Institutional Coordination in the UK:
The strengths and weaknesses of a variable system

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Institutional coordination in the UK

- Local government structure
- Transport responsibilities
- Planning responsibilities
- The current situation
- A critical assessment
- (Implications for other sessions)
Local government structure

• Pre 1974: a stable structure for c100 years
  – County councils (<100k to >3m)
  – Urban and rural district councils (often small)
  – County boroughs (unitary) for larger towns

• 1965: Greater London Council
  – The first strategic authority (>7m)
  – 33 London Boroughs
Local government structure

- 1974: two tier structure
  - six metropolitan counties in England
  - three new urban counties
  - some counties merged
  - regions in Scotland
- 1986: GLC, metropolitan counties abolished
- 1990-5: several unitary councils in England
- 1996: regions abolished in Scotland
Local government structure

- 2000: Greater London Authority (7m)
- 2000: Devolution for Scotland, Wales (4m)
- 2005?: Regional councils in England (4-6m)
  - with one existing tier abolished
- All in the interests of efficiency
  - but each change takes perhaps three years to be effective
Local government structure

- Other developments since 1998
  - elected mayors (as in London)
  - cabinet-style government
  - performance assessments
    - “best value”
    - comprehensive performance assessments
  - “Single Capital Pot”
    - gives flexibility in funding between sectors
Transport responsibilities

• Pre 1974
  – central government: national road, rail, finance
  – counties: local roads, bus services
  – districts: off street parking
  – London Transport: bus, underground
  – Passenger Transport Executives in four cities
  – finance project-specific
Transport responsibilities

- Transport Policies and Programmes (1974)
  - objectives, ten year strategy, five year plan
  - annual statement of expenditure and progress
  - project-specific infrastructure grants
  - flexible financial support for other policies

- Designed to
  - promote comprehensive transport plans
  - eliminate capital or revenue spending bias
  - distribute grant related to need
  - reduce detailed government supervision
Transport responsibilities

- The demise of the TPP system
  - revenue support for buses curtailed
  - grants only for “roads of more than local importance”
  - abolition of GLC, metropolitan councils
- But the “Package Approach” from 1995
- Bus deregulation outside London, 1986
- Rail privatisation, 1993-5
Transport responsibilities

• Changes from 1998
  – quality bus partnerships
  – Strategic Rail Authority
  – ten year plan for transport (£180b)
  – legislation for congestion charging
    • with revenues hypothecated for transport
  – Local Transport Plans (2000)
  – Regional Transport Strategies (2001)
Transport responsibilities

• Local Transport Plans
  – objectives, problems, consultation, strategy
  – five year plan, targets, Annual Progress Review
  – assessment of quality (5-point scale)

• Designed to:
  – provide longer term consistency
  – cover both capital and revenue expenditure
  – give greater flexibility, discretion
  – be based on government objectives
  – emphasise an integrated approach
Planning responsibilities

- Structure and Local Plans
- Planning applications
  - judged against Plans
  - permission granted, possibly with conditions
  - permission valid for five to ten years
- But dependent on
  - developers’ decisions
  - local government interpretation
  - appeals against refusal
Planning responsibilities

• Planning Policy Guidance 13: Transport
  – to promote sustainable travel choices
  – to improve accessibility by sustainable modes
  – to reduce need to travel, particularly by car
  – recommendations
    • major developments in centres, close to public tpt
    • “day to day” facilities accessible on foot, by cycle
    • housing in urban areas, at increased density
    • nation-wide maximum parking standards
    • public transport accessibility criteria
    • transport assessments for major developments
Planning responsibilities

- Limited impacts because:
  - few requirements on where to develop
  - open to interpretation by local authorities
  - appeals by developers upheld by government
  - requirements relaxed in development areas
  - long life of planning permissions

- New proposals
  - statutory Regional Spatial Strategies
  - Local Development Frameworks, updated annually
The current situation

- Seven different local government structures
  - Greater London Authority + London Boroughs
  - Passenger Tpt Execs + Metropolitan Districts
  - Unitary Authorities in larger English towns
  - County and District Councils in rural England
  - Scottish Executive + Unitary Authorities
  - Scottish Exec + PTE + Unitary Authorities
  - Welsh Assembly + two tier local government
The current situation

- Responsibilities for transport
  - national roads: Highways Agency
  - rail projects: Strategic Rail Authority + Network Rail
  - rail services: rail operators
  - bus services outside London: bus operators
  - bus and rail fares: operators
  - public transport information: operators
  - public car parks: local authorities + operators
  - private car parks: owners, unless levy introduced
The current situation

• The LTP process
  – generally regarded as a success
  – strengths
    • objective focus, five year timescale, flexible finance
    • integration, consultation, partnership
  – constraints
    • scale of change, particularly for smaller unitaries
    • lack of organisational capacity, political leadership
    • rapid increase in funding, shortage of skills
The current situation

- Weaknesses in the LTP process
  - still a bidding document for capital cf revenue
  - instability from Single Capital Pot
  - lack of guidance on stakeholder involvement
  - over-emphasis, limited guidance on targets
  - little consideration of alternative strategies
    - often based on previous infrastructure plans
    - unwillingness to consider demand management
  - lack of integration with Highway, Rail Agencies
  - limited integration with regional planning
The current situation

- The planning process
  - guidance generally consistent with transport policy
  - but limited in application
    - land use and transport responsibilities often separate
    - limited use of national parking standards or public transport accessibility criteria
    - dependent on developer decisions, local authority interpretation, national government response
    - backlog of less appropriate planning decisions from the 1990s
A critical assessment

• **National policy framework**
  – common national, local framework works well
  – regional framework under development
  – less strong for freight than passenger
  – links with land use, other policies rather weak

• **Institutional coordination, cooperation**
  – national/local good, but complex, variable
  – national/regional/local still under development
  – coordination with national agencies poor
  – coordination with bus, rail operators very limited
A critical assessment

- **Supportive legal, regulatory framework**
  - world leading for demand management
  - but very poor for public transport
  - land use policy needs regulatory base

- **Comprehensive pricing and fiscal structure**
  - no such structure exists
  - multiple responsibilities, no marginal cost pricing
  - but proposals for national distance-based charging
A critical assessment

• *Rationalised financing and investment*
  – greater consistency, flexibility in capital funding
  – but capital cf revenue bias discourages low cost options

• *Effective participation, partnerships*
  – participation encouraged, but guidance needed
  – partnerships stimulated; some good practice

• *Improved monitoring, research*
  – more advice needed on monitoring, targets
  – strong research programme
  – more emphasis needed on post-scheme evaluation