

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT OBJECTIVES

ACE Submission



ABOUT ACE

The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) is the association for the UK's professional consultancies and engineering companies operating in the social and economic infrastructure sectors.

The ACE champions infrastructure and the built environment to government and other stakeholders, representing the views of around 400 members. Our members employ over 60,000 in the UK and 250,000 worldwide, contributing more than £15 billion to the UK economy. However, the buildings they create actively contribute over £570 billion a year of GVA.

Our **vision** is for a safe, innovative, resilient, and globally competitive UK built environment sector driving economic growth by delivering well-connected, socially valuable and environmentally sustainable places. Our **mission** is to advocate, anticipate, and educate on behalf of our members. That means proactively engaging with government and stakeholders about challenges and opportunities, ensuring members of all sizes have a voice.

INTRODUCTION

The Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE) is pleased to submit its insights and recommendations to the Transport Committee's inquiry into the Government's strategic transport objectives and their influence on investment decisions, cross-government planning, and infrastructure development. As a collective voice representing the consulting and engineering industry, ACE recognises the pivotal role that well-informed and holistic transport planning plays in shaping sustainable, integrated, and efficient transportation networks.

A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Transport Planning

Our submission underscores the significance of adopting a multi-dimensional approach to transport planning—one that aligns national, regional, and local priorities to ensure a cohesive and future-oriented strategy. The current landscape often involves disparate initiatives, fragmented funding mechanisms, and varying levels of autonomy across devolved administrations and local authorities. To address these challenges, ACE proposes strategies to enhance coordination, communication, and collaboration among different levels of government, public bodies, and stakeholders.

Aligning Modes, Visions, and Objectives

Drawing from our extensive experience, ACE highlights the importance of adopting clear, national strategic transport objectives that transcend individual modes of transport. A cohesive vision can unify diverse transport modes, facilitating seamless interconnectivity and a modal shift towards more sustainable alternatives. We emphasise the potential benefits of a long-term, national, and multi-modal approach to predicting, maintaining, and developing the country's transport needs.

Coherent and Streamlined Policy Integration

Our submission delves into the critical need for coherent and streamlined policy integration between transport and related sectors, including energy, digital infrastructure, and land use planning. The interconnected nature of these sectors necessitates collaboration to mitigate conflicts, capitalise on synergies, and maximise the value of public and private investments. ACE offers insights on how cross-sector collaboration can be fostered through integrated planning, data sharing, common metrics, and policy alignment.

Promoting Private Sector Investment and Innovation

ACE recognises that achieving the Government's strategic transport objectives requires sustained private sector investment, innovation, and expertise. Our submission outlines strategies for promoting greater private sector involvement through mechanisms such as outcome-based funding, risk sharing, and regulatory stability. We emphasise the significance of longer-term certainty in planning to attract diverse sources of investment and to foster the development of resilient, forward-looking transportation infrastructure.

Stakeholder Engagement and Public Participation

Lastly, we stress the importance of engaging stakeholders, including local communities, businesses, and industry experts, throughout the planning process. ACE members play a pivotal role in facilitating public participation, promoting transparent decision-making, and ensuring that projects are responsive to the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve.

As the Transport Committee endeavors to assess and enhance the Government's strategic transport planning and investment coordination, ACE's submission offers practical recommendations derived from our expertise in engineering, consultation, and project management. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and to support the development of a transportation network that aligns with the nation's economic, environmental, and social aspirations.

ACE SUBMISSION

Defining objectives

1. What is your understanding of the Government's strategic transport objectives? Are they the right ones, and if not, how should they be changed?

The UK Government's strategic transport objectives, in the view of ACE members, can be broadly categorised into several key areas:

Connectivity and Accessibility – One of the primary goals of the Government's transport strategy is to enhance connectivity and accessibility across the country. This includes improving transportation links between cities, rural areas, and regions to promote economic growth, facilitate trade, and provide better access to jobs, education, and services. ACE members underscore the importance of enhancing connectivity and accessibility as the cornerstone of the Government's transport strategy. A well-connected transport network spanning cities, rural areas, and regions is pivotal for promoting economic growth, enhancing trade, and improving access to vital services and opportunities. ACE members view this objective as vital for fostering inclusivity and delivering the Government's levelling up agenda.

