Integrated National Transport Strategy

RoSPA's response to the Department for Transport's consultation

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Response to Department for Transport's consultation: Integrated National Transport Strategy

Introduction

This is the response of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to the Department for Transport's consultation on an integrated National Transport Strategy. We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.

Caitlin Taylor, Road Safety Manager.

In your opinion, how could the transport network be better 'joined-up'?

RoSPA response:

A more joined-up transport network would require an integrated approach that focuses on improving both the infrastructure and the way we use transport systems. Key actions include:

National Road Safety Strategy for England:
A coordinated National Road Safety Strategy is essential for England to address the growing concerns around road safety. Unlike Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, which each have their own comprehensive national road safety strategies, England currently lacks a unified, nationwide framework. This puts it at a disadvantage in tackling road safety in a consistent and strategic manner.

A clear and coordinated strategy for England would provide measurable targets, well-defined goals, and structured guidance for local authorities, ensuring that road safety is prioritised across the country. It would create a unified approach to road safety, aligning policies, infrastructure development, and enforcement measures with common objectives. This would not only help reduce accidents and fatalities but also foster a more collaborative approach between national and local government bodies, as well as various stakeholders such as law enforcement, businesses, and the general public.

By adopting a National Road Safety Strategy, England could ensure that all regions are working towards shared safety objectives, addressing issues of road infrastructure, traffic management, and safety awareness in a coordinated way. This strategic approach would lead to better outcomes for road users and contribute to a safer, more sustainable transport network.

Road Safety Education and Public Awareness:
Integrating road safety education across all user groups is essential for cultivating a culture of consistent, safe behaviour. By fostering mutual understanding and cooperation among drivers, motorcyclists, cyclists, and pedestrians, we can effectively reduce risks and enhance overall road safety. This collective approach not only promotes safer interactions but also contributes to improved connectivity and more harmonious traffic flow, benefiting all road users.

Data in the context of the next question can mean having better information about journeys, such as but not limited to departure times, journey planning, traffic information and accessibility information. How could data be used to improve the transport network?

RoSPA response:

Data can significantly improve the safety and efficiency of the transport network in several key ways. Firstly, data-driven safety interventions play a crucial role. By collecting and analysing data on accident hotspots, fatality rates, and contributing factors such as speed, distraction, and impairment, we can make informed decisions about where to invest in infrastructure and policy changes. For example, areas with high pedestrian fatalities could be prioritised for safety improvements like pedestrian crossings or reduced speed limits.

Secondly, collaboration across local authorities can greatly enhance road safety. Sharing data between local authorities enables a more accurate identification of safety trends and the implementation of targeted interventions. If a particular area experiences a high rate of pedestrian accidents, local authorities can work together to launch awareness campaigns or improve infrastructure in that location.

In addition, providing real-time information for road users can empower them to make safer and more informed decisions. By offering real-time traffic data, including information on congestion, accidents, and alternative transport options, apps and systems can help reduce congestion, prevent accidents, and improve the overall travel experience for all road users.

Lastly, establishing a Road Safety Investigation Branch would address the need for better data on fatal and serious accidents. This dedicated body would collect more accurate and comprehensive data on the causes of road collisions, analysing crashes independently of police investigations. By identifying systemic issues and providing recommendations for prevention, this branch would play a critical role in improving road safety nationwide.

Technology in the context of the next question means new and innovative ways to complete journeys, for example but not limited to the use of autonomous vehicles, electric scooters and e-hailing rides. How could technology be used to improve the transport network?

RoSPA response:

Technology holds great potential to improve the transport network, but it must be used thoughtfully to ensure it enhances safety without introducing new risks. There are several ways technology can be leveraged to improve the network while also addressing potential hazards such as distraction and overreliance.

One of the most significant ways technology can enhance safety is through the integration of advanced safety features in vehicles. Features like autonomous emergency braking, lane-keeping assist, and collision detection systems can reduce the likelihood of crashes caused by human error. Additionally, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) can alert drivers to potential dangers or intervene if a driver is distracted or fatigued, further improving overall safety.

Another area where technology can have a significant impact is in traffic management through smart infrastructure. Real-time traffic monitoring and dynamic traffic lights can help reduce congestion and prevent accidents by adjusting signals based on traffic conditions. Furthermore, intelligent traffic signs that provide drivers with real-time information about hazards, road closures, and accidents ahead can empower them to make safer decisions, improving both safety and traffic flow.

Technology can also play a key role in encouraging active travel, such as walking and cycling. Navigation apps could be developed to suggest the safest and most efficient routes for cyclists and pedestrians, steering them away from busy roads or areas with higher accident risks. Moreover, cycling infrastructure could be enhanced through the use of technology, such as e-bikes and smart bike-sharing systems, making cycling more accessible and safer for users.

When it comes to autonomous vehicles, technology has the potential to improve safety by removing human error from driving. However, careful integration is essential. Ensuring proper testing and regulation is crucial to prevent autonomous vehicles from becoming a safety hazard due to unexpected malfunctions or reliance on technology that may fail to react appropriately in certain conditions. Additionally, it is important that drivers remain engaged in situations where they must take control, such as when the system encounters an issue, without becoming overly reliant on the vehicle's technology.

