



## **The English Regions White Paper: Assessing its implications for Transport**

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### **Executive Summary**

- The UK is out of step with other EU states in not providing a strong regional level of responsibility in formulating and delivering transport policy. Decision-making in England remains over-centralised, while delivery is fragmented across national agencies, local authorities and private operators.
- Even recent attempts to ‘join up’ regional transport policy through Regional Transport Strategies have failed to bring about significant improvements. Moreover there are insufficient resources made available to tackle region-wide needs; the great bulk of resources are consumed in meeting national priorities.
- Focusing on the West Midlands region, this paper makes an assessment of how far the changes set out in the English Regions White Paper, *Your Region, Your Choice*, might impact on the formulation and delivery of transport policy. The White Paper set out two options for the English regions: a beefed-up version of existing arrangements for (unelected) regional governance (Track One); and, for those regions where there is sufficient demand, Elected Regional Assemblies (Track Two). Our research, based on interviews with regional stakeholders in the West Midlands finds:
  - Strong support for Track One arrangements to include a responsibility for joining up regional transport strategies with other strategic priorities in the region
  - Support for fuller coordination between Regional Assembly, Government Office for the Region and transport agencies, including transport-focused input into the government spending review process.
  - Track Two would equally give scope for fuller strategic ‘joining up’. An Elected Regional Assembly would arguable present a stronger regional voice to government and produce better coordination of national and regional priorities.
  - There were concerns though that ERAs would ‘crowd’ the policy field and could undermine progress made towards partnership working, especially among local authorities.
  - There was broad agreement that neither track would do no more than bring limited improvements. The real need was for a well-funded regional body with direct authority over statutory bodies and transport operators. The establishment of such a body should not await any move to ERAs.

## Introduction

The White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions* set out the Government's proposals to enhance regional governance in England.<sup>1</sup> Incremental reforms are presented, involving a strengthening of the roles of the Government Offices of the Regions (GORs) and the existing regional assemblies (Track 1) and the creation of elected regional assemblies (ERAs) in those regions where there is public support (Track 2).

The White Paper affirms the Government's belief that the improvements under Track 1 will 'make the delivery of programmes and policies more efficient and ultimately lead to better outcomes in all regions'. It goes on to declare that 'a regional tier of governance can improve decision-making on a range of issues' and 'wants elected regional assemblies to be efficient bodies that add real value' by improving 'the quality of life for people in their region and for the nation as a whole'. 'Elected assemblies could make a real difference in the regions. The role of elected assemblies will be to make regional governance more effective and more accountable' and 'improve efficiency and deliver better regional outcomes'.

These are ambitious claims but if the case for English devolution is to be made it cannot rely on assertions. In other parts of the UK national sentiments and a desire to 'democratise' could be depended upon to justify devolution. But in England public support is likely to be conditioned by more prosaic judgements about whether devolved government holds out the prospect of 'better' policy outcomes in the form of improved services.

This paper addresses that question on policy outcomes by exploring how the White Paper proposals might impact on the formulation and delivery of transport policy in the West Midlands region. Drawing upon the views of some twenty regional transport stakeholders it begins by assessing the present institutional and policy context for transport in the region. Second, it briefly outlines the White Paper proposals as they relate to transport. Finally, it explores how far either Track in the White Paper can be expected to assist in improving transport in the West Midlands.

## Transport policy in England

Any assessment of the contribution of regional institutions needs to be set in the context of historically low levels of government investment in transport. Between 1996-97 and 2001-01 government expenditure on transport in England declined from £6.0bn to £5.8bn<sup>2</sup> and compared with similar EU states between 1975 and 1995 there was under investment in UK transport of the order of £30bn.<sup>3</sup> Investment may now be moving towards European levels but, even under the most optimistic scenario, transport in the English regions will not improve, noticeably, for some years.

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Office and Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions. (2002) *Your Region, Your Choice*, Cm 5511, Cabinet Office and DLTR, London

<sup>2</sup> Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions (2001) *Annual Report*, DETR, London.

<sup>3</sup> Begg, D. (2002) Presentation at conference, *Transporting the Regions into the future: The White Paper on English Regional Governance*, 16th July, CBI Conference Centre, London.