Sustainability and Environment – With increasing concerns about environmental impact and climate change, the Government aims to incorporate sustainability into its transport objectives. This involves reducing carbon emissions, promoting the use of electric vehicles, investing in public transportation to reduce congestion and air pollution, and integrating green infrastructure into transport planning. The commitment to reducing carbon emissions, encouraging electric vehicles, and investment in public transport resonates with ACE members who also emphasise the urgency of addressing climate change and curbing air pollution. The integration of green infrastructure into transport planning aligns seamlessly with the ethos of environmentally conscious engineering solutions.

Safety and Reliability – Ensuring the safety and reliability of the transport network is another crucial objective. This includes measures to reduce accidents, improve road and rail infrastructure, and enhance the overall safety of all modes of transportation. The significance of safety and reliability within the transport network is unequivocal for ACE members. Beyond infrastructure development, they advocate for robust safety measures, accident reduction strategies, and a continuous focus on improving road and rail

structures. ACE members endorse this objective as central to building a trustworthy and secure transportation system for all users.

Economic Growth – The Government recognises that an efficient and reliable transportation network is essential for economic growth. Strategic transport planning aims to support businesses, attract investment, and create jobs by providing efficient transportation options that enable the movement of goods and people. The alignment of strategic transport planning with economic growth resonates deeply with ACE members. Recognising that efficient transportation networks underpin thriving economies, our members advocate for policies that facilitate business growth, attract investments, and create job opportunities. The role of a well-designed transport system in driving economic vibrancy is a shared conviction among ACE members.

Innovation and Technology – Embracing technological advancements is a part of the transport strategy. This involves promoting research and development in areas such as autonomous vehicles, smart infrastructure, data-driven transport management, and other emerging technologies that can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the transportation network. ACE members, at the forefront of technological advancements, endorse the emphasis on innovation. The integration of emerging technologies, such as autonomous vehicles, smart infrastructure, and data-driven management, resonates with their commitment to engineering excellence. ACE members emphasise the importance of staying abreast of technological progress to optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of the transportation network.

Integration and Multi-Modality – The Government aims to encourage the integration of different modes of transportation, such as seamless connections between trains, buses, trams, cycling routes, and pedestrian walkways. This approach is intended to create a holistic and interconnected transport system that offers a variety of options to users. Seamless connections between trains, buses, cycling paths, and pedestrian walkways form the bedrock of an interconnected transport system, resonating deeply with ACE members who champion the concept of multi-modality.

In terms of changing the objectives, ACE members advocate for:

Holistic Planning – Encouraging a more holistic and integrated approach to transport planning that considers multiple modes of transportation and their interactions. ACE members advocate for an integrated approach that considers the interactions between diverse transportation modes, promoting harmonious transport ecosystems.

Long-Term Perspective – Suggesting longer-term planning that accounts for future transportation needs and emerging technologies to prevent infrastructure from becoming quickly outdated. ACE members recommend embracing long-term planning to anticipate future needs and technological trends, safeguarding infrastructure against decline.

Sustainability Integration – Advocating for stronger integration of sustainability principles and green infrastructure into the objectives to align with global environmental goals. Given the urgency of environmental concerns, ACE members suggest strengthening objectives with sustainability integration to align with global ecological imperatives.

Flexibility for Innovation – Recommending objectives that allow for flexibility to accommodate technological advancements and innovations in the transport sector. ACE members emphasise the need for objectives that allow for flexibility to accommodate disruptive innovations, ensuring that the transport system remains adaptable to emerging technologies.

Investment Prioritisation – Providing insights into which projects or areas might need priority investment based on technical feasibility and potential impact. Offering insights based on technical feasibility and potential impact, ACE members can contribute to the informed prioritisation of investment projects.

2. How well has the Government articulated the outcomes and objectives it seeks from the country's transport network? How could this be improved, and what impact would better-defined objectives have on transport planning and investment?

From the perspective of ACE members, the articulation of outcomes and objectives by the UK Government for the country's transport network can have a significant impact on the clarity, effectiveness, and efficiency of transport planning and investment.

