



## Public transport in cities and regions, Facing an uncertain future?

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### ► To cite this version:

Reg Harman, Philippe Menerault, Alain L'Hostis. Public transport in cities and regions, Facing an uncertain future?. Ph. Booth, M. Breuillard, C. Fraser, D. Paris. Spatial Planning Systems of Britain and France, A comparative analysis, Routledge, pp.188-205, 2007. hal-00281587

**HAL Id: hal-00281587**

**<https://hal.science/hal-00281587>**

Submitted on 23 May 2008

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## **Public transport in cities and regions - facing an uncertain future?**

### **x.1 Introduction**

This chapter addresses transport policies in the two countries. Transport is a crucial factor in spatial planning. At its simplest, the quality and speed of transport affects the area within which people can live their lives and obtain goods and services. In turn the shape and scale of settlements has a significant impact on the forms of transport that are used. In consequence changes in transport have paralleled changes in settlement structure, both being driven by improved technology and growth in the economy.

The twentieth century has seen massive growth in mobility levels, with complex travel patterns reflecting dispersed development. This has led to congestion, delay, pollution, traffic accidents, economic inefficiency and social inequity. Public transport services, which can play a crucial role in solving these problems, are becoming ever more difficult to sustain on a purely commercial basis. So transport policies in both countries are changing, with the stated aims of supporting the demand for wider access while constraining the use of motor vehicles. But in practice they have so far had little impact on the demand for ever greater mobility.

This chapter outlines the main aspects of British and French transport policies, especially for urban and regional public transport, against this background. The first section reviews the development of major transport policy instruments in recent years. Following sections consider some specific aspects, including the roles of regional

agencies and local authorities, the links between transport and spatial development, and the administration of public transport. Each section contains a brief review of the British and French approaches and some comparative remarks. A concluding section draws out some key points of similarity and difference.

## **x.2 The development of transport policy in recent years**

British policy has evolved primarily in line with the main themes of the two White Papers discussed below. These in principle apply to all parts of the United Kingdom; in practice there are some real differences. Northern Ireland has a distinct policy regime, largely reflecting serious social unrest experienced over recent decades; most transport is centrally managed by the Province's administration. Within Great Britain, following an Act of 2001, Scotland has its own Parliament, with significant powers, and Wales has a separate Assembly, with more limited powers. Both are now developing policies for the administration and development of transport which differ from those in England. The majority of Great Britain's population lives in England, and in practice most of this review applies primarily to transport policy in England. London also has very different powers.

In France the key document which defines transport policy is the *Loi d'Orientation des Transport Interieurs* (LOTI), of 31 December 1982. This act was initially motivated by the need to revise the statutory position of the SNCF but became a document of general application. Its aim as such was to set out a comprehensive legal framework for the organization of transport, covering all modes and all spatial levels, for both freight and passengers. Drawn up under a left wing government by a communist minister, LOTI comprises a flexible framework which rests on establishing public regulation within a market economy. This principle is formalized in the combination of ideas of "right to transport for everyone", "public service", and "freedom of choice for the user". The act envisaged a sharing of roles, between central government and the local authorities on one hand and the public authorities and the operators on the other. Furthermore, Paris, like London, forms a special case in view of its national significance.

British transport policy has changed substantially over the last decade. The Conservative government in power during the 1980s and 1990s pursued two simple policy strands. It transferred the ownership and management of most public transport into private hands, through the Transport Act 1985 (buses) and the Railways Act 1993 (railways). It envisaged road movement as the keystone of transport policy, and so in 1989 published a strategy document called 'Roads to Prosperity', setting out a significant programme for expanding the trunk road network. This brought a substantial reaction from environmental groups and the wider public too, and the government slowly changed its approach to recognise that its policy of 'predict and provide' would not solve problems of access and congestion. The economic downturn of the early 1990s reduced public funds available for road building anyway.

The Labour administration elected in 1997 carried out a widespread consultation on transport and in 1998 published a White Paper 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone'. This identified the positive benefits of increasing transport but also saw the negative impact, in terms of poor quality of life for many. It set out as key objectives:

- An integrated transport policy is essential, in which transport supports spatial planning aimed at improving sustainable travel, environmental improvement, and education, health and employment policies.
- Public transport should play a greater role in travel and should be improved to attract people out of their cars.
- Good transport planning should happen mostly at local level, providing much better walking, cycling and bus services.
- Improvements to the environment should not mean forcing people out of their cars.

- More sustainable modes for freight movement should be encouraged.

The White Paper was linked to a number of supporting policy documents – the ‘daughter documents’ – which set out policy intentions for railways, buses, road pricing, and also guidance on the links between spatial planning and transport.

To implement these policies, the government adopted new powers, through the Transport Act 2000. The main changes established in this included:

- Reorganisation of administration of the national railway system, notably through creation of the Strategic Rail Authority to develop and implement a strategy and manage the franchising of passenger services.
- Creation of new powers, processes and duties for local transport authorities to prepare and implement a Local Transport Plan (LTP, covering local highways and bus services, financed largely by government grants.
- Creation of powers and processes for bringing in road pricing and workplace charging schemes.

