

PREPARATION OF FINAL LOCAL TRANSPORT PLANS: NEXT STEPS

Introduction

1. This note provides further guidance to local authorities preparing Local Transport Plans prior to their final submission to the Department in March 2006. It supplements and where appropriate supersedes the "Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans" published in December 2004.
2. The Department and regional Government Offices are currently assessing the quality of provisional local transport plans submitted in July 2005. A grading for each plan and a supporting written assessment will be published with this year's local transport capital settlement. These, together with the Annual Progress Reports also currently being assessed, will influence the distribution of funding in 2006/07.
3. Though the assessment of provisional plans is not complete the Department expects areas for improvement to be identified in most plans. The Department wishes to provide every opportunity and incentive for authorities to ensure that final plans provide the firmest possible foundation for delivering better local transport over the next five years. It is therefore making some changes to the proposals for assessment of the final plans by the Department during 2006.
4. The 2004 Guidance indicated that the assessment of Final Plans would cover only the assessed impact of targets included in the Plan. While this remains a particularly important element, the Department now proposes to combine the assessment of targets with a review of the overall quality of the Plan, so enabling the final assessment to take account of all improvements made prior to the submission of Final Plans. The intention is not to place an additional burden on authorities and require plans to be rewritten, but to provide authorities with the opportunity to make improvements to their plans, and scope for these improvements to be taken into account in funding allocations from 2007/8 onwards.

Combined Assessments

5. The Department will assess the final plans using the same six criteria as for the provisional plans set out in Annex C of the 'Full Guidance on Local Transport Plans'. But throughout the assessment, and in particular in considering the criteria on Performance Management and Priorities, the Department will consider whether and how targets have been selected, developed and set to provide a satisfactory or stretching degree of challenge for the authority. This will enable the impact of targets to be considered in the context of the overall quality of the Plan.
6. In considering the targets proposed, the Department will take into account the minimum standards set out in table C1 of the December 2004 guidance for the mandatory indicators they cover. In June 2005 the Department confirmed that targets for mandatory indicators BV97a/223a

(Non-Principal Classified Road Condition) and LTP4 (mode share of journeys to school) will not be required in final second local transport plans due to changes to data sets.

7. The Department's assessment related to targets will focus on what can be delivered given the final planning guidelines (currently being consulted upon). It will not take specific account of the stretch gained from an extra 25% of integrated transport block funding and authorities do not need to submit targets relating to this extra funding. This should reduce the workload on authorities and simplify the target-related assessment of final plans.

The Criteria for Assessment of Plans

8. As indicated above, assessment of the Plans will be based generally on the six criteria set out in Annex C of the 2004 Guidance. But some modifications will be required to the specific Guidance given on Performance Management and on Priorities.
9. On *Performance Management*, the sub-criteria set out in paragraph 11 of annex C of the 2004 Guidance took into account that while targets are an integral part of local transport plans, the precise level of all targets was not required to be finalised until the final plans. These sub-criteria have therefore been modified to guide authorities providing final plans, as follows:

"The Government will in particular look for evidence that:

- the strength of the evidence, including comparative analysis, to demonstrate that the proposed targets and trajectories are both challenging and realistic in relation to the final planning guidelines
- the extent to which the authority has set out key interventions and a balanced programme in the Plan to achieve the targets
- the strength of evidence, including analysis, demonstrating that the targets support, flow from and encapsulate a plan's objectives
- the extent to which the key risks to achievement of the targets have been identified and the authority has realistic plans for managing those risks
- the robustness of systems for reviewing targets, monitoring progress against trajectories and taking corrective action."

10. On *Priorities*, the Department will expect the final plans to include completed accessibility strategies as outlined in paragraph 2.6 of the accessibility planning guidance.
11. For air quality, Defra will provide specific feedback on provisional plans to improve the quality of the final plan. In some cases, authorities were unable to provide sufficient information on targets and measures to tackle road transport emissions in the provisional plan, especially where air quality management areas had only recently been declared. The

Government expects that final plans covering local transport related air quality management areas will demonstrate convincingly how air quality exceedances will be removed by 2010 or that the local action taken to achieve a lesser target is stretching. Where the air quality target for 2010 still exceeds the relevant EU limit value, the local authority must set out what additional measures could have been taken (i.e. model what reduction in traffic would be needed) to meet the limit value and justify why those measures were not taken.

12. In relation to the shared priorities generally, the Department will be assessing the strength of the evidence that the Plan provides soundly based strategies (as in the provisional plan assessment, but recognising that accessibility strategies in particular will have been developed further since then) and that this is reflected in a balanced delivery programme and realistic but challenging targets

Integrating the Combined Assessment with Deliverability

13. There are no planned changes to the *Deliverability* element of the LTP assessment, which relates to reporting about the first local transport plan period. The Department still anticipates that this will contribute to funding allocations from 2007/08.

Future Reporting and Funding

14. The Department is considering separately arrangements for future progress reporting and how planning guidelines will be turned into financial allocations during the second local transport plan period. It will advise authorities on these issues in due course.

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