Current Situation:

Clarity of Objectives – The extent to which the UK Government has effectively articulated its transport objectives can vary. While there are overarching goals such as connectivity, sustainability, safety, and economic growth, the clarity and specificity of these objectives may be open to interpretation.

Multi-Modal Approach – The UK Government's transport planning historically had a mode-specific focus, which can lead to fragmented decision-making and competition for funding between different transport modes. This approach might not adequately address the interconnected nature of transport networks and the potential for synergies between modes.

Potential Improvements:

Clear and Measurable Objectives – The Government could enhance its transport objectives by making them more explicit, quantifiable, and measurable. This would provide a clear framework for evaluating progress and success in achieving desired outcomes.

Integration and Holistic Vision – Instead of focusing on individual transport modes, the Government could adopt a more integrated and holistic approach that considers how different modes interact and influence each other. This could lead to more balanced and efficient investments that address the needs of various transportation users.

Long-Term Perspective – Shifting towards a long-term perspective when setting transport objectives would help anticipate future needs and technological advancements. This could involve envisioning the transport network's state in 10, 20, or more years and aligning objectives with that vision.

Impact of Better-Defined Objectives:

Enhanced Clarity – Clear and well-defined objectives would provide a common understanding of the Government's priorities and allow stakeholders to align their efforts accordingly. This could streamline decision-making processes and reduce ambiguity in project evaluation.

Optimised Investment – Well-articulated objectives would enable more informed investment decisions. Funding allocation could be directed towards projects that directly contribute to achieving the defined outcomes, reducing wastage of resources on initiatives that might not align with the broader vision.

Smoother Cross-Government Planning – Better-defined objectives would facilitate coordination between various government departments and agencies involved in transport planning. This would minimise conflicts and ensure that projects contribute cohesively to overarching goals.

Synergistic Solutions – An integrated approach based on clearly defined objectives could lead to solutions that exploit synergies between different modes of transportation. For example, initiatives that promote both cycling and public transport usage can lead to reduced congestion and emissions.

Future-Proofing – Long-term objectives would guide investments towards adaptable and future-proof infrastructure that can accommodate changing needs and emerging technologies.

Public Confidence – Clearly communicated objectives provide transparency to the public, building trust and confidence in the Government's transport planning and investment decisions.

In summary, ACE members see room for improvement in the UK Government's articulation of transport objectives. A shift towards clearer, multi-modal, long-term, and measurable objectives could lead to more effective transport planning and investment, resulting in a well-connected, sustainable, and efficient transport network that meets the needs of the population while accounting for future challenges and opportunities.

Using objectives to guide investment

3. How well does the appraisal and decision-making process for new transport investment meet the Government's strategic transport objectives? How should this be improved?

From the perspective of ACE members, the appraisal and decision-making process for new transport investment in the UK should ideally align closely with the Government's strategic transport objectives to ensure efficient and effective allocation of resources.

Current Situation:

Mode-Specific Focus – The current investment planning often revolves around individual transport modes or specific projects. This can result in a fragmented approach that might not adequately consider the broader interconnectivity between modes.

Local Advocacy – Different bodies in various parts of the country advocate for infrastructure and funding for their respective regions, which could lead to competition for resources and potentially overlook national priorities.

Short-Term Focus – The short-term and competitive nature of funding allocation can sometimes hinder the development of long-term strategic projects that align with the Government's vision.

Potential Improvements:

Multi-Modal Integration – The appraisal and decision-making process should prioritise a multi-modal perspective. Rather than viewing transport modes in isolation, the process should assess how investments in one mode can complement and enhance the performance of others, leading to a more holistic transport network.

National Prioritisation – While regional needs are important, there should be a mechanism for prioritising projects that align with national strategic objectives. This would help avoid fragmented decision-making and ensure that projects contribute to broader goals.

Strategic Alignment – The appraisal process should explicitly require project proponents to demonstrate how their proposals align with the Government's strategic transport objectives. This alignment should be a key criterion for project evaluation and funding allocation.