In 2000 the government also published a plan for investment and action, ‘Transport 2010 - The 10 Year Plan’, which defined the intended funding for transport over the decade, both capital and revenue. It aimed to encourage capital expenditure by private interests, through Public Private Partnerships. Its aims were to achieve the White Paper objectives through reducing congestion, encouraging higher use of public transport, supporting economic growth and improving the environment. This formed the economic justification for the increased spending on transport, as the government was committed to tight fiscal management.

The new policies and action plans received widespread support. However, there remained some concern about whether the policies could be achieved, while some motoring and business interests considered that the policies would constrain the freedom to travel, and could lead to poorer economic performance. These negative aspects were widely reported in the media. Negative views eventually gained dominance after two key events. One was a campaign against fuel price rises in autumn 2001, when some groups of independent road freight drivers blockaded oil depots; this led government to abandon its petrol tax 'escalator'. Then government declared bankrupt the private owner of the national rail infrastructure (Railtrack plc) and established a 'stakeholder company' (Network Rail) to run it, following a period of rapid increase in railway maintenance costs and growing public concern over four crashes in the London area (even though the total number of casualties was relatively small)

Other indicators also suggested that the new policies were not working: bus service passenger levels and operations continued to decline outside London, the condition of roads remained poor and that of footways declined. Implementation of local authority LTP projects was generally held back by government controls, so that congestion continued to increase while local transport and environmental conditions generally got worse. In response, government issued two more White Papers, one proposing a review of railway administration, the other setting out policies for the other areas of transport. The second document – 'The Future of Transport', subtitled 'A network for 2030' – stressed the increased public funding which government was awarding to the transport sector, and set out a series of new initiatives for various parts of the transport sector, aimed at taking forward the principles of 'Transport 2010'. Many commentators saw this

as moving transport policy away from environmental and social goals and back towards more road building.

In contrast to Great Britain, French transport policy has not seen any real change since the publication of LOTI. While its application has run into several difficulties, subsequent legal documents have sought to remove blockages rather than restructure it. Two points should be stressed: the difficulty of an intermodal approach; and the problem of interaction between transport systems and decentralization.

On one hand the multimodal and intermodal approach of LOTI has in practice seen little development. Thus the first national strategic plans, proposed by LOTI, for infrastructure were single mode: they covered respectively inland waterways (1985), motorways (1990) and high speed rail links (1991). It was not until 1999 that the *Loi d'Orientation pour l'Aménagement et le Développement Durable du Territoire* (LOADDT, called the *Loi Voynet*) replaced the sectoral strategies for transport, implemented through the *Loi Pasqua* of 1995, by two multimodal strategies for coordinated services, one for passenger transport and the other for freight. However, despite the concern expressed for altering the balance of modes in favour of public transport, especially rail, there remains a wide gap between intentions and implementation. Planning for transport networks and establishing complete travel systems, key factors in such a policy, remain limited, while the road network continues to grow, notably through more bypass routes round conurbations.

On the other hand it is important to note the problems resulting from the telescoping of two separate policy strands: the transport sector and the process of decentralization. From 1982 the organization of administrative areas was defined as having three tiers,



one above the other (the region elevated to be a public authority, the department, and the municipality), linked to the principle that no authority has control over any other. In this framework LOTI allocates to each area level the power of *Autorité Organisatrice* (AO) for the defined system of public transport. The growth of mobility and the expansion of functions over wider areas meant that the institutional areas became more and more inappropriate. Coordinating transport networks has become more difficult because of the multiplicity of responsible authorities: the French system always tries to maintain the balance between seeking to establish comprehensive networks and strictly maintaining the autonomy of local authorities.

### **x.3 Regional agencies and local authorities**

As discussed elsewhere, England's structure of local administration includes non-elected regional bodies and elected local authorities. The regional assemblies, made up of members from local authorities with some representatives of business and community interests, draw up a regional planning strategy, and this must incorporate a regional transport strategy (RTS). The transport policies in the RTS should support the spatial and land use objectives; they also act as the guiding framework for LTPs in the region. The action and investment programmes of the regional development agencies (RDAs), which represent mainly the businesses in each region, support mostly development and regeneration projects, but may also cover some transport projects as well.

Greater London has a unique structure, reflecting its size and its central role as a national capital and international finance centre. The Greater London Authority (GLA), led by the (elected) Mayor, is responsible for strategic planning (led by the London Development Agency, LDA) and for most aspects of transport (led by Transport for London, TfL). But this level of control is to some extent limited. Development of the London Underground system is defined through a long term Public Private Partnership (PPP) contract agreed between the government and private consortia before the Underground was handed over to TfL. TfL has no direct responsibility for the national railway network around London (though this is being sought). TfL does have full control over highways, and over bus services, which are run by private companies under short term franchises for groups of routes. Policies and programmes are set out in the London Transport Strategy, formulated under the leadership of the Mayor.

