

# ICE Policy Position Statement: A national transport strategy for England

July 2023

## Executive summary

The UK's long-term economic, environmental and social objectives are not being realised at the pace required. Transport has a key role to play in meeting those strategic objectives. It enables productivity and economic growth as well as quality of life and social well-being.

However, surface transport is also the largest source of carbon emissions in the UK. To maximise the economic and social benefits derived from transport, there is an urgent need to accelerate progress towards decarbonising it and ensure the network is resilient to the effects of a changing climate.

England's current fragmented system of responsibilities for transport planning and delivery means its transport network is not perceived as a whole or planned as an integrated, multi-modal system. It makes it difficult to ensure transport planning and investment is linked to delivering wider societal benefits and meeting long-term strategic objectives.

At present, investment in the operation, renewal and enhancement of England's railways and strategic roads is determined on separate cycles by central government, which also controls investment in the capital maintenance of local roads, bus support, and a myriad of smaller funding pots.

There are a range of subsidiary bodies responsible for planning around and maximising the benefits from these investments, as well as developing projects that would qualify for central funding.

Those bodies would benefit from a clearer strategic framework that looks across the piece and sets out what wider outcomes the government is seeking to achieve, what its plans are for those investments it determines itself, and how it wishes to see the framework of funding and powers functioning at the various, appropriate subnational levels.

By looking across modes and addressing the desired environmental, economic and social policy outcomes, a national transport strategy would provide a clear vision and set of principles for sustainable road and rail development and help align the efforts of engineers, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

Earlier this year, the ICE launched a consultation seeking views on whether England needs a national transport strategy to provide that overarching vision against which to plan future subsidiary strategies and investments.

This policy position statement draws on the evidence from the consultation and makes several recommendations for why a national transport strategy is needed, what it could look like and how it could be developed.

## Recommendations

- **A national transport strategy for England should be developed to set out an overarching vision of a sustainable transport network.** *This should establish a 'golden thread' of desired outcomes across modes and levels of government by drawing together the existing array of strategies into a coherent framework, and identifying and addressing policy gaps and areas of need. It should set out how transport will contribute to delivering net zero and an equitable transition. It should also identify other long-term economic, environmental and social priorities, such as economic growth, reducing inequalities and climate resilience. This should clarify the role of transport in delivering them and the appropriate level of investment between modes and regions.*
- **A future review should assess whether a UK-wide strategy is needed and how it could be developed.** *A strategy for England is a pragmatic starting point and will address an existing gap in transport planning. However, this strategy needs to set out the wider national context in which it sits and an assessment of which transport issues can best be addressed at a UK-wide level. Further reviews could then assess both the effectiveness of the English strategy and whether and how a UK-wide strategy should be developed.*
- **The strategy needs to establish a set of principles derived from its overarching vision that enable prioritisation of transport projects.** *This should allow decision-makers at the appropriate levels to develop transport interventions that deliver outcomes linked to wider strategic objectives. A strategy should not be a wish list of projects – but it should be supported by a pipeline of projects and long-term funding commitments.*
- **The strategy should clarify the roles and responsibilities required of key stakeholders to deliver its overarching vision.** *Bodies responsible for delivery need to be appropriately empowered and supported with long-term funding settlements. Central government should be accountable for identifying outcomes, policy formulation, funding allocation and legislation/regulation. The Department for Transport (DfT) should own the strategy. National agencies and Subnational Transport Bodies (STBs) should inform the strategy and have the appropriate powers and resources to develop and deliver projects within their remit based on the overarching principles and within agreed constraints. The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) should also have a role advising the government about specific infrastructure requirements.*
- **A strategy has to be a long-term process which is agile and manages uncertainty.** *A strategy is not just a document. It should set out a long-term vision of 20–30 years but needs to be dynamic to manage uncertainty. There should be five-yearly reviews, which would enable politicians to influence it once in a political cycle. A further 'trigger point' mechanism would enable a response to significant changes in the external context.*

## An overarching vision of sustainable transport

A myriad of modal, thematic and regional transport strategies exists in England. These include the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (IRP) and Network Rail's Control Periods and route strategies for rail. For the Strategic Road Network there is the Road Investment Strategy model, while Bus Back Better and the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy cover buses and active travel. There are also strategies which cut across modes, such as the Future of Freight: A Long-Term Plan, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, the Clean Air Strategy and the Inclusive Transport Strategy.