Long-Term Planning – The decision-making process should encourage and support long-term planning by considering the potential impacts of projects over extended timeframes. This could involve conducting robust scenario analysis and considering future trends in transportation.

Quantifiable Metrics – The process should incorporate quantifiable metrics and key performance indicators that reflect the Government's objectives. This would provide a clear framework for evaluating the success of projects in achieving desired outcomes.

Flexibility for Innovation – The process should be flexible enough to accommodate innovative solutions and emerging technologies that might not fit traditional modes. This would encourage creativity and adaptation to changing transportation trends.

Impact of Improved Appraisal and Decision-Making:

Better Aligned Investments – Improved alignment between investments and strategic objectives would ensure that projects contribute directly to the Government's vision for the transport network.

Efficient Resource Allocation – A more integrated approach would optimise resource allocation, avoiding duplication of efforts and promoting synergies between different modes.

Enhanced Long-Term Benefits – Long-term planning would result in projects that are more resilient to future challenges and capable of adapting to evolving transportation needs.

Clearer Accountability – Clear strategic alignment and measurable metrics would make it easier to hold decision-makers accountable for the outcomes of investments.

National Connectivity – Prioritising projects based on national objectives would lead to a more cohesive and connected transport network that benefits the entire country.

Confidence and Support – A transparent and strategic decision-making process would garner public and stakeholder support, leading to greater confidence in the Government's transport plans and investments.

In conclusion, ACE members see room for improvement in the alignment of the appraisal and decision-making process with the Government's strategic transport objectives. By embracing a multi-modal, long-term, and strategic approach, the process can ensure that transport investments are well-coordinated, efficient, and impactful, contributing to a well-integrated and sustainable transport network across the UK.

4. How should wider economic, environmental and social impacts be appraised and valued, including when the gains will largely be felt in policy areas other than transport?

From the perspective of ACE members, the appraisal and valuation of wider economic, environmental, and social impacts in transport planning is essential to ensure that decisions are comprehensive, well-informed, and aligned with broader societal goals.

Economic Impacts:

Cost-Benefit Analysis – Economic impacts should be assessed through rigorous cost-benefit analysis. This involves quantifying both direct and indirect economic benefits (e.g., increased productivity, reduced travel time) as well as costs (e.g., construction, operation, maintenance).

Indirect Effects – Beyond immediate economic effects, indirect impacts on regional development, job creation, business growth, and the potential for attracting investment should be considered.

Distributional Effects – An evaluation should take place into how economic impacts are distributed across different segments of the population and regions. This helps to address equity concerns and ensures that benefits are not disproportionately concentrated.

Environmental Impacts:

Environmental Assessment – Conduct thorough environmental impact assessments to evaluate the potential effects of transportation projects on air quality, noise levels, biodiversity, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Sustainability Metrics – Use sustainability indicators to quantify environmental impacts. This might involve calculating carbon footprints, assessing air quality improvements, or estimating reductions in congestion-related emissions.

Resource Efficiency – Consider the efficient use of resources, such as land and energy, to minimise negative environmental effects and promote sustainable practices.

Social Impacts:

Social Cost-Benefit Analysis – Assess the social impacts of transport projects by considering factors such as accessibility, social inclusion, health benefits, and quality of life improvements.

Equity and Accessibility – Evaluate how the project affects accessibility for different social groups, particularly vulnerable populations, and address potential disparities.

Community Engagement – Involve local communities in the assessment process to capture their insights and concerns related to social impacts.

Cross-Policy Gains:

Holistic Approach – Recognise that the impacts of transport projects often extend beyond transportation itself. Collaborate with experts from various policy areas (e.g., environment, health, education) to identify and quantify cross-policy gains.

Scenario Analysis – Conduct scenario analysis to explore the potential impacts of transport investments on various policy areas. This helps to identify synergies and trade-offs across different societal objectives.

Integration:

Integrated Assessment – Utilise integrated assessment tools and frameworks that consider multiple impacts simultaneously, allowing decision-makers to evaluate the project's overall net impact on society.

Trade-Off Analysis – Recognise that there might be trade-offs between different impacts. For instance, a project with substantial economic benefits might have negative environmental consequences. Decision-makers should weigh these trade-offs based on societal priorities.

