult. More radical propositions such as congestion charging have become all but impossible. Whereas the London scheme was delivered in part because a single political office – the Mayor of London – possessed sufficient mandate, power and resources to realise pioneering policy choices (MacKinnon *et al*, 2008), the situation in provincial conurbations is rather different, as evidenced by Edinburgh and Greater Manchester's failed referendums on congestion charging. In both cases fractious coalitions of local authorities were unable to provide enough leadership to bring about road user charging even, in Manchester's case, with the promise of £3 billion worth of investment in the city's public transport system (Gaunt *et al*, 2008).

A related point is that local authorities outside of London have been stripped of much of their capacity to plan a coherent network of public transport services. In conforming to the post-Thatcher belief that the public sector is incapable of delivery in many fields, the New Public Management (NPM) has been ever more relied upon to reshape public services according to the axioms of privatisation and competition. National Rail companies may well be subject to detailed contractual specifications with regard to the services they provide, but these are not especially flexible means of, for example, reacting to changing market conditions (witness the failure of several franchises in recent years) or coordinating public transport services in a travel to work area (even in London it has proven extremely difficult to roll out the Oyster Card system city-wide) (Anable and Shaw, 2007; Wolmar, 2005). The bus network outside of the capital is completely deregulated and provisions for re-regulation, namely Quality Contracts and Statutory Quality Partnerships, have not been pursued for a variety of reasons (Knowles and Abrantes, 2008). The Local Transport Act (2008) provided for the creation of Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) in several city regions which offer some potential for improvement, but the reality is that many of the more direct

means of intervention in the market, such as overarching public *control* (ownership is not necessarily an issue) of public transport networks, timetables and fares, remain elusive and challenging to deliver.

New Realism: still a credible basis for transport strategy?

In the context of this discussion we arrive at the question, 'where does the experience of 1997-2010 leave the New Realism as a prescription for better transport policy?' One view is that the approach has run its course, and that a return to a 'tried and tested' method is needed. In a prominent recent intervention by the RAC Foundation, *Roads and reality: Motoring towards 2050* (the title making direct reference to the New Realism), Banks *et al* (2007) call for renewed, large scale road building so that ever-increasing congestion does not further damage the UK's economic competitiveness or quality of life. While the authors admit that "we cannot build our way out of congestion" and that "no-one would seriously advocate such a policy..." (9), they go on to do just that by proposing a programme of some 600 lane-kilometres per year.

The reason for this inconsistency is that it probably *is* possible to build enough roads to keep pace with increasing demand along the inter-urban corridors upon which the report focuses. The problem comes at the corridor ends – the towns and cities where traffic accumulates and disperses – and where large-scale capacity increases are simply not feasible, at least not without the total redesign of the settlements themselves and this has been widely resisted ever since the publication of *Traffic in Towns* nearly 50 years ago (Ministry of Transport, 1963). Banks *et al* (2007, 10) admit that "we have not examined in any detail the problems of suburban or urban areas, which deserve separate investigation." Subsequent analysis by the Cabinet Office (2009) provides some insight in this regard with the conclusion that the annual costs of congestion in urban areas are £8-11 billion, depending on the definition of 'urban' applied. This figure would only grow if inter-urban road capacity were to be substantially increased. The New Realism focused on towns and cities precisely because it is here that the effects of increased congestion are most acutely felt, and there is the least scope to ameliorate the problem by increasing road space.