Despite this assortment of transport strategies, infrastructure and connectivity constraints still hold back growth in towns and cities.<sup>1</sup> Surface transport is the largest emitting sector in the UK, but emissions have been flat for three decades – and are expected to remain so for the next several years at least.<sup>2</sup>

The government has also admitted that the UK's transport networks could not cope with extreme temperatures. It is expected to take decades to retrofit an ageing rail system with infrastructure able to withstand extreme temperatures.<sup>3</sup>

In a fragmented system of responsibilities and strategies, it is difficult to ensure transport planning is directed towards outcomes that will help address these wider economic, social and environmental challenges. There is no means of assessing whether the resources provided to different modes, projects and regions are appropriate against wider aspirations for what the network needs to deliver.

In short, transport investment is not being spent as effectively as it could be and wider progress towards national goals is too slow as a result.

### Plan according to wider needs and benefits

An overarching vision for transport is needed to establish which outcomes transport needs to achieve and enable all relevant national and subnational bodies to plan and invest in transport infrastructure and services accordingly. Establishing this 'golden thread' can therefore reduce the risk of investing in outcomes that do not contribute to or hinder long-term objectives.

Clarity on the strategic role of transport will help accelerate a shift in how investment decisions are made, from a focus on economics and the benefit-cost ratio (BCR) to giving more weight to the wider societal benefits of projects and programmes.

The ICE has long called for this change in mindset and there is evidence that the public agrees. According to polling for the ICE, the most important success metric for the public is that projects will benefit communities. Just 3% of the public said the most important factor is that the overall cost of constructing the project is low.<sup>4</sup>

The Wales Transport Strategy achieves this by referring to the seven national well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.<sup>5</sup> This approach ensures that planning considers a wider range of transport users, journey types and outcomes – including the needs of future generations. Emerging feedback suggests that this clarity and alignment with long-term objectives is allowing for the delivery of alternatives to road building to be accelerated and become more integrated.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> National Infrastructure Commission (2023) [Interurban Transport Advice Note on Roads Policy](#)

<sup>2</sup> Climate Change Committee (2020) [The Sixth Carbon Budget – Surface Transport](#); HM Government (2023) [Carbon Budget Delivery Plan](#)

<sup>3</sup> SEC Newgate (2022) [Why Can't Britain's Railways Take the Heat?](#)

<sup>4</sup> ICE (2019) [Reducing the Gap between Cost Estimates and Outturns for Major Infrastructure Projects and Programmes](#); ICE (2022) [5 Surprising Ways that the British Public Rates the Success of an Infrastructure Project](#)

<sup>5</sup> Welsh Government (2021) [Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#)

<sup>6</sup> ICE (2023) [ICE Summer Prestige lecture: transport](#)

## Accelerating delivery

There is also a need to reduce the time it takes to plan and deliver strategic infrastructure projects.<sup>7</sup> Major strategies and projects, such as the IRP and High Speed 2, have been subject to perennial negative debate because the strategic context within which they sit has not been well articulated or understood. This distracts from delivery, causing delays and increasing costs.

A national transport strategy can reduce the risk of political uncertainty deterring investment and delaying the delivery of strategically important national infrastructure projects. A clear strategic rationale can support long-term consensus building around the need for and benefits of major projects and make it harder for politicians to delay, rescope or abandon them.

## Risks of developing a new strategy

It is important to note that the UK already has many advantages in transport planning. It has significant public sector institutional capacity, albeit concentrated in central government agencies and larger transport bodies such as those for London, the North, Scotland and Wales.