The UK is also out of step with other EU states in its approach to formulating and delivering transport policy. Studies show that ‘a strong regional level of responsibility for transport policy, funding and service provision which co-exists with defined (and complementary) national and locality roles’ is a feature of European best practice.<sup>4</sup> But this responsibility is almost entirely absent in the English regions, militating against integration at a scale where there are considerable potential benefits. Despite recent efforts to boost regional capacity through Regional Transport Strategies (RTS), decision-making remains highly centralised while responsibility and accountability for delivery are fragmented between national agencies and a multitude of local authorities and private operators. The outcome is a diffused institutional framework that relies on rule setting by central government and bargaining between multiple stakeholders operating at different territorial levels, leading to compromise rather than radical solutions.

## Multiple stakeholders

There are a number of key organisations engaged in the planning and delivery of transport (see Figure 1):

**Nationally**, the Department for Transport (DfT) and its executive agencies - the Highways Agency (HA) and the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) - are responsible to ministers for delivering the Government’s ten year plan for transport. Other government departments also have a strong interest in transport - the ODPM, because of its significance for Regional Planning Guidance (RPG), and DEFRA and the DTI, because of the salience of transport in rural and economic development policies.

At the **regional level** each of these departments is represented in the Government Offices for the Regions (GORs), which co-ordinate the work of government departments in the English regions. They are responsible for scrutinising Local Transport Plans (LTPs) prepared by local highway authorities and have taken a lead in sponsoring Multi-Modal Studies (MMS). Their role has been enhanced in recent year through the devolution of administrative responsibilities and transport has emerged as one of their core responsibilities. The HA also has outposts in each English region and its West Midlands office has an annual budget of about £200m. The London based SRA has yet to establish a base in the region but, like the GOR and the HA, it participates in regional transport forums.

Alongside the GOR the other key regional organisations are the Regional Assembly, the Regional Development Agency (Advantage West Midlands (AWM)) and the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA), which represents the thirty-eight local authorities in the region and is the Regional Planning Body (RPB). Collaboration between them is assisted via a voluntarily agreed ‘Regional Concordat’. Together with other organisations and agencies they have each contributed to formulating the RTS, prepared formally by the RPB in 2002. Its purpose is to integrate the planning of major new development at the regional level, identify transport investment and management priorities and provide a long-term framework for development and local transport plans. As in other regions it was intended that the West Midlands RTS should be informed by the findings of MMS, but not all were completed in time.

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<sup>4</sup> Commission for Integrated Transport (CfIT). (2001) *Study of European Best Practice in the Delivery of Integrated Transport*, Report on Stage 3: Transferability, CfIT, St Albans.

Prior to the RTS limited attention had been given to identifying the region's transport priorities. This encouraged the Regional Assembly and the RDA to prepare 'Transport Priorities for the West Midlands' in 2002<sup>5</sup>. While criticised for its scope and content, the document was seen as long overdue, providing a common message to central government and transport stakeholders, where none had existed previously. The Regional Assembly has also acted to bolster its own capacity and promote greater co-operation between organisations in the delivery of the RTS by creating a 'Regional Forum for Transport' (RTF), comprising representatives from the Assembly and co-opted transport stakeholders. It has a counterpart in the WMLGA's 'Regeneration Conference' (dealing with planning, transport and economic development). This is assisted by technical working groups including representatives from local authorities, the HA, SRA, GOR, Birmingham Airport and AWM who also respond to requests for research and advice from the RTF.

At the *sub-regional level* the Transport Act 2000 required all highway authorities - shire and unitary authorities - to prepare LTPs to help co-ordinate and improve local transport. LTPs are seen as a principal mechanism for delivering regional transport priorities. Some £320m is channeled through West Midlands LTPs annually. Institutional arrangements for preparing and delivering LTPs differ across the region. A jointly prepared LTP covers the metropolitan districts, which is consistent with the presence of a Passenger Transport Authority (PTA). It assists in co-ordinating rail services and specifies fares and service levels in conjunction with the SRA but has lost its powers to regulate buses and integrate bus and rail services. Beyond the metropolitan area there are no single bodies responsible for all aspects of public transport and sub-regional co-operation is limited.