In summary, the appraisal and valuation of wider economic, environmental, and social impacts in transport planning requires a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach. ACE members currently collaborate with experts from various fields, involve stakeholders, and employ robust methodologies to ensure that projects align with the broader goals of economic development, environmental sustainability, and social well-being, even when the gains extend beyond the realm of transportation.

5. How can longer-term certainty in planning be achieved in order to promote greater private sector investment from a range of sources?

Achieving longer-term certainty in transport planning is essential to promote greater private sector investment from various sources. ACE members play a pivotal role in this process by advocating for and contributing to strategies that provide stability and transparency in planning.

Clear Strategic Objectives:

Alignment with National Objectives – Clearly define and communicate the Government's strategic transport objectives. This alignment will assure private investors that their projects contribute to broader national goals.

Comprehensive Planning:

Long-Term Vision – Develop a comprehensive, long-term vision for the country's transportation network. This provides a roadmap for private investors and encourages them to engage in projects with lasting impact.

Regulatory and Policy Framework:

Stable Regulatory Environment – Establish stable and predictable regulatory frameworks that support private sector investment. Avoid frequent changes in regulations that could introduce uncertainty.

Funding Mechanisms:

Diversified Funding Sources – Create a mix of funding sources, such as public-private partnerships (PPPs), infrastructure bonds, and concession agreements, to reduce reliance on short-term government funding and encourage private investment.

Risk Management:

Risk Sharing – Develop mechanisms for sharing risks between public and private sectors. This can involve risk assessments, risk allocation, and risk mitigation strategies to ensure that both parties are comfortable with the level of risk they are undertaking.

Transparent Decision-Making:

Clear Project Selection Criteria – Implement transparent criteria for project selection and funding allocation. This assures investors that projects are chosen based on merit and strategic alignment.

Open Communication – Maintain open channels of communication with private investors and stakeholders, providing updates on project timelines, regulatory changes, and other relevant developments.

Long-Term Contracts:

Long Concession Periods – In the case of PPPs, structure contracts with longer concession periods to provide investors with a reasonable time frame for recovering their investments and generating returns.

Multi-Modal Integration:

Integrated Approaches – Encourage private investment in multi-modal projects that address various transportation modes. Investors may be more interested in projects that contribute to a holistic and interconnected transport network.

Robust Project Preparation:

Detailed Feasibility Studies – Conduct thorough feasibility studies for projects, addressing technical, financial, and environmental aspects. This provides a solid foundation for private investors to evaluate risks and benefits.

Public-Private Collaboration:

Collaborative Planning – Engage private sector stakeholders in the planning process to ensure that their expertise is considered, increasing the likelihood of successful private sector participation.

Stable Political and Policy Environment:

Political Consistency – Maintain political stability and consistency in policy-making. A stable political environment gives investors confidence that their investments won't be subject to abrupt changes due to shifts in political priorities.

By implementing these strategies, ACE members, alongside government agencies and private sector partners, can contribute to achieving longer-term certainty in transport planning. This, in turn, will encourage greater private sector investment from a diverse range of sources, leading to the development of a resilient, efficient, and well-integrated transport network.

Improving coordination and alignment

6. How effectively is strategic transport planning and investment coordinated across and between transport modes, including with reference to achieving modal shift?

From the perspective of ACE members, strategic transport planning and investment coordination across different transport modes is crucial to achieving efficient, sustainable, and well-integrated transportation networks. Achieving modal shift, which involves encouraging people to switch from using private vehicles to more sustainable modes of transport like public transit, cycling, and walking, is a key objective for addressing congestion, reducing emissions, and improving overall mobility.

Current Situation:

Mode-Specific Focus – Historically, transport planning has often been focused on individual transport modes, leading to fragmented decision-making and a lack of synergy between modes.

Competition for Funding – Funding allocation based on competition among different modes can result in a disjointed approach, with some modes receiving more attention and resources than others.

Lack of Integration – Coordinated planning for seamless interconnectivity between different modes is lacking, which can hinder the overall effectiveness of the transportation network.