The UK also has substantial technical and commercial advisory resources available to project sponsors and, through tools such as the Green Book, a robust approach to appraisal. Bodies such as the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) and National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) provide a means of project evaluation, capacity building and sharing best practices in project development and delivery.

There is also commitment across the mainstream political parties to achieving net zero, which is underpinned by a legally binding target to aim at, and consensus about other long-term economic, health and social well-being objectives.

Given those advantages and the myriad of existing strategies and frameworks, some responses to the ICE's consultation questioned whether a national transport strategy would, rather than add value, risk detracting from making progress on key projects and objectives.

Developing and implementing a new national transport strategy, including the potential changes to governance and roles and responsibilities, could become a lengthy process. If key policy and investment decisions were deferred, the effect could be to increase, rather than reduce, uncertainty, delays and the risk to strategic goals – at least in the short to medium term.

However, the overwhelming body of evidence the ICE received showed strong support for developing an overarching strategic vision for transport.

Greater clarity and consistency of direction for decision-makers was considered necessary to ensure the link between transport planning and investment with accelerating progress towards the UK's wider strategic objectives. This does not require major changes to the current planning architecture. A strategy that gives delivery a clearer long-term trajectory can help optimise rather than revolutionise the existing framework.

## Recommendation

**A national transport strategy for England should be developed to set out an overarching vision of a sustainable transport network.** *This should establish a 'golden thread' of desired outcomes across modes and levels of government by drawing together the existing array of strategies into a coherent framework, and identifying and addressing policy gaps and areas of need. It should set out how transport will contribute to delivering net zero and an equitable transition. It should also identify other long-term economic, environmental and social priorities, such as economic growth, reducing inequalities and climate resilience. This should clarify the role of transport in delivering them and the appropriate level of investment between modes and regions.*

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<sup>7</sup> ICE (2019) [Reducing the Gap between Cost Estimates and Outturns for Major Infrastructure Projects and Programmes](#)

## A strategy for England is a pragmatic first step

In the UK, Scotland and Wales have each developed national transport strategies. There are also regional transport strategies developed by some of England's seven Subnational Transport Bodies (STBs) and Transport for London (TfL). England's local authorities must also prepare Local Transport Plans (LTPs) over a five-year period.

However, there are gaps within this framework. England does not have its own national transport body or strategy, despite having a much larger population than the other nations.<sup>8</sup> At subnational level, some of the STBs and Mayoral Combined Authorities either lack transport strategies or are at earlier stages of development. New guidance for LTPs has also yet to be published.

Nor is there an overarching transport strategy for the UK. In 2021, the Union Connectivity Review (UCR) looked at how the UK's key transport corridors could be strengthened through a multi-modal lens. However, the government has not yet responded to its recommendations.<sup>9</sup>

Responses to the ICE's consultation made clear the benefits of a UK-wide strategy. It makes sense to address certain modes at a UK level, particularly aviation and maritime. However, across all modes, passenger and freight journeys and the network infrastructure do not adhere to subnational borders.

Devolved transport networks may also work best in the context of an overarching vision for developing the networks and connections that link them. An overarching UK-wide transport strategy could also address aspects of the transport system that are not devolved and enable a more coherent approach to issues with a national impact. Objectives such as net zero are also UK-wide.

However, given that transport is already largely devolved, and with Scotland and Wales having their own transport strategies, a more pragmatic approach would be first to develop a national transport strategy for England.

This would give England's national agencies and subnational bodies a framework of objectives and guiding principles against which to respond with subsidiary transport plans.

England would benefit from a framework for developing multimodal long-distance corridors. The NIC has highlighted the benefits of 'an interurban transport strategy' for road and rail to support growth across England's regions.<sup>10</sup>

An English strategy could also serve as a foundation for strengthening co-operation between the four home nations around a common set of high-level objectives, identifying interdependencies and improving the co-ordination of delivery. It could also be the basis for defining UK-wide strategic corridors and where responsibilities for them sit – perhaps building on the work already carried out in the UCR.