More widely, the road building thesis depends on the assumptions that future demand for (road) travel will inexorably increase in line with past trends, and that even large-scale modal shift to public transport will not be enough to accommodate demand growth. Although supporting road user charging as a means of locking in the benefits of a significant road building programme, Banks *et al* (2007) remain suspicious of demand management, viewing it as the repression of (legitimate) economic and social activity. This is more than a little reminiscent of the car-owning democracy narrative of the Thatcher governments, which brought about the need for a New Realist approach to transport policy in the first place. Of course, starting with different assumptions alters the picture considerably. We would argue that it is very much within the gift of determined ministers to ensure that demand for transport in the future does not necessarily increase in line with historic trends and to make the case that managing existing demand is not in any way illiberal (there is some evidence in any case that car traffic is levelling off, even if overall traffic volumes are still rising). Much contemporary mobility, at least in the way it is currently expressed, imposes very real externalities on both individuals and the state (see Banister and Gallent, 1998, Glazebrook, 2009; Proost and Van Dender, 2008) and the scope for reducing car travel, especially over short distances, is very significant indeed. There is a strong case for remaining wary of arguments about ‘choice’ or economic imperatives where they are advanced in support of significant road-building programmes; it strikes us that the kind of “sophisticated policy mix” – to use the language of Sir Rod Eddington’s (2006, 6) report into the role of transport in the competitiveness of the UK economy – of some judicious new capacity on both road and rail, plus road pricing, real demand management, ‘smarter choices’, better land use planning and the innovative use of the ICTs unavailable when the New Realism was originally formulated, is more likely to deliver real improvements in accessibility and quality of life.

Potter (2007) argues that Eddington’s particular blend of policies “is neither the old ‘predict and provide’ nor the environmentalists’ vision of ‘sustainable transport’, but a philosophy that seeks to blend elements of both. This helps to explain the support that this report has won from across transport’s political spectrum.” He goes on to suggest that the Eddington report is “a well-informed and astute blending of economic and environmental realities that, although far from perfect and fully worked out, does provide more of a coherent and pragmatic framework for transport policy than we have ever had before.” Whilst

we agree with much of Potter's analysis, a risk inherent in any pragmatic or integrative approach is, of course, that findings and recommendations from the report can be used in support of any number of policy interventions by different actors advocating different and sometimes incompatible agendas. To us, although much has changed since 1991 in terms of the economic, environmental and social context for action, the central tenet of the New Realism – that we cannot ever match supply to demand – means that we are still, and will remain for the foreseeable future, forced to think about ways of matching demand to supply. The key seems to be to unlock the necessary changes in the governance of transport in the UK that will make the implementation of the New Realism actually possible in practice, since it is the peculiar set of governance realisms shaping wider British political discourse that constrained the capacity of the Labour government to deliver a more sustainable transport system. Where analyses such as Banks *et al's* (2007) and ours coincide is on the point that inactivity is the wrong response to the resilient transport realism of increasing demand. But it is not that the New Realism has been tried and has failed; it is rather that it has not really been tried at all.

As things have turned out, other events have conspired to undermine the case for a return to large-scale road building; most obviously, there is the reality of substantially reduced public resources over the medium term and cuts in transport budgets have already been made. This arguably improves the case for a New Realist combination of policy prescriptions given that many of them are relatively cheap to deliver, and certainly less costly than a substantial programme of road construction. Perversely, perhaps, budget reductions might prove more beneficial to the transport sector than it may at first appear since they enforce the discipline of casting a much more critical eye over current spending priorities. This need not take a great deal of time and necessitate a battery of new documents from the DfT. It would be reasonably straightforward, for example, to re-evaluate the benefit of universal 100% concessionary fares for the over 60s versus substantial investment in the quality of bus services themselves; equally the utility of planned *grands projets* such as Crossrail and HS2 could quickly be compared with numerous smaller schemes.⁷ Perhaps, given the flurry of recent calls for “root and branch review of transport appraisal” (Forster, 2010: 1), the conventional wisdom that road building offers better value for money than other transport

⁷ Crossrail is an east-west heavy rail link across London from Essex / North Kent to Heathrow Airport / Maidenhead. HS2 is the proposed high speed railway line northbound from London.

interventions on the basis that it can save lots of people minute amounts of time could at last be subjected to serious review (see, for example, Lyons and Urry, 2005; Metz, 2008 and the vibrant debate that follows). It is also inevitable – as the Cabinet Office has recognised – that the whole issue of charging for road space will come back onto the agenda given the scarcity of resources for investment, and the very real potential of other revenue streams from instruments such as parking charges, urban fuel tax surcharges or payroll taxes such as the longstanding French *versement transport* arrangements (see Docherty *et al* 2009 for a comparison of these) might well be recognised.