## Assessing existing structures

Stakeholder views about the existing structures for preparing and implementing regional transport policies revealed several important concerns that are likely to be relevant in other English regions:

***Long term and broad perspective:*** Transport continues to suffer from a legacy of insufficient investment, a lack of integration of land use and transport planning and limited co-ordination between national, regional and sub-regional levels.

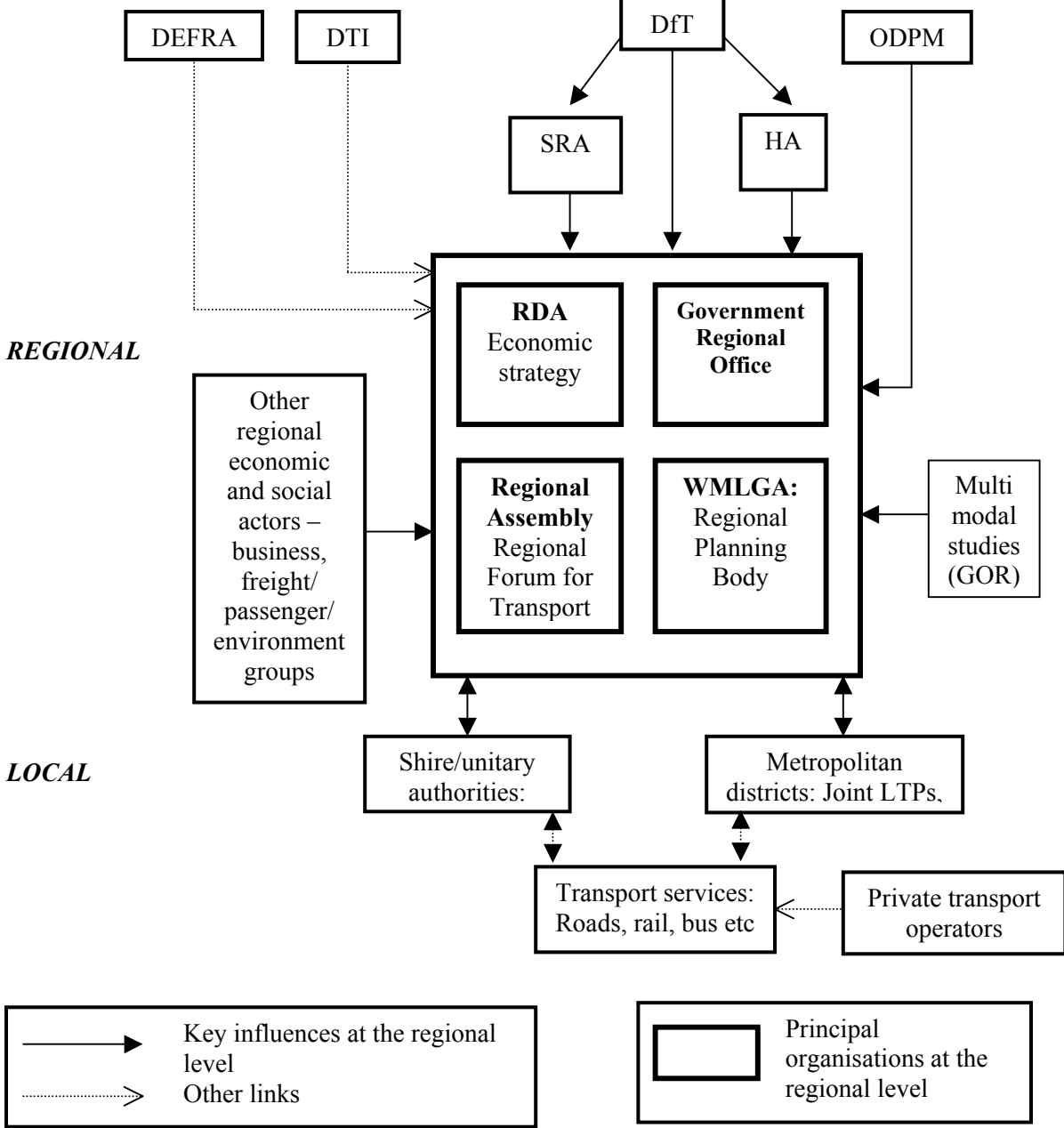
***Institutional structures:*** Recent developments in both institutional arrangements and transport policy have encouraged greater collaboration, leading to a constructive dialogue and new ways of working between organisations. Some stakeholders observed that it was too early to evaluate the effects of these developments, but reflected that the region is slowly building its governance capacity. Nonetheless, there was widespread anxiety that fragmented structures and blurred accountabilities were inhibiting the delivery of transport policy. Even the most circumspect civil servant acknowledged that the present arrangements have their shortcomings. The lack of a single body responsible for delivering transport at the regional level was a constant theme.