### Recommendation

**A future review should assess whether a UK-wide strategy is needed and how it could be developed. A strategy for England is a pragmatic starting point and will address an existing gap in transport planning. However, this strategy needs to set out the wider national context in which it sits and an assessment of which transport issues can best be addressed at a UK-wide level. Further reviews could then assess both the effectiveness of the English strategy and whether and how a UK-wide strategy should be developed.**

<sup>8</sup> Office for National Statistics (2022) [Population Estimates for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: Mid-2021](#)

<sup>9</sup> Department for Transport (2021) [Union Connectivity Review: Final Report](#)

<sup>10</sup> National Infrastructure Commission (2023) [Interurban Transport Advice Note on Roads Policy](#)

## A vision-led approach

Transport is a means to an end, not an end in itself. A national transport strategy for England, therefore, needs to be vision led. It should not be weighed down by technical details or become a wish-list of projects. It should set out the context, ambition and core elements needed to develop and deliver subsidiary modal and regional plans.

A national transport strategy could take a more holistic view than existing strategies, such as the Transport Decarbonisation Plan, of the economic, environmental and social outcomes the country needs to achieve and the role of transport in meeting them. This would achieve what Wales has done by linking its transport strategy to its seven national well-being goals.<sup>11</sup>

It should establish a vision of an integrated, multimodal and sustainable (financially and environmentally) transport system. This should outline how planning and modes should evolve over the long term, making clear the scale of change expected, existing barriers and the consequences of inaction. It should not be solely about infrastructure needs but about the broader policy levers needed to achieve that vision.

That vision should also be underpinned by principles to guide subsidiary plans and decision-making towards achieving a sustainable transport system. Those principles should take account of the following factors:

- Transport is a means to an end. Decision-making should attach more weight to the whole-life economic, environmental and social benefits of projects, as opposed to a fixation on achieving lowest capital cost in delivery.
- Transport planning must be focused on the needs of current and future generations of transport users. Planning must strive to enable the seamless, end-to-end, multimodal journey people and freight need to make.
- Transport planning needs to be aspirational about behaviour change and shaping sustainable travel patterns. There is a need to accelerate the shift in planning from a 'predict and provide' to a vision-led approach.
- Planning an integrated, sustainable transport network means being modally agnostic. Decision-makers need to be able to identify and assess the trade-offs between modes and develop the best solution based on robust evidence for achieving the desired outcomes.
- More attention needs to be given to the maintenance and resilience of existing assets on which future services and new infrastructure will still depend.
- Infrastructure is a system of systems. Transport planning needs to be aligned with other key infrastructure sectors, particularly energy and digital, to maximise efficiencies and wider benefits.

Keeping a strategy high level and integrating it with long-term national priorities such as net zero, reducing inequalities and economic growth will also help it stand the test of time. In contrast, setting out too much detail about how to deliver a strategy or overly reflecting short-term political priorities will risk it falling out of date.

## Planning for a preferred future

A national transport strategy is an opportunity to accelerate the shift from a 'predict and provide' (forecast-led) approach to a vision-led (or 'decide and provide') approach to transport planning.

The 'predict and provide' model is incompatible with the need to fundamentally change transport use. Vision-led planning 'sets out a preferred future and charts a course towards it that allows for uncertainty'.<sup>12</sup> It is a means of rethinking how people and freight will travel by guiding movement in more sustainable and equitable directions.

<sup>11</sup> Welsh Government (2021) [Llwybr Newydd – The Wales Transport Strategy 2021](#)

<sup>12</sup> International Transport Forum (2021) [Travel Transitions: How Transport Planners and Policy Makers Can Respond to Shifting Mobility Trends](#)

Embedding this approach through a national transport strategy could help accelerate the transition from a car-centric vision to one that is modally agnostic. Indeed, vision-led planning enables a shift away from focusing only on mobility to recognising that enabling access to opportunities 'can also be achieved by spatial proximity and digital connectivity'.<sup>13</sup>

A national transport strategy needs to put users at the core of planning by enabling integrated, end-to-end multimodal journeys. However, it must also be realistic about how much travel demand a sustainable transport system can manage and aspirational about how to achieve the behavioural changes which will result in people choosing more sustainable options.

