

MTS STAG

Identification of Problems

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MTS – STAG Analysis

Identification of the problems to be solved

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document assesses the problems being experienced in the North East of Scotland that the MTS is intended to resolve.
- 1.2 It has been produced from the work carried out by a sub group of the MTS Implementation team and discussed by the large sounding board group that formed the MTS Options team.
- 1.3 The document must be read in conjunction with the other STAG analysis documents covering Objectives, Opportunities and Options.
- 1.4 The problems have been considered in sections or groupings for clarity in the subsequent analysis. Seven of these sections are the same as those used in the other MTS STAG documents. These are:-
 - Acceptability
 - Deliverability
 - Environment
 - Safety
 - Economy
 - Integration
 - Accessibility

For this particular section a number of problems have been considered in a new category described as:-

- North East Specific

This was considered necessary to highlight those problems which distinguish our area from other areas. Many of the identified problems are generic in that they are similar throughout the country. However there are specific North East problems, which, when taken as a group, highlight the task faced by NESTRANS in this specific area.

- 1.5 Each of the sections has been considered under four headings to describe fully the problems encountered and distil this down to a manageable set of summary headline problems. This is similar to the approach adopted for the objective document. These headings are:-

Heading	Description
Overview	This gives a perceptual view of the issues considered in each section. It summarises the problems that are analysed in greater depth in the following sections.
Analysis	This gives an attempt at putting an objective analysis to the problems as they are perceived generally in the North East. Quantifiable values are researched to provide background information to support the generally believed problems.
Information Available	This provides a reference of information that has been used, or can be used to support the contention that there is a problem that needs to be assessed.
Problems summary	This summarises the problems into a short set of headline problems to be used in the analysis.

In this document the **overview** and the **problems summary** are discussed under the category headings. The backup information provided in the **analysis** and **information available** sections is included as Appendix A.

2. Summary of Headline Problems

Accept 1.	Public lack awareness both local and national of wider transport issues.
Accept 2.	Public perception is that the strategies are anti-car whilst business perception is that the strategies are anti-lorry.
Accept 3.	Public feel that decisions are out of their hands. Lack of participation.
Accept 4.	Pro public transport policies are seen as boosting the profits of private companies.
D 1.	Lack of transport investment and funding.
D 2.	Perceived Central Belt bias.
D 3.	Delivery of the MTS is not wholly within the powers of the local authorities. SRA and Railtrack for example need to be involved in delivery.
En 1.	Impact of pollution from both noise and air quality on peoples health and the environment.
En 2.	Continued use of non-renewable resources.
En 3.	Localised air quality problems, breaching national standards.
En 4.	Local impact on global problem of greenhouse gases affecting climate change.
S 1.	Need to build upon successes in reducing accidents.
S 2.	Traffic management lacking in areas, safer roads required for all users.
S 3.	Vulnerable users feel their personal safety is at risk while travelling. Neighbourhoods lack security for walkers or cyclists, also at bus stops and stations.
Ec 1.	Current transport network is limiting competitiveness; the North East is not competing on a level playing field due to congested links through Aberdeen to reach external markets.
Ec 2.	Peripherality of the North East, due to both the physical and the psychological distance to central Scotland, other U.K. countries and Europe.
Ec 3.	Poor communications affecting business efficiency.

In 1.	Poor links between dispersed land uses
In 2.	Poor linking of dispersed populated areas and land uses.
In 3.	Lack of access to open further development areas.
In 4.	Transport's limited integration with other policy areas, particularly land use and social inclusion.
Access 1.	Few transport alternatives for rural areas and towns, increasing dependence on cars. Infrequent transport services for rural areas and towns, leading to over use of cars.
Access 2.	Access to jobs affected by mobility.
Access 3.	Severance, perceived and physical, caused by inappropriate traffic and transport links through residential/ neighbourhood areas
Nes 1.	Infrastructure has failed to keep up with the rapid growth of industry leading to restricted availability of commercially viable industrial development sites and congestion on the existing road network.
Nes 2.	Existing trunk road network in north east is inadequate, particularly for HGV's leading to the use of inappropriate routes including the city centre, residential areas and country roads.
Nes 3.	Central location of harbour attracts freight and passenger traffic through Aberdeen City Centre. Rural isles rely on Aberdeen for transfer of goods and passengers.
Nes 4.	Lack of rail structure in parts of the region.
Nes 5.	The nature of freight from the North East is often high volume minimum value goods leading to high transport costs.
Nes 6.	Polarised distribution of wealth throughout the region.
Nes 7.	Cost of travel in the North East
Nes 8.	Physical constraints in Aberdeen City

3. Acceptability

Overview

The STAG guidance places a great emphasis on public participation and consultation. The NESTRANS team are fully supportive of this approach and a significant number of public consultations have taken place during the production of the relevant planning policy documents that have been used in this analysis. These include the Structure Plan NEST, The Local Plans and the two Transportation Strategies covering the NESTRANS area. Further NESTRANS itself has commissioned a number of separate consultation on transport matters. There is a separate document describing the consultations that have taken place.