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<sup>5</sup> Advantage West Midlands and West Midlands Assembly (2002) *The Transport priorities for the West Midlands*, Birmingham.

**Figure 1: Current institutional arrangements for transport in the West Midlands**

**NATIONAL**



***Geographical focus:*** Some stakeholders favoured a region-wide transport authority to replace the current institutional patchwork. But there was limited agreement about the powers and resources that such a body should possess and to whom it might be accountable. Some local authority stakeholders asserted that the focus should be on sub-regional partnerships and that the ‘big’ transport issues required national rather than regional solutions.

***Identifying regional priorities:*** Improved opportunities for dialogue at the regional level had helped reconcile conflicting views - for example between business and environment groups - but underlying conflicts had not been resolved - ‘the dialogue between organisations has improved but the entrenched positions have stayed the same.’ There were visible differences in the priorities of the main urban authorities and the shire counties. Many of the region’s transport priorities seemed to be focussed on the conurbation - the West Coast Main Line, Birmingham Airport and improvements to the rail network in and around the metropolitan area - which have limited resonance in many shire districts.

***Presenting a coherent regional message:*** Tensions between local authorities and the lack of a genuine regional perspective gave rise to difficulties in creating ‘winning coalitions’. Agreements about regional priorities, policies and implementation could easily be blocked. As a consequence the West Midlands had often been less effective than other regions in presenting a clear and coherent transport voice in Whitehall.

***Stakeholder involvement:*** Stakeholders had been involved in the preparing RTS, but many were less than confident about their ability to influence its content. Instead, some felt the process was ‘an exercise in listening and responding and not an attempt at incorporating multiple views’. The consultation leading to the Transport Priorities document was commended, but some stakeholders cavilled over its ‘broad brush’ approach, reflecting the need to incorporate the views of multiple stakeholders.

***Taking unpopular decisions:*** Several stakeholders observed that the real transport challenge in the region was to persuade politicians of the need for more radical approaches to transport policy. Concerns were expressed about the dominant role of local politicians in drafting RTS, the tendency to include ‘wish lists’ of projects, echoing local rather than regional priorities and an inclination to avoid difficult decisions. ‘Many of the policy initiatives required to prevent eventual traffic gridlock are simply not on the political radar’ - ‘there are simply no votes in the type of transport decisions required to solve the region’s transport problems’ - ‘congestion charging would be political suicide’.

***The Regional Transport Forum:*** All stakeholders affirmed the value of the RTF in filling the void left by the absence of a much-needed regional transport body. It had made some headway in encouraging national and local stakeholders to adopt a regional rather than a sectoral or sub-regional perspective. But participation by some key transport actors in the RTF was less than ideal. Most stakeholders admitted that the Forum lacks resources and the capacity to influence central government, its agencies and other transport providers - ‘it’s a useful talking shop but the real decisions take place elsewhere’. Some stressed the need to extend its relationship with transport operators - vital if strategy is to be turned into delivery. The RTF was playing a useful role, but its ultimate success depends on whether it can deliver. At this stage, the universal assumption was that it cannot.

***The Regional Transport Strategy:*** The RTS was regarded as a useful step in bringing separate organisational plans together and linking transport with land use planning. But doubts were

expressed about how far it dealt with substantive regional issues, the commitment among regional stakeholders to consolidate transport and land use policies and how far those responsible for funding transport would adhere to the strategy. Combining RTS and RPG in a statutory Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was seen as a welcome development - 'it will have greater weight - not just guidance but firm policy' - which other relevant plans, including LTPs, will be required to adhere to. But how far this duty will apply to Government agencies was unclear.

