

ICE submission to the Transport Committee on joined-up journeys: achieving and measuring transport integration

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About the ICE

The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) is a 97,000-strong global membership organisation with over 200 years of history.

It is a centre of engineering excellence, qualifying engineers and helping them maintain lifelong competence, assuring society that the infrastructure they create is safe, dependable and well designed.

Its network of experts offers trusted, impartial advice to politicians and decision makers on how to build and adapt infrastructure to create a more sustainable world.

The ICE supported the Transport Committee's inquiry into strategic transport objectives, launched in 2023, under the previous government. We welcome the Committee continuing to examine transport at a strategic level and the opportunity to provide the following evidence to its inquiry.

For more information, please contact **David McNaught**, Policy Manager: policy@ice.org.uk

Submission

The submission focuses on questions c, d and e from the call for evidence.

c) What kinds of interventions and policy decisions are needed to provide joined-up transport, including in areas beyond transport such as planning?

Joined-up strategic planning

The key issue has been the lack of an overarching strategic plan for transport that enables joined-up planning across the entire network. The upcoming Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS) is an opportunity to address this, and is something the ICE has long called for.¹

¹ ICE (2023) [ICE policy position statement: a national transport strategy for England](#)

The strategy will need to be fully aligned and integrated with the wider strategic policy framework the government is developing for infrastructure planning and prioritisation, particularly the vision set out in the 10-year national infrastructure strategy and the Modern Industrial Strategy.

Infrastructure is a system of systems and transport needs to be planned alongside other key networks like energy and digital. At the same time, the INTS should be 'vision-led', setting out the government's wider social, environmental and economic objectives and the outcomes transport must deliver to help achieve them. Establishing this 'golden thread' of desired transport outcomes across modes and levels of government will help national and subnational bodies plan accordingly. This alignment of national and regional objectives is especially important given the push towards more Combined Authority-level plans in the government's English Devolution White Paper.

Infrastructure has strong links to many other policy areas including housing, health and the environment and is one of the key enablers for driving sustainable economic growth. For example, the government has set an ambitious target to build 1.5 million homes in England this Parliament. One of the barriers to effective housing growth has been the lack of alignment between housing decisions and other spatial, infrastructure or supply chain strategies or wider national goals. Instead, subnational authorities have largely determined the geographic spread of new housing. As a result, too much housebuilding has happened in locations with poor connectivity, reinforcing car dependency rather than unlocking the benefits (to public health, the environment and the economy) of active travel and joined-up public transport infrastructure.²

Spatial planning

Strategic integration is already happening in parts of England. London, for example, has an integrated plan covering land use, economic development and transport. The challenge is developing and applying this approach consistently. Subnational transport bodies (STBs) are well positioned to deliver 'place-making' and are working to unlock the wider benefits of transport investment by integrating transport with land-use planning and other infrastructure systems.

The 10-year infrastructure strategy includes a spatial element as the government seeks to join up sectors and geographies to address both national and local needs. Key changes will include ensuring all parts of England are covered by a spatial development strategy (SDS), which will be aligned with the 10-year infrastructure strategy. The duty for key bodies to cooperate across geographical boundaries and sectors, including between development corporations and local transport authorities, will also be enhanced.

It will be important that this new framework promotes joined-up, interdisciplinary, place-based growth and reduces the risk of strategic developments being thwarted by local planning objections. However, more clarity is still needed on the SDSs, including their size, duration and the standing they will have in local planning decisions. In addition, not all mayoral combined authorities have the same capabilities – some are starting from scratch and need additional support, time and investment to build up capacity.

Better coordination

Partnerships are key to joined-up transport planning so the strategic framework should reduce uncertainty and help guide investors, delivery bodies and other stakeholders. Coordination between different transport bodies across regions and modes tends to be ad hoc and voluntary. The INTS could provide the architecture for greater, more formal collaboration – building on the work already underway between national agencies, STBs and other

² ICE (2025) [Enabling housing growth through infrastructure](#)

stakeholders. This would help maximise the national benefits of subnational transport investment, for example, enhancing the development of strategic transport corridors in England that cross regional boundaries.

People-focused transport planning

Infrastructure is a tool, not an end in itself. Joined-up transport planning also means being more people-focused. The INTS is an opportunity to think differently to ensure the transport network is modern and fit to meet societal challenges and people's needs in the 2030s and beyond. Accelerating the shift from 'predict and provide' to vision-led transport planning that is aspirational about behaviour change and the wider benefits of the transport network will help join up transport planning, align it with the government's wider objectives and enable more sustainable and equitable movement of people and freight.