Despite little identifiable progress at central government level, post-devolution UK has of course produced several parallel political realities. Transport as an issue moved up the political agenda in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (MacKinnon *et al*, 2008), but it is in London where most progress has been made. Whatever wider history is eventually written about Ken Livingstone's tenure as the UK capital's first elected Mayor, his decision to introduce congestion charging and a raft of public transport improvements demonstrates that measures deemed too radical by central government ministers are in practice deliverable in the British political context (see White, 2008 for a discussion of transport developments in London since devolution). This was possible in London partly because of the particular geographical and transport characteristics already in place (Anable and Shaw, 2007), but mainly because of the very substantial 'strategic capacity' – that is the leadership, the finance, the powers, the technocracy – developed after devolution to enable effective movement from policy formulation to implementation (Gordon *et al*, 2004; Mackinnon *et al*, 2008; Sweeting, 2002). With very few exceptions – the devolved Scotland, which after a shaky start has invested substantially in railways, smarter choices initiatives and a roads programme that focuses on the safety and quality of the network rather than (just) capacity enhancement, being perhaps the most significant – these attributes are almost completely absent elsewhere.

Certainly it appears that progress in developing a fresh approach to transport policy in provincial English cities was (and remains) hampered by the limited transfer of substantive power and fiscal responsibility away from the centre. This is despite a long and wide ranging debate about the role of local and regional

government in England (Morgan, 2007; see also Bulkeley and Rayner, 2003; Vigar, 2001). At least for the post-Thatcher era, the new Integrated Transport Authorities (ITAs) possess reasonably strong coordinating powers, but they fall a long way short both of what is commonplace in continental Europe where innovations such as the expansion of light rail and substantial effort into improving the public realm for pedestrians and cyclists are the norm, and of the position in which many of the English city regions would like to find themselves (pteg, 2009). In this sense, Labour neither did enough itself, nor created the conditions needed for others even to have the chance of developing the kind of strategic capacity now present in London. Consensus politics is not enough to overcome the governance realism of urban and regional structures that have been progressively fragmented and under-resourced (Docherty *et al*, 2009; Hambleton and Sweeting, 2004; Mawson, 2007).

The road (or railway line, or bus lane, or cycle path) ahead...

We do not deny that actually implementing a genuinely sustainable transport policy along the lines of the New Realism is an immensely difficult task, perhaps even a 'wicked problem' (Conklin, 2006; Rittel and Webber, 1973). But this would surely hold true for a variety of public policy areas – consider the sheer scope of the possible corresponding analyses of health policy, for example – and, in any case, serves to highlight the importance of government doing something positive about the situation rather than burying its head in the sand. Perhaps the gamut of forces we identify really can be reduced to the issues of timescale and political timidity in taking on vested interests and what is perceived to be the dominant public view, augmented by a civil service obsession with incremental policy making. Either way, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that New Labour's ministers were just not interested enough in promoting more sustainable transport to invest sufficient thought and take the political risk (such as it actually is) necessary to push for major change in both the amount and the manner in which we travel. None of this would surprise Wackernagel and Rees (1995: 64) who, writing about sustainability more generally, note that the "deliberate vagueness" associated with the concept is "a reflection of power politics and political bargaining, not a manifestation of insurmountable intellectual difficulty."

In order to define a way forward, it is first necessary to make the essential step of moving on from diagnosing the transport problem – despite repeated analysis *ad nauseam* this has not fundamentally changed – to the (re)assertion of what might actually be done to make things better. For some it might be enough that some positive developments have come about due to sporadic serendipitous combinations of circumstances such as in London, but for us – and we suspect many others – the need to do better than begin the same debate every time a new minister arrives remains pressing. It may or may not be that one specific event will constitute the ‘tipping point’ (Gladwell, 2002) often required for radical ideas such as the New Realism to fully take hold, but in the meantime, there remains an outline of what an alternative future might look like. Thus in considering how transport policy might develop in the years ahead, we would argue, first, that there is a strong case for retaining a normative position in terms of where we think it should be going; without such a strategic vision the temptation to cherry-pick the politically-attractive quick wins will be overwhelming. Second, because our inability to match road supply with demand has not changed, the strategic vision should be based largely on New Realist thinking since this remains the most appropriate position yet set out. Again, it is important to state that Labour’s approach to transport did not fail because it identified the wrong suite of policies – rather, it failed because in government its ministers did not pursue that suite of policies with anything like enough vigour.