Potential Improvements:

Integrated Planning:

- Holistic Approach – Promote holistic planning that considers the interplay between different transport modes, viewing them as interconnected components of a unified system.
- Intermodal Hubs – Develop intermodal hubs that facilitate easy transfers between various modes, allowing people to switch between modes smoothly, encouraging them to use several modes as part of the same journey.

Shared Objectives:

- Unified Vision – Foster a common, national-level vision that guides investments and policies to achieve balanced modal development and address key transportation challenges.
- Multi-Modal Objectives – Set objectives that incentivise modal shift, like reducing car dependency and increasing public transport usage.

Resource Allocation:

- Outcome-Based Funding – Allocate funding based on outcomes rather than competition, encouraging projects that contribute to broader modal shift and transportation goals.

- Incentivise Sustainability – Develop funding mechanisms that prioritise sustainable modes and projects that promote modal shift.

Data Integration:

- Data Sharing – Implement data sharing across modes to improve the understanding of travel patterns, making it easier to design solutions that encourage modal shift.
- Integrated Ticketing – Introduce integrated ticketing systems that allow users to seamlessly switch between different modes using a single ticket.

Policy Alignment:

- Cross-Government Collaboration – Facilitate collaboration between different government departments responsible for various modes of transport to ensure policy coherence.
- Transport Integration with Land Use Planning – Align transportation planning with land use planning to promote transit-oriented development and reduce the need for private vehicles.

Impact of Improved Coordination:

Efficient Resource Use – Integrated planning leads to better resource allocation, minimising duplication of efforts and maximising the effectiveness of investments.

Reduced Congestion – A well-coordinated system that encourages modal shift can lead to reduced traffic congestion and improved overall mobility.

Environmental Benefits – Modal shift towards sustainable modes can lead to decreased carbon emissions, better air quality, and a smaller ecological footprint.

Improved Accessibility – Integration between modes ensures better connectivity, making the transportation network more accessible for a wider range of users.

Economic Benefits – An integrated system can enhance economic efficiency, reduce travel costs for users, and contribute to local business growth.

Quality of Life – Promoting modal shift improves the quality of life by reducing travel stress, promoting active transportation, and making cities more livable.

In summary, ACE members see the need for more effective coordination in strategic transport planning and investment across different modes. Achieving modal shift requires a multi-modal approach that integrates planning, policy, funding, data, and stakeholder engagement to create a seamless and sustainable transportation network.

7. How could planning for transport infrastructure across government and coordination of policy (for example, with policy on energy, digital or planning) be made more coherent and streamlined?

From the perspective of ACE members, achieving a coherent and streamlined approach to planning for transport infrastructure across government and coordinating policies with other sectors such as energy, digital, and planning is crucial to ensuring effective and holistic decision-making. Here are some strategies that can help improve this coordination:

Integrated Planning:

Cross-Sector Working Groups – Establish interdepartmental working groups that bring together representatives from relevant government departments, including transport, energy, digital, and planning. This promotes collaboration and ensures that decisions are made with a comprehensive perspective.

Shared Objectives – Develop shared objectives that cut across different sectors, aligning goals to create a common vision for infrastructure development.

Long-Term Vision:

National Infrastructure Strategy – Develop a national infrastructure strategy that outlines the long-term vision for transportation and other related sectors. This strategy should incorporate input from all relevant departments and provide a cohesive framework.

Cross-Sector Goals – Ensure that the objectives of transportation planning align with broader national goals related to energy efficiency, sustainability, economic growth, and digital connectivity.

Data Sharing and Analysis:

Integrated Data Platforms – Create data-sharing platforms that allow different government departments to access and analyse data related to transportation, energy consumption, digital infrastructure, and land use.

Evidence-Based Decision-Making – Use data-driven insights to inform decision-making, allowing for a more accurate understanding of the potential impacts and benefits of infrastructure projects.

Policy Coherence:

Policy Integration – Coordinate policies across sectors to avoid conflicts and ensure that regulations and policies support rather than hinder the achievement of shared objectives.

Cross-Sector Impact Assessment – Develop mechanisms to assess the potential cross-sector impacts of policies and projects, ensuring that unintended consequences are identified and mitigated.