Wales and Scotland each have targets to reduce transport levels, but England has no corresponding overall target. The Wales Transport Strategy sets out a clear hierarchy of transport modes, with sustainable modes at the top. This has been instrumental in decision-making, such as the decision to cancel, postpone or scale back all major road-building projects in Wales.<sup>14</sup>

### Enabling subnational delivery

The onus will be on central government to set out this overarching vision. However, input into the strategy must be gathered from as wide as possible. This will help establish a broad sense of ownership and give the new strategy credibility. It will also ensure that the strategy benefits from the extensive knowledge and evidence about transport challenges and opportunities at subnational level.

Responsibility for delivery should then be clearly devolved to the organisations best placed to make decisions, deliver actions and manage risks. This will help avoid duplication and optimise delivery. At present identifying and challenging where the responsibility for different actions and outcomes lies often lacks clarity.

These bodies need to be suitably empowered and resourced while retaining an appropriate level of governmental oversight.

In England, these bodies include national agencies such as National Highways, Network Rail (or Great British Railways (GBR)) and Active Travel England. At subnational level, it includes the Combined Authorities, STBs and Local Transport Authorities. There would be a challenge in aviation and maritime to establish responsibility for a strategy and its implementation, as there is no single 'owner' of airports or seaports in England or the UK. A broader collaborative approach across the industry would therefore be needed.

The current devolved transport strategies work because they cover geographies and populations large enough to be significant but small enough to be sufficiently distinct and managed. England's 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.

What they currently lack is a clear strategic framework for ensuring those strategies – and the associated investment – are consistent with the wider national outcomes the government is seeking to achieve. A high-level, national strategy would create this alignment while still allowing STBs the flexibility to respond to local needs and deliver in the local context.

A strategy would also benefit from the NIC taking a holistic view of infrastructure planning to consider issues such as integration between modes and the potential for innovation and technology. It should also have a role in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of a national transport strategy. The ICE has recommended elsewhere that the NIC should be placed on a statutory footing to provide more certainty about its role and ability to influence government.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> International Transport Forum (2021) [Travel Transitions: How Transport Planners and Policy Makers Can Respond to Shifting Mobility Trends](#)

<sup>14</sup> Welsh Government (2023) [National Transport Delivery Plan 2022 to 2027](#); Welsh Government (2023) [Roads Review: Welsh Government Response](#)

<sup>15</sup> ICE (2021) [ICE Policy Position Statement: Evolving the UK Strategic Infrastructure Planning System](#)

## Devolution

A consistent barrier to developing integrated transport systems is the variety and competitive nature of funding streams. Subnational authorities with less capacity struggle to invest time in applying for competitive funding, thus creating a cycle of underinvestment.

Decision-making is also constricted by which local powers exist in a given area. This can limit how effectively different transport modes can be matched to local needs. For example, local leaders may choose to invest in buses because they do not have the right levers over rail, even in scenarios where rail might offer the better solution.

Progress is being made, for example, through the trailblazer deals and single multi-year budgets announced for the Greater Manchester and West Midlands combined authorities. However, more reform will be needed to build capacity and resources at the subnational level. A national transport strategy could be a basis for continuing devolution in a more strategic way. More broadly, STBs may also need to evolve to become subnational infrastructure bodies, as the ICE has previously recommended.<sup>16</sup>

A national transport strategy could provide the architecture for greater, more formal collaboration – building on the work already underway between STBs and other stakeholders – to maximise the national as well as regional benefits of subnational planning and investment.