Attempting to discern what will come to pass under the Coalition government is rather difficult. In many ways, transport is one of the areas of policy in which the two parties have least in common; many Liberal Democrats have strong environmental sympathies – their manifesto supported a switch of resources from new road building to reopening rural railways – whilst arguably the Conservatives remain the natural party of the motorist given their historic promotion of the car as a critical component of personal freedom (although as noted earlier it was John Major’s Conservative government that began the move away from predict and provide in the 1990s). The first pronouncements of the new government have underlined its split personality: the new Secretary of State for Transport, the Conservative Philip Hammond, in his first press conference declared an end to the ‘war on the motorist’ to the delight of the tabloids, but he also confirmed the cancellation of the third runway at Heathrow and confirmed that Crossrail would proceed. A few weeks later, the £1.1bn A14 road upgrade scheme was cancelled, and in the June 2010 Emergency

Budget not only were two large public transport investments approved – the renewal of the Tyne and Wear Metro and the extension of the Greater Manchester Metrolink – but the Chancellor George Osborne also announced that capital spending would be spared any further cuts than those already announced by Labour. He wisely noted that “an error was made in the early 1990s when the then Government cut capital spending too much” (HM Treasury, 2010, unpaginated). Only time will tell if these decisions herald a more sophisticated approach to transport along the lines of the New Realism in which targeted infrastructure development and other policy measures go hand-in-hand, or whether it will be business as usual after the impacts of the recession have played out.

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Headline policy	Policy elements	Further details
Land use planning		Journeys need to be shorter; less reliance on polluting and congesting modes; site facilities closer to people
Traffic calming		Motor vehicles to lose their dominance in situations where they have become a nuisance and a danger
Road pricing		Schemes to be local in nature; benefits from schemes might be divided between environmental improvement, extra traffic and higher speeds (on-road) and between general taxation, roads and public transport (net expenditure). Whatever, road pricing only makes sense as part of a 'total transport package'
Traffic control	Traffic management Informatics	Making the best use of existing infrastructure through: stronger enforcement of existing restrictions, prioritising efficient vehicles such as buses, effective safety margins between traffic flow and capacity, and balanced parking provision Could be used to increase capacity/efficiency of current networks (or reduce the amount of traffic. But only as effective as general policy context
Public transport	Information Light rail New bus designs Ticketing methods Bus priorities Park and ride Personal security Financing	General awareness-raising campaigns and better in-service information Better targeted at large cities where capacity and speed benefits more attractive set against costs Guided buses, hybrid fuels, trolley buses and low-floor buses. Pre-board payment and simple ticketing systems Bus lanes, selective vehicle detection at traffic signals, reserved busways Must be cheaper, more convenient and faster than driving 'Safe areas' in city centres at night, conductors, CCTV etc. Transport part of the problem but danger and violence need to be tackled in a broader policy context too Change the balance of costs borne by less-efficient modes (cars) to more efficient modes (public transport)
Walking		Maintain local shops and services, prioritise pedestrians over vehicles in certain areas, better maintenance of pavements, widening pavements, enhanced protection and security of pedestrians
Cycling		Provide maximum possibilities for people to cycle: traffic calming, well marked and maintained cycle lanes and routes, priority systems, secure parking spaces and driver education
Private cars	General principles	Cars can be used easily where access or convenience more than any other mode and where unmitigated external costs not imposed on others; inhibiting car use to be done ensuring maximum compensating

	Safety	benefits regarding other modes and improved quality of life Measures to reduce the effects of accidents: vehicle and road design and construction improvements, traffic management and control, educating for better road user behaviour
Freight		Potential for out-of-town distribution depots, but solutions for freight transport not as well thought through as those for personal transport. Lorries have much to gain from reduced congestion, though
Other priority users		Emergency vehicles could be slowed by traffic calming measures but assisted by bus lanes and other traffic management schemes
New roads		Roads policy to be linked to realistic and acceptable amounts of traffic and completely consistent with other aspects of transport policy; some new construction – for example for new residential or industrial developments – inevitable but in general building new roads should be considered last rather than first
Institutional and financial implications		Implementation of road pricing to make users the dominant funders of all transport expenditures; institution(s) needed to allow the coordination of policies and the consistent treatment of different modes

Table 1. Principal elements of the policy package advanced by the *New Realism*. Source: assembled from Goodwin *et al.*, 1991.