Notwithstanding these consultations there is a general feeling that there is a lack of understanding amongst the general public of transportation issues and the choices to be made to develop a modern transport system that is acceptable and provides for the needs of the area.

With these issues not being widely understood there are significant numbers of people with views on the way forward which are directly contradictory. This contradictory view is exacerbated in some instances by personal views that are overly influenced by the “how does it affect me” attitude. With the lack of railways in the North East there is a significant proportion of HGV traffic on North East roads. This is another issue that causes polarity amongst the populace. HGV operators see congestion being an intolerable cost to a necessary business whilst the commuting community see HGV’s as being a prime cause of congestion.

Within this transportation debate there are many complex issues that are difficult to get across and a number of possible solutions that need a change in public attitude in order to be successful. This particular problem will be a major challenge for NESTRANS. However it is likely that any solution acceptable to the majority will have significantly vocal opponents from either within the general public or interested groups.

There is a perception, not reflected fully in the consultations, that the strategies are anti car. Whilst this perception is disputed by NESTRANS, the overall strategy being viewed as balanced, the main roads element, the Western Peripheral Route, has not been progressed (on the ground). In the mean time, due to access to funding being limited to Public Transport Fund, progress has been made on bus priority and park and ride issues. This has skewed views on the balance of the strategy. This has caused some local resentment in these measures being perceived by some as lining the pockets of private companies. Other local issues i.e. the Grandholm Bridge closure which depends on the WPR to reduce the impact, and only minor public transport improvements have so far proved possible, have enhanced this view that the strategy is anti car.

3. Acceptability cont.

Problems Summary

Accept 1.	Public lack of awareness at both local and national level of the wider transport issues.
Accept 2.	Public perception is that the strategies are anti-car whilst business perception is that the strategies are anti-lorry.
Accept 3.	Public feel that decisions are out of their hands. Lack of participation.
Accept 4.	Pro public transport policies are seen as boosting the profits of private companies.

4. Deliverability

Overview

NESTRANS and its predecessors NESEDP have always been acutely aware of the need for any strategy to be deliverable. The two transport strategies and the work previously carried out by Halcrow Fox were written with this in mind. To that end, proposals with limited benefits and large set up costs have not generally been pursued to date. This does not seem to be a common view in some of the strategies considered in other parts of the country.

In terms of financing any improvements there is a very strong impression throughout the North East that this is the “forgotten” area of Scotland. The common view is that decision makers, in the central belt and at Westminster, perceive this area as prosperous and that it can look after itself.

The perception from this area is considerably different and includes:-

- Areas of deprivation in the North East are not considered in the same manner as areas in the central belt.
- A disproportionate amount of transport funding is spent in the North East bearing in mind
 - The value of road tax collected from this area given the levels of car ownership
 - The grossly inadequate trunk road system in this area (much of which was built not by government but by local authorities)
 - Whilst the North East is considered as prosperous, able to take care of itself, the ability to do this is somewhat taken away by the diversion of business rates collected in the North East to the central belt
- Decision makers in the central belt do not appreciate nor understand the problems of this area as they, nor their officials, are seldom here. Therefore the specific problems in the central belt are seen, and understood better giving that area a distinct advantage.
- There is no understanding in the central belt of the peripherality issues surrounding the remoteness of the North East.
- The decisions, taken only recently, to extend the CSTM and the rail study have put the North East at a few years disadvantage over our central belt competitors

The very strong view in this area then is that provision of the modern transport system is necessary not only for the economic well being and transport needs of the North East but of Scotland as a whole. The people of this area therefore

expect the Scottish Executive to recognise its responsibilities in this area. The Executive are expected to, as they have done in other areas, become involved in the provision of the transport system that will allow the North East and Scotland to flourish. The North East does not believe it is asking for anything other than that it is entitled to, its fair share of government expenditure and support.

Should the appropriate support and expenditure be forthcoming from government then difficult local decisions on spending priorities and funding raising issues will be more understandable and acceptable for the people of the North East.