To prevent new technology from contributing to distraction, it is important that devices and systems are designed with driver attention in mind. Hands-free and voice-activated technology can be used for navigation and communication, reducing the need for drivers to physically interact with devices. Furthermore, in-car infotainment systems should be carefully regulated to ensure they do not contribute to cognitive distractions, with clear limits on what can be done while driving.

Finally, while technology can certainly improve safety, it is vital to avoid overreliance on it. Educating drivers on how to use technology safely is essential, emphasising that technology should assist, not replace, good driving behaviour. Even with advanced technology, drivers must remain alert and ready to take control when necessary, particularly in autonomous vehicles or e-hailing rides.

By using technology responsibly and integrating it into the transport network in ways that enhance safety and efficiency—while preventing overreliance and distraction—we can create a safer and more effective transport system for all road users.

How, if at all, would you improve the way decisions are made about the transport network?

RoSPA response

1. Evidence-Led Decision Making

Decisions regarding the transport network should be driven by data and evidence to ensure the implementation of the most effective policies and interventions. This can be achieved by collecting and analysing comprehensive accident data, which includes causes and contributing factors, to identify patterns and problem areas within the network. Additionally, establishing clear and measurable targets for reducing fatalities, injuries, and other key metrics is crucial in guiding decision-making and ensuring that progress is being made. Real-time data and predictive analytics should also be used to dynamically adjust policies and interventions. For instance, areas with high accident rates or hazardous conditions could be prioritised for infrastructure improvements or safety campaigns.

2. Long-Term Strategic Planning

Transport decisions must be proactive and follow a long-term, strategic vision for the future of the network. This requires the development of a National Transport Strategy that outlines a comprehensive and forward-thinking plan for the development and operation of the transport network over the next 10 to 20 years. The strategy should include clear goals and milestones for improving road safety, reducing congestion, and promoting sustainability, along with regular monitoring and review of progress. To reduce accidents effectively, a cross-government approach to accident prevention is essential. Our report, *Safer Lives: Stronger Nation*, has highlighted

a concerning 42% rise in the number of accidents across roads, homes, leisure activities, and workplaces, which underscores the need for a coordinated effort across all government departments to address safety challenges.

3. Collaborative and Inclusive Decision-Making
The decision-making process for the transport network should involve all relevant stakeholders. Local authorities should be empowered to design and implement transport solutions tailored to the specific needs of their communities, including safer roads and active travel infrastructure. Engaging with public and private transport operators is also important to understand their perspectives on improving efficiency and safety. Additionally, public consultations and community engagement should be integral to the decision-making process, ensuring that the voices of road users, pedestrians, cyclists, and other groups are heard. Collaboration with experts and advocacy groups, such as RoSPA, which have specialised knowledge in road safety and accident prevention, is vital to ensuring well-informed policy development.

4. Dedicated Oversight Bodies
It is essential to introduce dedicated, independent bodies tasked with overseeing and ensuring the effectiveness of road safety policies. A Road Safety Investigation Branch should be established to investigate fatal and serious incidents on the roads. This body would focus on identifying root causes, offering recommendations for improvements, and tracking the effectiveness of safety measures over time. Operating independently from the police, the branch would ensure that its focus remains solely on enhancing road safety, rather than on criminal investigations.

5. Incorporating Public Health and Sustainability Goals
Road safety decisions should align with broader public health and environmental sustainability objectives. For instance, active travel, such as walking and cycling, should be prioritised alongside road safety efforts. This could involve making the transport network safer for vulnerable road users while encouraging healthier travel options. Sustainability should also be a priority, with policies aimed at reducing environmental impacts, such as promoting the use of electric vehicles, enhancing public transport options, and reducing emissions from the transport sector.

6. Flexibility and Innovation
The transport network should be open to innovative solutions that improve safety and efficiency. Decision-making should not be rigid but allow for flexibility, enabling the adoption of new approaches as they arise. By incorporating these strategies, the transport network can become more efficient, safer, and responsive to the evolving needs of society. Decision-making will be more transparent, accountable, and focused on outcomes that prioritise road safety, sustainability, and the well-being of all road users.

Any other comments?

RoSPA response

RoSPA urges the Government to take bold, decisive action to address road safety, including the implementation of a **National Accident Prevention Strategy**. Over the last decade, accidental death rates have risen sharply – by

42%, costing the NHS at least £6 billion annually. We believe that through targeted interventions—such as the introduction of progressive licensing for young drivers, reducing the legal drink-driving limit, improving vehicle safety standards, and better regulation of new technologies—we can significantly reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries on our roads.

It is also vital that we do not lose sight of the importance of **education and public awareness**. RoSPA strongly supports campaigns to raise awareness of dangerous behaviours such as speeding, distracted driving, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. The Government should also invest in promoting healthy and active travel, such as walking and cycling, to reduce congestion and improve public health.

Ultimately, every life lost on the road is a tragedy. It is time to move beyond complacency and take action that will safeguard the future of all road users, regardless of their mode of transport.

RoSPA has no further comments to make on the consultation process, other than to thank the Department for Transport for the opportunity to comment. We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.