<i>A New Deal for Transport</i>	<i>Transport 2010</i>	<i>The Future of Transport</i>	<i>Delivering a Sustainable Transport System</i>
<p>We need a transport system which supports our policies for more jobs and a strong economy, which helps increase prosperity and tackles social exclusion. We also need a transport system which doesn't damage our health and provides a better quality of life now - for everyone - without passing onto future generations a poorer world. This is what we mean by sustainable transport and why we need a New Deal...</p> <p>[This means we need to] achieve transport that is safe, efficient, clean and fair...</p> <p>[and] create a transport system that meets the needs of people and business at an affordable cost and produces better places in which to live and work.</p>	<p>Our vision for transport in this country is for a modern, safe, high quality network that better meets people's needs and offers more choice to individuals, families, communities and businesses...</p> <p>[We want to] benchmark our performance against the best in Europe and, through greatly increased investment, to transform our transport infrastructure over the next ten years...</p> <p>[At the same time we want] to lessen the impact of transport on the environment at both global and local levels.</p>	<p>We need a transport network that can meet the challenges of a growing economy and the increasing demand for travel, but can also achieve our environmental objectives.</p>	<p>We want our transport system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to support national economic competitiveness and growth, by delivering reliable and efficient transport networks; to reduce transport's emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, with the desired outcome of tackling climate change; to contribute to better safety, security and health and longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport, and by promoting travel modes that are beneficial to health; to promote greater equality of opportunity for all citizens, with the desired outcome of achieving a fairer society; and to improve quality of life for transport users and non-transport users, and to promote a healthy natural environment

Table 2. Social, economic and environmental 'headline' aims of government transport policy strategy documents, 1998-2009. Sources: DETR, 1998, 2000; DfT, 2004, 2008a). Subservient aims were categorised, broadly and in no particular order, as economic development, social exclusion, environment, public transport, walking and cycling, safety, and integration.

Category	Target	Comments	Data refer to	On course to meet target?
Overall	“Far fewer journeys by car and far more journeys by public transport”	The number of car/van/taxi trips fluctuated but remained more or less constant, although distance travelled rose from 642 bpkm to 679 bpkm in 2008 (+5.8%). Passenger rail journeys increased from 931m to 1274m (+33.3%) and bpkm increased from 38,472m to 50,698m (+32.8%). Light rail journeys increased from 113m to 203m (+79.6%) and bpkm increased from 675m to 1,191m (+76.4%); bus journeys fell from 2,510m to 2,440m (-2.9%) while vehicle kilometres remained more or less constant	GB GB England England (not London)	Not really
Rail	50% growth in passenger kilometres	Increased year on year from 38,472m to 50,698m (+32.8%)	GB	No
	80% growth in freight kilometres	Increased from 18.2bfkm to 20.6bfkm (+16.7%); peaked at 21.9bfkm in 2006/07	GB	No
	Real reductions in the cost of rail travel	Real cost of rail travel increased year on year 2000-2008 (+33.1%)	GB	No
	Increased reliability and punctuality	Public Performance Measure increased from 87.8% to 90.6%, although the Hatfield crash in 2000 severely affected performance throughout the decade (the PPM fell to 79.1% in 2000/01 and did not recover to 1999/2000 levels until 2006/07)	GB	Mostly
	Improved levels of passenger satisfaction with services	From a 2001 base, positive perceptions regarding the overall journey, punctuality and reliability, frequency of trains and information have all steadily increased. Only perceptions of value for money have become less favourable, and even then only marginally so, although from a base of just over 40% this was never a particularly well-received aspect of rail policy	GB	Mostly
	Light rail passenger journeys at least doubled by 2010	Increased year on year from 113m to 203m (+79.6%) despite spectacularly failing even to attempt to achieve planned investment in 25 new lines	England	Unlikely
Bus	A 10% increase in passenger journeys by 2010	Fallen from 2,510m to 2,440m (-2.9%). Trough of 2,315m in 2005/06, and recent recovery to do with the introduction of a nationwide concessionary fare scheme (see below)	England (not London)	No
	Reduce average age of bus fleet to 8 years	Average age 8.2 years in 2007/08	GB	Unlikely
	Better quality, less polluting, more accessible buses	Condition of buses satisfied 80% of users in 2000/01 and 82% in 2007/08; CO ₂ emissions 0.00125 tonnes/km in 1997/98 and 0.00107 tonnes/km in 2007/08 (-14.4%); responses for those with a disability (in relation to accessibility of buses) only sought from 2006/07	England	‘Qualified’ yes
	At least half-fare discounts for pensioners and the disabled	Free travel for these groups introduced at local authority level in 2006 and nationally in 2008	England	Yes
	Improved levels of customer satisfaction with the quality of services	Increased from 79% in 2000/01 to 82% in 2007/08	England	Yes
	Integrated	Traveline introduced to provide integrated information; PlusBus to a	England	Partly