Collaborative Design:

Early Involvement – Involve relevant departments in the early stages of transport infrastructure planning. This ensures that potential conflicts and synergies are identified and addressed from the beginning.

Funding Integration:

Pooling Resources – Explore opportunities to pool funding from different departments for integrated projects that span multiple sectors. This encourages cooperation and maximises the impact of investment.

Regulatory Alignment:

Harmonised Regulations – Work towards harmonising regulations across sectors to create a consistent regulatory environment that supports integrated infrastructure development.

By implementing these strategies, ACE members can contribute to a more coherent and streamlined approach to planning for transport infrastructure across government and fostering effective coordination of policies with other sectors. This integrated approach ultimately leads to better-informed decision-making, improved resource allocation, and the development of sustainable and resilient infrastructure that meets the needs of a complex and interconnected society.

8. How effectively is strategic transport planning and investment coordinated between national, devolved, regional and local government and other public bodies? Do the current division and distribution of powers help or hinder?

From the perspective of ACE members, the effectiveness of strategic transport planning and investment coordination between different levels of government and public bodies can significantly impact the overall success of transportation initiatives. The degree to which this coordination is achieved, along with the

division and distribution of powers, can either help or hinder the development of an efficient, integrated, and sustainable transport network.

Current Situation:

Division of Powers – The UK has a mixture of devolved powers to Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, along with various degrees of local government autonomy. This can result in varying levels of decision-making authority and policies across different regions.

Coordination Challenges – The complex governance structure can lead to challenges in coordinating strategic transport planning and investments. Varying priorities, regulations, and funding mechanisms across different jurisdictions can hinder seamless collaboration.

Regional Disparities – The current division of powers might not always consider the broader national transportation goals, leading to the potential for regional disparities in investment, infrastructure development, and service quality.

Considerations for Improvement:

Clear National Framework:

- Develop a clear national framework for strategic transport objectives that sets out overarching goals, allowing devolved and local governments to align their plans with national priorities.
- Encourage regular dialogues between national, devolved, regional, and local governments to ensure that transportation strategies are consistent and aligned.

Coordinated Planning:

- Establish mechanisms for regular collaboration and information-sharing between all levels of government and relevant public bodies. This could include joint working groups, task forces, and coordinated project reviews.
- Engage stakeholders, including ACE members, to provide expertise and input into planning processes at all levels of government.

Integrated Funding:

- Develop funding models that provide a balance between national, regional, and local investment. Ensuring equitable distribution of funds can help address regional disparities and foster collaboration.
- Explore ways to pool resources from different levels of government for large-scale infrastructure projects that benefit multiple regions.

Common Metrics and Evaluation:

- Establish common performance indicators and evaluation criteria that can be applied across different levels of government. This ensures consistent assessment of project success and alignment with strategic objectives.
- Develop mechanisms for sharing best practices and lessons learned between regions to enhance the effectiveness of transport investments.

Flexibility and Local Autonomy:

- While a clear national framework is important, allow flexibility for devolved and local governments to tailor solutions to their specific needs and challenges.
- Empower local authorities to make decisions that are aligned with national objectives while addressing unique regional circumstances.

Impact of Improved Coordination:

Efficiency – Improved coordination ensures that resources are allocated efficiently, avoiding duplication of efforts and conflicting projects.

Seamless Connectivity – Coordinated planning and investment lead to a more interconnected transport network, benefiting users who travel across different regions.

Consistency – Alignment between national, regional, and local plans leads to consistent policies, regulations, and standards, providing a clear framework for infrastructure development.

Equity – Enhanced coordination can address regional disparities, ensuring that transportation benefits are distributed more equitably.

Attracting Investment – A coordinated approach increases confidence among investors, as they can expect stable and coordinated policy environments across different regions.

In summary, while the current division and distribution of powers can present challenges, ACE members see the potential for improvement through clear national frameworks, coordinated planning, integrated funding, common evaluation criteria, and a balance between flexibility and local autonomy. By fostering collaboration between different levels of government and public bodies, the transportation network can become more efficient, integrated, and aligned with both national and regional goals.