4. Deliverability cont.

Problems summary

D 1.	Lack of transport investment and funding.
D 2.	Perceived Central Belt bias.
D 3.	Delivery of the MTS is not wholly within the powers of the local authorities. SRA and Railtrack for example need to be involved in delivery.

5. Environment

Overview

Both local authorities are concerned with the impact that climate change could have on the world and the North East of Scotland in particular. In particular each authority is keen to be seen to do its bit to help the country comply with international agreements and Local Agenda 21. To this end there is a need to reduce emissions from the global point of view and also from the need to resolve the issues that have led to the declaration of an “Air Quality Management Area” in the heart of the City of Aberdeen.

In the local context too, there is a need to find a balance between necessary development to permit the economy and hence Scotland’s economy to grow, reducing the need for travel by utilising appropriate land uses and protection of the existing built and natural environments. In the North East area this problem is further exacerbated by a lack of “brownfields” for development. This pushes development pressures into the green belt on the periphery of the city and other settlement tending to increase the need for travel.

Notwithstanding the current difficulties in addressing the future development versus protection of the environments debate, the North East is currently perceived as providing a very high quality of life for its residents. The major challenge in the future is to recognise those aspects of society and environment, which provide that quality of life and foster a good balance between the competing pressures.

5. Environment cont.

Problems summary

En 1.	Impact of pollution from both noise and air quality on peoples health and the environment.
En 2.	Continued use of non-renewable resources.
En 3.	Localised air quality problems, breaching national standards.
En 4.	Local impact on global problem of greenhouse gases affecting climate change.

6. Safety

Overview

The two local authorities in the North East have a particularly good record in reducing accidents in this area. However there is a strong desire to build on this achievement and head for the first fatality free year as quickly as possible.

There is a strong desire, from some sections of the population, to introduce traffic calming in many of the residential sections of the area. Implementation of these schemes has been introduced on an accident saving basis but has been funding limited. Consequently there is a sizeable backlog of proposals.

More recently there has been both national and local campaigns aimed at driver attitude and behaviour as well as education and enforcement.

Personal safety is always a concern when choosing a mode of transport. Although the perception of personal safety problems is greater than the reality this is a problem that needs to be overcome.

6. Safety cont.

Problems summary

S 1.	Need to build upon successes in reducing accidents.
S 2.	Traffic management lacking in areas, safer roads required for all users.
S 3.	Vulnerable users feel their personal safety is at risk while travelling. Neighbourhoods lack security for walkers or cyclists, also at bus stops and stations.

7. Economy

Overview

One of the main factors for businesses in the North East is the distance from markets, be these in central Scotland, England or Europe. To overcome this factor it is essential to have good links with these markets. Unfortunately all the transport links to the North East can be considered as poor. There is no government assessment of economic value that permits these routes to be seen as having an economic importance that can be taken into account in the valuation of any improvement proposals.

By road, businesses are hampered by the city of Aberdeen. Whether having to pass through or start a journey from the City invariably one of the slowest and most costly parts of the journey is that within the city area.

For many parts of the region there is no rail alternative. Even where this exists the main line South is hampered by a stretch of single track just south of Montrose. This section of line is already, during the day, at capacity and any attempts to introduce further freight movements would have to address this problem, which lies outwith the region of NESTRANS responsibility.

To make rail freight attractive a good freight link to the Mossend terminal is required. This will involve significant investment in bridges, track and signalling most of which will be outside the NESTRANS area.

Passenger rail in the North East is based on the long distance market. There is no local rail service. Even these long distance services are limited (although frequency is at a reasonable level) through inadequate infrastructure. It is possible to drive to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness in the time it takes a train to do the journey. Indeed a train can travel from London to Newcastle in the time it takes to travel from Aberdeen to Edinburgh.

Air links from the area should be supported to help reduce this peripherality however the opposite seems to be the case. Indeed some of the low cost carriers were recently reported to be interested in starting services to parts of Europe from Aberdeen Airport but were unable to introduce these services due to high landing charges. Surface links to the airport are poor and with the airport sitting in one of the major industrial areas attracting over 25,000 people a day to work in the vicinity, roads in and around at peak times are especially busy. The rail system does pass close by but there is no direct link.

Main shopping centres in both the city and the surrounding towns are heavily trafficked, most with very narrow footpaths. There is a need to boost the shopping experience by increasing the comfort factor for pedestrians in these areas. It has been noticed, in the North East that many of Scotland's main shopping centres are reaping the advantages of having shopper friendly environments. However it has not gone un-noticed that many of these places

have had the advantage of significant government investment in their transport infrastructure to facilitate these improvements.