	50% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured on road	Child pedestrian and cyclist fatalities halved since 2005; contracts from 400 to 220 (a 50% back office) only let in 2010	GB	Yes
Walking and Cycling	Accidents: number of	Number of cycling trips fluctuated but had fallen by around 4% by 2009	GB	No
Social exclusion	Children to increase their 2000 level of rural	Proportion living within 13 minutes' walk of an hourly or better bus service increased from 41% in 1998/2000 to 56% in 2008 (+36.6%).	England	Yes
	Safe by giving walking routes 10 particularly of an school (or better) bus service	Pedestrian deaths a steady 57 to 62; cyclists killed reduced from 127 to 115. Pedestrian stats represent a genuine reduction over time but cycling figures reveal no clear trend. KSIs decreased year on year for adult and child categories of pedestrians (6,112 to 4,724 and 3,226 to 1,784) and cyclists (2,172 to 2,101 and 950 to 417)	GB	Generally yes
Roads	Reduction in congestion on inter-urban trunk roads to 5% below current levels by 2010	Delays for slowest 10% of journeys, expressed as average vehicle delay in minutes per 10 miles (!), decreased from 3.8 in 2004 to 3.58. Most recent reductions likely associated with the economic downturn	England	Unclear
	Congestion in larger urban areas reduced by 8%; Congestion in other urban areas congestion growth reduced from 15% to 7%	Average speeds in the 18 largest English urban areas outside London decreased from 21.8mph (1999/2000) to 20.9mph (2006) at peak times, and from 26 to 24mph for the same years at off-peak times	England	No
	Road condition maintained to a high standard: proportion requiring maintenance held at 7-8%			Unclear
Environment	Contribute to meeting climate change targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions	Domestic transport emissions rose from 124.1mtCO ₂ in 2000 to 131.4mtCO ₂ in 2007	GB	No
	Accelerated take-up of cleaner vehicles to reduce air pollution and CO ₂ emissions	Happened by default as a result of advancing technology	GB	Yes
Safety	40% reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents	All road users killed decreased from 3,423 to 2,538 although there was no drop below 3,400 until 2004; KSIs reduced year on year from 44,255 to 28,572 (-35.4%)	GB	Likely to come close

Table 3. Performance against key targets in *Transport 2010: The Ten Year Plan*. The 'overall' target was not included in the *Plan* and relates to an earlier quote by John Prescott; it is included here for reference (see text). Figures for comparisons are from 1999 or 1999/2000 and 2008 or 2008/09 unless otherwise noted. Sources: (DfT, 2008b; DfT, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d).

Note

1. This comparison is slightly awkward since it doesn't include London Underground but does include buses in London, which are under TfL's jurisdiction and have seen a 66% growth in passenger numbers since 1999/2000. We have included London buses because almost all of London's rail services and the DLR appear in the National / Light Rail figures.