At present co-operation tends to be ad hoc and voluntary. There is no duty for regional areas to co-operate on strategic transport and planning matters in the way Local Planning Authorities have a statutory duty to co-operate (although this is planned to be removed in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill).

Providing a framework for the STBs and local authorities to work more closely together would support the development of strategic transport corridors that cross regional boundaries. In the rail industry, the GBR Transition Team is developing a partnership approach to engage with STBs, combined authorities and other regional organisations with an interest in rail services. A similar approach may be effective for and between other modes.

Enhanced co-ordination between England's STBs and other transport bodies could also form the basis of a wider dialogue with the devolved administrations (facilitated by the Department for Transport (DfT)) to enable consideration of UK connectivity needs in the round.

## Recommendations

**The strategy needs to establish a set of principles derived from its overarching vision that enable prioritisation of transport projects.** *This should allow decision-makers at the appropriate levels to develop transport interventions that deliver outcomes linked to wider strategic objectives. A strategy should not be a wish list of projects – but it should be supported by a pipeline of projects and long-term funding commitments.*

**The strategy should clarify the roles and responsibilities required of key stakeholders to deliver its overarching vision.** *Bodies responsible for delivery need to be appropriately empowered and supported with long-term funding settlements. Central government should be accountable for identifying outcomes, policy formulation, funding allocation and legislation/regulation. The Department for Transport (DfT) should own the strategy. National agencies and Subnational Transport Bodies (STBs) should inform the strategy and have the appropriate powers and resources to develop and deliver projects within their remit based on the overarching principles and within agreed constraints. The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) should also have a role advising the government about specific infrastructure requirements.*

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<sup>16</sup> ICE (2021) [ICE Policy Position Statement: Evolving the UK Strategic Infrastructure Planning System](#)



## Developing a strategy

To embed a national transport strategy into the fabric of England's devolved landscape and the myriad of existing modal and regional strategies, a range of issues will need to be addressed. However, the ICE's consultation indicates strong support for a strategy and these challenges need not be a barrier to developing one.

Beyond the wider-geographical question of whether to develop a UK-wide strategy, there are questions around governance, powers, responsibilities and funding reform in the context of further devolution, and how to better integrate transport with land-use planning and other infrastructure systems such as energy and digital.

Developing a robust strategic framework will help to resolve these issues through future iterations of a strategy and build confidence in the vision and resilience of a strategy to changing economic or political circumstances.

### Governance

While a national transport strategy would most likely be owned by the DfT, wider governance of it should incorporate other key stakeholders. This could create a cross-regional, cross-modal and apolitical governance structure to inform future iterations of the strategy, hold its delivery to account and mitigate party political changes.

Broad political consensus and embedding a strategy across different modal and regional bodies make it more difficult to unpick it. Political consensus will also be necessary if legislation is required. Strategies need to have a formal status, such as being placed on a statutory footing, to consistently influence decisions.

The commercial and economic benefits of a strategy will help give it cross-party buy-in and political weight. More certainty can drive efficiency in the supply chain and build up the confidence to invest. For the government, a strategy would not necessarily mean more investment but a framework for smarter investment and more efficient delivery.

However, too many strategies are ineffective because they lack a commitment to long-term funding. To be effective, a national transport strategy should be underpinned by a pipeline of planned investment backed up with long-term funding commitments.

A national transport strategy and its future updates should be aligned in such a way as to support key government funding and decision-making processes as well as the development of subsidiary modal and regional strategies.

### Timeframe

A timeframe of 30 years would align a strategy with the 2050 net zero target. It also aligns with HM Treasury Green Book-compliant business cases, which commonly use a 30-year time horizon when evaluating capital investment.

However, ensuring any long-term strategy is robust, particularly in a complex devolved landscape, is difficult. Agility and the ability to manage uncertainty are critical as circumstances evolve. An effective strategy needs to be a continuous process linked to the ongoing development of subsidiary strategic and investment plans that deal with shorter investment cycles, such as the five-year control periods for road and rail.