Due to a lack of “brownfield” sites in the North East the rapid growth brought about by the oil industry has led to the introduction of large industrial sites on the periphery of the city. This phenomenon is beginning to appear in the surrounding towns. The result of this is that the city, and to a smaller extent, the towns, has a significant volume of traffic which is, at some point in its journey, counter commuting. This flow of traffic has to be dealt with at the major junctions often decreasing capacity for inbound traffic.

The North East is also the main support and supply stage for the Shetland Islands and, to a lesser extent, the Orkney Islands. This essential supply line, whilst welcomed, does cause some problems in that it does have its centre at the harbour, which is right in the centre of the city. This essential traffic along with the other traffic generated by a busy harbour, serving the North Sea oil sector, must be in the City centre.

7. Economy cont.

Problems summary

Ec 1.	Current transport network is limiting competitiveness; the North East is not competing on a level playing field due to congested links through Aberdeen to reach external markets.
Ec 2.	Peripherality of the North East, due to both the physical and the psychological distance to central Scotland, other U.K. countries and Europe.
Ec 3.	Poor communications affecting business efficiency.

8. Integration

Overview

The North East has a large travel to work area based around Aberdeen. Many of the towns surrounding the City have grown significantly but links to the City remain poor. In many towns the only option is road travel, rail doesn't exist and for a number the road link is a poor standard single carriageway making bus priority measures difficult. In the main towns transport interchanges are almost non-existent with poor parking at most rail stations and no bus interchange facilities.

Links between the major towns in the area are very poor with public transport options almost non-existent. Given that for these movements, car is the only option, the roads between the towns are of a particularly poor standard, most extremely narrow with bad horizontal and vertical alignments. Many of these roads carry a significant number of HGV's and are unfit for their purpose.

Aberdeenshire also has a high number of smaller villages between the main towns. These villages make serving the areas with public transport very difficult as the sparseness of the population leads to uneconomical bus services which in turn has led to very high car ownership rates.

The rapid rate of growth and the need to supply industrial development land has led to very large industrial estates on the periphery of the City. These estates, in part due to their location, do not have good public transport links. Housing has suffered in a similar way in that the need to supply housing land at such a rapid rate of growth has seen very large housing estates built. Whilst most of these are reasonably well served by public transport for the journey into town, there is, in most cases, no public transport link between the housing areas and the industrial areas without changing bus in the city centre. Therefore the choice for someone living in say Westhill and working in Dyce is a Hobson's choice of car or no work.

In more recent times there has been attempts at providing the "joined up" approach to planning by relating the various policies of the Council. In transport terms this perhaps most closely relates to land use, health and air quality.

Opening further areas of development land for industry and housing is difficult in that the existing transport infrastructure cannot cope without creating new means of access to areas. In relation to health the City Council has had to create an air quality action area in the city centre. The transport strategy looks to address these problems by reducing emissions and traffic volumes particularly in high volume shopping areas.

8. Integration cont.

Problems summary

In 1.	Poor links between dispersed land uses
In 2.	Poor linking of dispersed populated areas and land uses.
In 3.	Lack of access to open further development areas.
In 4.	Transport's limited integration with other policy areas, particularly land use and social inclusion.

9. Accessibility

Overview

Many of the problems relating to accessibility are derived from the same overview that has been given for the Integration section (Section 8 Page 19)

Due to the rapid growth of the City, in particular, but also seen in some of the towns, many of the roads that are used as main distributors are also local access roads through neighbourhoods. This results in many neighbourhoods being divided by busy main roads, often dual carriageways. In many circumstances peoples access to services is cut by the dual carriageway resulting in high demand for pedestrian crossing opportunities. These are difficult through communities as crossing desire lines are spread along a dual carriageway rather than being directed to a particular point. This severance is resented locally and in many cases is severe (the volume of traffic making crossing unaided impossible, as well as at times a high number of people needing to cross).

9. Accessibility

Problems summary

Access 1.	Few transport alternatives for rural areas and towns, increasing dependence on cars. Infrequent transport services for rural areas and towns, leading to over use of cars.
Access 2.	Access to jobs affected by mobility.
Access 3.	Severance, perceived and physical, caused by inappropriate traffic and transport links through residential/ neighbourhood areas

10. North East Specific

Overview

Many of the problems discussed above are generic in that they could be applied to almost anywhere in Scotland. There are however North East specific issues that need to be addressed. Some of these have been touched on already.