Political	Economic	Social	Technological	Environmental	Legal
Short termist, incremental political culture	Ideological fixation with privatisation and competition	Car owning democracy / consumerist attitudes to transport	No 'technological fix' yet apparent despite faith in one appearing	Carbon emissions and climate change policy agenda	Response to climate change from European and global institutions
Lack of political will for radical change, ostrich mentality	Treasury attitude to value of transport to the functioning of the economy	Individualism and the 'right to mobility' (e.g. the freedom to fly)	Appraisal and modelling techniques limited and can be manipulated	Impact of climate change on transport infrastructure	Constitutional issues: devolution, potential independence, etc.
Civil service risk aversion	Debates over increasing costs of congestion	Feminisation and increasing complexity of transport demand	Reliance on expertise of consultancies and financial sector who have their own agenda	Uncertain impact of emissions trading	Developing law in areas pertaining to transport, i.e. regulation
Power and influence of transport and other vested interest groups	Capital rationing	Evolving lifestyle trends	Project complexity	Local area air quality issues	Health and Safety and DDA legislation impacts on procurement costs
Conflicts between ministers / departments over resource allocation	Globalisation of world economy	Social exclusion and polarisation	Internet and ICT changing patterns of physical mobility	Links between transport, activity patterns and public health	Human Rights legislation and resulting new obligations on government and transport providers
Effectiveness and / or personal inclinations of incumbent transport minister(s)	High cost of crude oil (<i>Transport 2010</i> assumed barrels would fall to \$16 by 2005!)	Fear of crime / anti-social behaviour	Quality and attractiveness of car industry products, and persuasiveness of their marketing	Continuing urban sprawl as a response to demographic and lifestyle change	Land-use planning legislation
Attitudes and electoral importance of 'Middle England'	Overcrowding in the south east of England; lack of coherent central government regional policy	NIMBYism	Car efficiency gains lost through purchase of bigger/more powerful vehicles		
Complicated and fragmented governance structures	Renewed prosperity of major provincial cities				
Inconsistencies between local and national priorities					
Politicians overawed by private sector and hold dim view of public sector's ability to deliver					

Terrorism / security environment					
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Table 4. PESTEL analysis of influences and constraints on transport policy making. Source: Shaw and Docherty, 2008.

Table 5. 2009 opinion poll of policy issues regarded as important to Britain today. Source: Ipsos MORI, 2010.

Q1	What would you say is the most important issue facing Britain today?		
Q2	What do you see as other important issues facing Britain today?		
	Q1	Q1/2	
	%	%	
	Economy/economic situation	38	55
	Race relations/immigration/immigrants	14	33
	Crime/law & order/violence/vandalism/ASB	6	25
	Unemployment/Factory Closure/Lack of Industry	9	21
	National Health Service/Hospitals/Health care	3	20
	Education/Schools	3	19
	Defence/foreign affairs/international terrorism	3	14
	Morality/individual behaviour/lifestyle	2	8
	Inflation/prices	2	8
	Drug abuse	1	8
	Poverty/inequality	1	7
	Pensions/social security/benefits	1	7
	Pollution/environment	2	6
	Housing	*	5
	Low pay/minimum wage/fair wages	1	5
	Taxation	*	5
	Public services in general	*	4
	Population levels/overpopulation	1	4
	Local government/council tax	*	4
	Petrol prices/fuel	*	4
	Common Market/EU/Europe/EURO	1	4
	Transport/public transport	*	3
	Pound/exchange rate/value of pound	*	2
	Nationalisation/Government control of institutions	*	1
	Nuclear weapons/nuclear war/disarmament	*	1
	Countryside/rural life	0	1
	Privatisation	*	1
	Bird flu/Pandemic Flu/Swine Flu	*	*
	AIDS	0	*
	Animal welfare	0	*
	GM/GM (Genetically Modified) foods	*	*
	Foot and mouth outbreak/farming crisis	0	*
	Trade Unions/Strikes	0	*
	Northern Ireland	*	*
	Scottish/Welsh Assembly/Devolution/Const. reform	0	0
	Other	2	5
	Don't know	6	13

Figure 1. Identification of transport as ‘an important issue facing Britain today’ over time *Source: Ipsos-Mori, 2010.*