**Multi-modal studies:** MMS had helped develop new thinking around solutions to intra and inter-regional transport problems. However, given the resources required there was scepticism about whether their recommendations would be implemented. Concerns were also expressed that road schemes could progress more rapidly than improved public transport provision and congestion charging. A desire for 'quick wins' could threaten long-term measures and undermine efforts to promote urban renaissance. MMS were also criticised for being too narrowly focussed on transport to the exclusion of other regional objectives and that while public transport schemes, when taken together, stand up to financial appraisal they may fall when examined on an individual basis. This raised important issues for delivery of the RTS.<sup>6</sup>

**Implementing priorities:** There was almost universal agreement that the current arrangements for turning strategy into delivery were inadequate. Decision chains were complex and accountability relations ill defined - 'too many tools are missing'. Funding was a recurrent theme - 'if people wanted a "world class" transport system then they will have to pay more'. Stakeholders also expressed concern about the dominance and unpredictability of national transport funding. Increasing resources are being allocated via the LTP process but there is no 'regional own resource'. The influence of regional bodies over the SRA or HA, which have their own long term spending priorities, was judged limited. There was far greater likelihood of regional priorities being delivered when they matched national objectives, but mechanisms were also required to ensure that others were not ignored. Transport privatisation also made it difficult to combine national priorities, for example in the rail network, with measures to meet regional needs. Uncertainty over train franchises and arms length relationships between funders and providers hindered efforts to foster integration and long-term investment.

**The role of the GOR:** The GOR was viewed as an important but 'low key' actor. Some stakeholders were unclear about how it added value and were critical of its capacity to formulate clear regional priorities, contribute to framing and delivering transport policy and represent West Midlands' interests. However, we were invariably reminded that the GOR draws its power and influence from ministers and not the region, that it was for the region to formulate its own policies, within Government guidelines, and that local authorities had been awarded substantial additional resources for transport. As far as influence was concerned, channels of communication had been improved following the establishment of the Regional Co-ordination Unit in Whitehall and the GOR and AWM were now regularly informing the Treasury of regional priorities.

**The Regional Concordat:** Several stakeholders had only a hazy view of the Regional Concordat, which is intended to provide a framework for regional working and the integration of regional strategies. Some viewed it as a useful reminder of the philosophy of regional partnership working but the majority believed that it had not yet influenced the way transport policy is formulated or delivered. In any case efforts to establish positive relationships between regional stakeholders are 'worthless unless central government is prepared to listen and work with them.'

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<sup>6</sup> GVA Grimley and ECOTEC Research and Consulting. (2002) *West Midlands RPG review: Towards an implementation strategy*, Report for the Public Examination, GVA Grimley, Birmingham.

**Staffing resources:** Stakeholders acknowledged the considerable costs involved in the process of consultation and alliance building and that some interests were far better resourced than others. There was also dissatisfaction with the level of staffing resources to prepare and take forward the RTS - the absence of dedicated professional staff acted as a brake on building regional capacity.

## **The White Paper: How far might it assist in improving transport in the West Midlands?**

The White Paper sets out an incremental, two-track approach to strengthen regional governance:

- **Track 1** will be applied, irrespective of any decision about an Elected Regional Assembly (ERA). In the West Midlands it will see the current Regional Assembly become responsible for co-ordinating and integrating regional strategies. It will replace the WMLGA as the RPB and be responsible for preparing the new statutory regional spatial strategy. The GOR will act as a ‘forum’ for regional public-sector bodies - including the HA and the SRA - to come together to dovetail their strategies, monitor the activities of the RDA and manage the regional input into the government spending review process.
- **Track 2** envisages an ERA, which would assume responsibility for writing regional strategies - including the RTS - and ensuring that regional strategies are mutually consistent. With respect to transport it would have an ‘advisory’ role on the allocation of LTP funding, make proposals to the SRA and HA, and would be consulted by those bodies. It would have almost no specific transport funding, but could establish a limited resource base through taxation and borrowing. There is the possibility that an ERA could impose requirements on partner organisations to implement its transport strategy, but delivery would depend critically on its capacity to influence the use of resources dispersed around a variety of organisations.

The boxes below set out stakeholder views on the potential advantages – or problems – these two tracks may bring.