However, polling commissioned by the ICE suggests that decision-makers need to be much better at engaging the public about infrastructure projects.³ Almost two-thirds of respondents (62%) felt that major infrastructure projects are poorly communicated to them (only 19% believed they are currently well communicated). People were keenest to hear about why projects are being built and what the benefits will be (47%),

Better understanding the needs of all users of the transport network and the psychological factors that influence people's decisions about travel is key to providing a joined-up transport network that delivers the outcomes sought by the public and the government.⁴

Factors that influence people's behaviour include how confident, comfortable and safe they feel about different modes of travel, how they perceive the ease of travel and their most recent experience of a particular mode and whether they have a sense of pride or ownership about their local network (for example impact of the rebranding and yellow-colour scheme of Manchester's Bee network⁵).

Better data about transport users can help challenge long-held assumptions based on historic travel patterns that reinforce car-centric planning. However, one challenge concerns the validity of the Census 2021 Travel to Work statistics. These are usually considered key transport statistics for planning purposes, but the 2021 data were collected during the Covid-19 lockdown, which may impact their effectiveness for future planning purposes.

d) How should transport integration and its benefits be measured and evaluated—including the impact on economic growth, decarbonisation and the Government's other 'missions'?

The data currently being collected is not always the data needed to enable better decision-making about transport projects. There may be a tendency to measure what is easier rather than what is required. As noted above, a key foundation for better decision-making is measuring the factors that influence people's behaviour and choices about how to travel, like how confident, comfortable and safe they feel and how reliable different services are.

Beyond that, smarter decision-making also requires metrics linked to the wider impacts of transport investment to align investment with the government's wider objectives. This includes environmental and social value and productivity growth, alongside traditional metrics like journey time and cost.

³ ICE (2025) [ICE briefing paper: paying for Britain's infrastructure system](#)

⁴ ICE (2024) [Presidential Roundtable summary: how do governments drive strategic change in transport infrastructure?](#)

⁵ Transport for Greater Manchester (2025) [Delivering Better Bus Services for Greater Manchester](#)

However, at a national level, more cross-departmental working is needed to understand the wider opportunities that arise from transport investment, including the outcomes that are most beneficial to different groups. For example, investing in transport services that enable an ageing population to remain independent for longer means happier and healthier individuals and less demand for health and social services.

e) How should the cost of interventions needed to deliver transport integration be assessed and appraised? Will proposed changes to methodology in the Treasury's 'Green Book', including the introduction of 'place-based business cases', change this?

England's fragmentation of strategic objectives for transport has made it hard for decision-makers to assess the trade-offs between different options and develop the best solutions suited to the desired outcomes. There is no means of assessing the appropriate level of resources for different modes against wider aspirations for what the network needs to deliver.

Decision-making about transport investment should recognise that transport is a means to an end, not an end in itself. As noted above, transport is a key enabler of growth and other economic, environmental and social outcomes. The new strategic framework needs to align transport planning with these wider objectives to maximise the potential benefits and enable better decision-making about transport investment.

The ICE's research has shown that major projects and programmes require clarity and consistency on outcomes from the outset to deliver value for money. On High Speed 2, for example, delivery has been perennially undermined because the strategic need the project was intended to meet had never been well articulated or understood.⁶

Decision-making processes also need to do more to capture and give greater weight to the whole-life benefits of projects and programmes instead of focusing on economics and the benefit-cost ratio (BCR). However, government departments can use the Green Book best when targeted outcomes are clear.⁷

The economic case for transport has largely been built on "further, faster, more" even though this often does not match what people and governments often say they want from the network (for example, affordable, fair, available, safe). Too often potential benefits are either missed or underestimated in business cases – such as the number of users on a new line. This can be fixed by improving public engagement – both engaging more widely and asking more/different questions - during business case development.

HM Treasury's refresh of the Green Book in 2020 was a positive step in changing this approach. Actioning the findings from the more recent Green Book review could lead to a bold evolution in how public investment is appraised. Notably, infrastructure projects and programmes will increasingly be assessed not in isolation, but as part of a broader regional strategy. Projects with benefits that unfold over decades will get a fairer hearing. The shift away from rigid BCR thresholds opens the door for more nuanced, context-sensitive decision-making, ensuring decisions will account for wider value, although it does risk introducing greater subjectivity and politicisation in decision-making.

However, the Green Book's success hinges on how well the reforms are implemented, especially in terms of building local capacity, maintaining analytical rigour and ensuring transparency. The introduction of place-based business

⁶ ICE (2024) [ICE briefing paper: the cancellation of HS2's northern leg – learning lessons](#)

⁷ ICE (2020) [Reforming the Green Book to achieve better outcomes from infrastructure investment](#)

cases is ambitious. Coordinating across multiple departments and local authorities is no easy task and will require strong leadership to be fully realised.