Five-yearly reviews would enable a strategy to respond to changing circumstances and be tested against scenarios for transport growth and other variables. They would also allow politicians to influence the strategy once in a political cycle and for broader stakeholder consultation and public engagement.

Allowing too many short-term reviews could undermine the clarity of vision the strategy aims to provide. However, an additional 'trigger point' mechanism would allow for an earlier or partial review if a fundamental change in external context requires major reassessment – such as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is a risk that without a statutory requirement, these reviews would be neglected. In recent years national policy statements (NPSs), including the National Networks NPS, have been left unchanged for several years. The ICE, the NIC

and others have highlighted the importance of keeping this guidance up to date for decision-making. The NIC recommended that the government makes at least five-yearly reviews of key NPSs a legal requirement.<sup>17</sup> In New Zealand, which has a 10-year land transport strategy, the Minister of Transport is required to review and update the strategy every three years and issue a new policy statement at least once every six years.<sup>18</sup>

### A systems approach to transport planning

Infrastructure is a system of systems. To be effective, a national transport strategy will need to enable greater alignment of planning and investment between transport and other relevant sectors, particularly energy and digital.

There is also a need to clarify how transport and spatial planning can co-ordinate more effectively so that local plans align with regional and national priorities and to prevent strategic developments from being thwarted by local planning objections.

This integration already happens in parts of England. London, for example, has an integrated plan covering land use, economic development and transport.<sup>19</sup> The challenge is developing and applying this approach consistently.

Australia is also grappling with the need to shift to more vision-led transport planning. The dominant urban transport policy has been to expand road capacity to accommodate growth. In turn, car ownership and congestion have continued to grow, transport emissions have increased, and road safety targets have not been met.

This has led to calls for the Australian Government to take a systems approach that would enable more collaboration between land-use planners, transport planners and other stakeholders ‘to deliver “place-changing” projects that connect people with the community in a sustainable way and serve economic needs.’<sup>20</sup>

This was reflected in the 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan, developed by the independent government advisory body Infrastructure Australia.<sup>21</sup> The plan sets a 15-year vision for infrastructure in Australia. In relation to transport, it highlights the need for:

- consistent national movement and place standards applied under a transparent framework;
- transport activities to be ‘aligned across short-, medium- and long-term horizons’ between different levels of government and jurisdictional boundaries; and
- on overarching vision within which the staged delivery of public transport services, corridors and networks can establish ‘a culture of sustainable transport’.

Its recommendations include the requirement to align transport projects with published population and land-use plans to maximise the benefits of transport investment.

### Recommendation

**A strategy has to be a long-term process which is agile and manages uncertainty.** *A strategy is not just a document. It should set out a long-term vision of 20–30 years but needs to be dynamic to manage uncertainty. There should be five-yearly reviews, which would enable politicians to influence it once in a political cycle. A further “trigger point” mechanism would enable a response to significant changes in the external context.*

<sup>17</sup> National Infrastructure Commission (2023) [Delivering Net Zero, Climate Resilience and Growth](#)

<sup>18</sup> Te Manatū Waka Ministry of Transport [Government Policy Statement on Land Transport](#)

<sup>19</sup> Greater London Authority [Programmes and Strategies](#)

<sup>20</sup> Engineers Australia (2023) [The Future of Transport – Discussion Paper](#)

<sup>21</sup> Infrastructure Australia (2021) [2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan](#)

## About ICE

Established in 1818 and with over 96,000 members worldwide, the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) exists to deliver insights on infrastructure for societal benefit, using the professional engineering knowledge of our global membership.

The ICE's strategy is focused on the decarbonisation of the infrastructure system, building resilience against the effects of climate change, and transforming productivity in infrastructure delivery, recognising the interlinking effects of water, transport and energy in achieving these goals.

This project supports the ICE's strategy by outlining how strong frameworks for infrastructure planning and prioritisation, as well as accessible, affordable and reliable transport networks, are crucial in helping to achieve decarbonisation of the infrastructure system.

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