### ***Track 1***

#### *a) An enhanced role for the West Midlands Regional Assembly*

- Some stakeholders saw this as a positive step, having albeit a marginal effect, while others stated that no added value would arise since the proposals are, or should be, already happening. In general stakeholders were wary about whether the proposals to extend the role of the Assembly would add value to transport in the region.
- There was some support - notably from the business community - for the RPB function to be transferred to the Assembly, on the grounds that it should develop its decision-making capacity. But local authority stakeholders and environmentalists were cautious about conferring additional powers on an unelected body.
- The more optimistic stakeholders believed that the Assembly’s role in co-ordinating and integrating regional strategies could be beneficial. But whether this could be extended so that transport funders and private sector providers adjusted their investment plans and activities to meet regional priorities was more problematic.
- Considerable doubts were expressed about the Assembly’s ability to influence the Whitehall spending review process, via the GOR, or its potential impact on national transport policies.

#### *b) An enhanced role for the GOR*

- A majority of stakeholders favoured the GOR playing a more active role by joining up the activities of government agencies in the region and making them more accountable. However, the fostering of such relations would depend on the leadership of the GOR Director, the competencies of GOR staff and the commitment of agencies to co-operative working. Given the way that accountabilities work in central government such commitment could not be guaranteed.
- Proposals for the GOR to articulate regional interests more forcefully in Whitehall were also cautiously welcomed. But the GOR cannot represent the region - it has multiple responsibilities and extending its role would not reduce the concentration of power over transport in the hands of central government and its agencies. In general, stakeholders were unconvinced that proposals to enhance the role of the GOR would add value to transport.

### ***Track 2. An elected regional assembly***

- Most stakeholders concluded that Track 2 fell well short of what was required. Some were disappointed that an ERA would not have devolved powers comparable with those of the GLA, Scottish Parliament or Welsh Assembly which have direct influence over statutory bodies and annual transport budgets of £1.7bn, £1.1bn and £210m, respectively. Almost half the stakeholders suggested that far more direct regional control over decision-making powers and resources was necessary.
- Several stakeholders asserted that the White Paper offered a ‘second rate’ solution and should be resisted. A powerless ERA would not attract the ‘best people’, leaving the same set of local politicians in charge. ‘If the same people are involved, what is the added value?’ opined one stakeholder.
- Some feared that ERA might lead to increased bureaucracy and confusion - a ‘consultation body’, with no real powers to take and implement decisions. Conversely, a strong ERA might challenge local authorities leading to ‘turf wars’.
- There was some support for the White Paper on the grounds that it offered a useful ‘starting point’ and that an ERA might, over time, extend its influence, raise additional funds and acquire regulatory powers to implement the region’s transport priorities. But, ‘any ERA will face an uphill task in convincing people that it should have extensive tax raising powers’. One source of funding that might attract an ERA’s attention would be a regional or sub-regional congestion charge, which is not politically feasible at present.
- Supporters of Track 2 also claimed that an ERA would be less prone to local interests that have bedevilled agreements about regional transport priorities in the past and have sufficient status to take the tough decisions required to tackle the region’s growing transport crisis. It should also be able to influence LTP expenditure so that due weight is given to regional priorities.
- An ERA might be in a position to influence government bodies and other organisations, including those in the private sector. However, since they would still be accountable to ministers, local politicians and shareholders the potential for leverage could be limited.
- Stakeholders hoped that an ERA would have a strong voice in Whitehall and work with other regions on transport issues. However, they were unsure about how this would impact on transport outcomes.
- Giving an ERA responsibility for writing regional strategies was seen as a way of getting a more integrated approach to policy making. But doubts were expressed about whether this would be sufficient to influence statutory and other organisations. Co-operation with other agencies might be seen as a worthy aim, but strategy-writing alone is insufficient to achieve co-ordinated government.<sup>7</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Despite efforts to establish a more coherent regional perspective through the RTS and RTF, the culture of regional decision making and management for transport in the West Midlands lacks coherence. There is a need for greater clarity of purpose and a far greater alignment between strategic and operational levels. Fragmented territorial interests hinder attempts to develop a genuine regional perspective and articulate a clear and consistent message to central government and its agencies. Wish lists may emerge, only to gather dust. The decentralisation of transport responsibilities has seen a substantial increase in transport resources for individual local authorities, but not the region *per se*. Local authorities and the new regional institutions are seen by central government as being poorly equipped to tackle the complex of issues of regional transport planning and delivery and are largely excluded from national policy making.