The North East has, since the late 1960's experienced and enjoyed a remarkable period of growth. This has brought with it many advantages and some problems. There are many opportunities for us to build upon and these are discussed elsewhere. However this rapid growth has not come without its own problems.

Physically two major rivers split Aberdeen, the Dee and the Don. On the West side the City is bounded by the trunk Road Anderson Drive. There are not enough crossing points on either river to serve the needs of the North East. Over the Dee there are four bridges in the immediate city area with one of those, the trunk road bridge, so sub standard it can't accommodate HGV's. There is a further bridge approximately six miles west of the city centre. To the north there are only three bridges over the Don. These are spaced out over the greater than six miles to the edge of the urban area. Therefore over eight miles of two rivers there are only seven bridges (one of which is inadequate). In comparison, in Glasgow over the one river, there are twelve crossings in a space of approximately six miles.

The Anderson Drive trunk road is inadequate for its purpose. Built by the North East Councils of the past this road was only recently taken over as a trunk road. It is part dual part single and has sixteen sets of traffic lights as well as a number of roundabouts. Its vertical alignment is difficult with steep hills and the horizontal alignment, in keeping with its urban setting is sub standard. The bridge at the south end, the historic Bridge of Dee is too narrow forcing HGV's to be diverted onto local roads to continue on the trunk road. These constraints mean that HGV drivers tend to divert from the trunk road onto the local roads travelling through the city centre. This leads to very high levels of HGV traffic on Wellington Road – Market Street – Virginia Street. This is where the worst air quality measurements are recorded leading to the declaration of an air quality management area.

Our main areas of employment have grown at the edges of the city well away from the housing areas that have also rapidly grown in recent times. There are over 25,000 people travel to both Dyce and Altens to work each day. These areas, being on the outskirts of the city, are not well served by public transport, most people requiring a trip into town to change bus for a trip out of town again. For most then it is quicker to use a car than contemplate public transport.

The city of Aberdeen has a unique feature in its harbour. No other city in Europe has its harbour in the very heart of its city centre. This requires a certain amount of HGV traffic to be in the city centre.

For many parts of the country, in attempting to reduce traffic there is the option of boosting train services. This is not an option in the North East as the bulk of the region is not served by rail. Even where it does exist it is limited by track and signalling inadequacies and is concentrated on long distance travel. The concept of local rail use for commuting is dismissed by the SRA and this hampers the local authorities efforts to introduce this to the area (where rail actually serves). Many other parts of Scotland, central belt, Tayside etc are well served by rail and have the advantage of using infrastructure investment from the past. Had Aberdeen and surrounds been their current size in previous era" then perhaps we would have had this luxury as well. Whilst other areas of the country enjoyed their times of growth during periods of increasing infrastructure investment, the North East has grown during a time of reducing investment and that investment being targeted to areas of declining industry.

The quite remarkable growth of this area has, of course, led to a comfortable lifestyle for those fortunate enough to be part of it. Unemployment figures are indeed low and on the Scottish scale, very low. These statistics however do hide the fact that there does exist people who have enjoyed lesser fortunes. Pockets of deprivation do exist in the North East. For those involved, living in a prosperous area can be difficult. Little has been done in the North East to help provide the infrastructure to make accessing a job easier for those living in areas where public transport to the major employment opportunities is difficult.

Further, the cost of travel within and from the North East is very expensive. Bus fares in the area are considerably higher than equivalent fares in Edinburgh. The peripherality of the region makes actually getting here or coming here expensive. Train fares seem to be set to equate to the cost of a car journey making the car cheaper if more than one travels. Plane fares can be expensive but from a UK point of view surely the government should prioritise plane journeys from the outlying areas rather than the shorter journeys which are more effectively undertaken by trains?

10. North East Specific cont.

Problem Summary

Nes 1.	Infrastructure has failed to keep up with the rapid growth of industry leading to restricted availability of commercially viable industrial development sites and congestion on the existing road network.
Nes 2.	Existing trunk road network in north east is inadequate, particularly for HGV's leading to the use of inappropriate routes including the city centre, residential areas and country roads.
Nes 3.	Central location of harbour attracts freight and passenger traffic through Aberdeen City Centre. Rural isles rely on Aberdeen for transfer of goods and passengers.
Nes 4.	Lack of rail structure in parts of the region.
Nes 5.	The nature of freight from the North East is often high volume minimum value goods leading to high transport costs.
Nes 6.	Polarised distribution of wealth throughout the region.
Nes 7.	Cost of travel in the North East
Nes 8.	Physical constraints in Aberdeen City

11. Bibliography

12. Appendix A