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<sup>7</sup> Sandford, M. (2002) *A commentary on the Regional Government White Paper, ‘Your Region, Your Choice: Revitalising the English Regions Cm 5511’*, Constitution Unit, London.

At the regional level important areas of expenditure do not have accountable agencies and a multiplicity of strategies, funding regimes and actors gives rise to high transaction costs. The conurbation wide PTA is the closest the West Midlands has to an integrated, cross-boundary transport authority, but it has limited regulatory powers and covers only a fraction of the region. The consequence is that there are limited incentives for national public organisations or private transport providers to consider West Midlands' priorities. An unresolved question is who is to be responsible for ensuring that the policies in the RTS and the findings of the MMS are implemented and will the necessary resources be forthcoming. The root problem remains one of resources, which run out rapidly after national priorities are met.

Opinions were divided on how far the White Paper proposals would help ameliorate some of these deficiencies. There was support for proposals to make the Assembly responsible for the co-ordination and integration of regional strategies (Track 1) and transferring to an ERA responsibility for writing and ensuring consistency between regional strategies currently prepared by a mixture of regional organisations (Track 2).

Greater collaboration between the Assembly, the GOR and transport agencies was also welcomed, as were proposals for the GOR to manage the regional input into the government spending review process. These measures could lead to the emergence of a more cogent regional transport policy, assist in removing current problems of overlapping administrative structures, encourage greater clarity and realism in the preparation of the RTS and strengthen strategic planning. Moreover, requiring government bodies to develop their work with an ERA could lead to them better understand the region's needs and encourage better working between national and regional tiers.

An ERA should have more legitimacy and expertise to develop well thought through, integrated regional strategies. But those strongly in favour of an ERA were in a minority. They were optimistic about an ERA's capacity to add value by establishing a more representative regional view, make the necessary hard choices about transport policy and have the necessary dedicated skills, and were confident that its remit would be strengthened over time. Even among the minority who supported Track 1, on the grounds that an ERA would lead to greater bureaucracy and costs, it was acknowledged that an elected body could bring benefits, providing it was granted sufficient powers and resources. However, they were concerned that an ERA might damage the progress already made to cement partnership working and clash with local authorities.

Almost half the stakeholders felt that neither Track would confer significant transport benefits. They were most critical about the implications of the White Paper's proposals for delivering transport policy. Indeed, there was an overwhelming consensus that neither Track offered a solution to the region's implementation 'deficit'. The main criticism was that key funding regimes would remain national (SRA and HA) and local (LTPs). A strong case was made for a regional authority with direct control over statutory bodies, transport operators and additional resources to deliver the RTS. In the absence of such a commitment the predominant view was that little would change.

The message to emerge is twofold. First, the proposals in the White Paper will bring about only limited improvements to transport in the West Midlands. Second, there is an emerging consensus in favour of a single regional body with responsibility and resources for transport. Track 1 does not address this issue and although Track 2 foreshadows an ERA with 'executive' and arms-length 'influencing' powers, the majority view was that these were insufficient. Over time an ERA might acquire sufficient competencies and resources to address the region's transport

priorities, but this could not be relied upon. In the meantime, there was a strong case for reforming institutional structures and capacities.

Most stakeholders believed that there was sufficient support for a new region-wide transport body and that such an outcome should not wait on the results of a referendum on regional government. However, there was far less agreement about how such an authority would be financed, its powers and to whom it would be accountable. One solution would be to absorb the PTA and the passenger transport functions of the non-metropolitan authorities into a Regional Transport Authority, linked to the regional assembly. This could be accompanied, for example, by the creation of a dedicated transport team within the Assembly, securing the regular engagement of a wider range of transport funders and providers and promoting greater co-ordination between national, regional and local funding priorities through a strengthened implementation strategy. The Assembly and the GOR would be responsible for ensuring that these priorities complement the RSS.

Such reforms might well be seen as insufficient but since they would require the consent of both shire and metropolitan authorities there is no guarantee that even they could be achieved. This not only highlights the shortcomings of current institutional arrangements; it is also a reminder that given the restrained aspirations of the White Paper they will be in place for some years to come. The implication for policy makers and practitioners is that while one or two ERAs may emerge over the next five years, in most regions the challenge lies in making modest progress in the context of existing structures and the limited opportunities afforded under Track 1 of the White Paper.

## The authors

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