In England the structure and powers of local authorities outside London vary widely, following significant reorganization by successive governments over the last two decades. The major conurbations (metropolitan counties) have no county council. Instead the metropolitan district councils, which are elected authorities, cooperate through joint arrangements over strategic planning for their area, while passenger transport functions are overseen by a passenger transport authority (PTA) representing all of them. The PTA's policies are developed and managed by a passenger transport executive (PTE): a body of permanent staff headed by a small group of directors. A joint team from the PTE and the metropolitan districts manages local transport planning matters, including the LTP.

Outside the major conurbations, English local authority areas may have two levels of elected councils or just one. In two-tier authorities the county council is responsible for strategic planning and for transport (together with other functions such as education and social welfare services) and a number of district councils are responsible for local development planning (and some other functions). In single-tier areas a unitary authority has both strategic and local planning and transport responsibilities (and other functions).

The main transport tool for local transport authorities is the LTP, established by the Transport Act 2000. This sets out a five year programme for all local transport services and facilities, including highways and public transport. The first LTP was prepared and submitted in 2000, to cover the period 2000/2001 – 2005/2006. The second LTP has been prepared during 2005, to run for the period 2006/2007 – 2010/2011. The LTP is intended to describe the authority's transport policies and programmes for the five year period, show how these address the government's key transport themes, and set out Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for monitoring progress. It should reflect the regional

transport policies set out in the RTS. Implementation of the programmes and projects depends on funding approved annually by government. This is based on an Annual Progress Report (APR) which each local transport authority prepares each year, summarizing its activities and updating funding needs. It also reflects the rating awarded by government officials, following procedures set out in government guidance documents, which change from year to year. As a result, spending is strictly controlled, and local transport authorities have little freedom to coordinate or to negotiate.

Apart from London, local transport authorities have little control over public transport. They are required to draw up a bus strategy but they can only fund services to run where commercial operators do not provide them, organize joint tickets in certain circumstances and publish area timetables. They have no real control over rail services, which are planned and administered centrally. They can fund new local infrastructure, such as improvements to bus stations and railway stations, and provide road priorities for bus operation, but the funds they have for these are generally very limited.

In Wales and Scotland all local authorities are unitary. In Scotland statutory Regional Transport Partnerships, bringing together the local authorities in each region, now coordinate planning and investment for transport, under the overall authority of the national Transport Executive. (The Glasgow area's unique PTE has been absorbed by the relevant Partnership). These regional groups are now coordinated by a national Transport Executive established by the Scottish Parliament to develop and manage all transport across Scotland.

In France the institutional structure and its evolution are, for the most part, very different from those of the United Kingdom:

- the influence of elected representatives from the different levels of public authorities is dominant;
- the role of central government is declining more and more in terms of funding and of transfer of responsibilities ;
- business interests are not represented in the decision making bodies in the fields of transport and of planning;
- the municipality, as the basic tier, remains the key level in local policies.

However, the strengthening of intermediate levels for planning and operations within the framework of districts and regions forms an element of convergence between the two countries.

In France the municipalities in urban areas, on their own or in groups, can establish a *Périmètre des Transport Urbains* (PTU) for public transport; the PTU forms the geographical framework for the *Autorité Organisatrice* (AO). Within the PTU the AO allocates to a single operator the management of an urban transport network comprising one or more modes of public transport (bus, tramway, metro, etc.). Outside the Ile-de-France, these authorities, unlike those in England, have at their disposal sufficient financial resources of their own: these include local taxes (31%), income from users (20%) and above all the revenue from a specific tax on the salaries of businesses situated within the PTU, the *Versement-Transport* (VT, 46%). The modest budget share which central government allocated to urban public transport authorities (3% in 2002) was cut out from 2004. The VT encouraged municipalities to group together in order to have powers over urban public transport, because this tax system could only be set up for levels of population within the PTU above a certain threshold. In addition to the widening of areas, the VT also led to the assembly of groups of municipalities into

*Syndicats Intercommunaux à Vocation Unique* (SIVU), formal associations whose sole responsibility is for public transport. This has contributed to public transport being cut off in its own field of responsibility, supported by funding which separates it from other functions, such as spatial planning.

The reform brought about by the 1999 act on the strengthening and simplification of cooperation between municipalities (the *Loi Chevènement*) has addressed this gap. It basically establishes a form of local authority association with wide powers, including urban public transport and area planning, obligatory in urban areas. While *Communautés Urbaines* (CU) existed before this act, they were few in number; in contrast the newly created structure of *Communautés d'Agglomérations* (CA) has been taken up enthusiastically. Financial incentives from central government have contributed strongly to this development. But grouping together various powers in one joint body does not necessarily lead to the integration of sectoral policies, even if it can make it easier. In fact many urban transport authorities do not have their own developed expertise. They can only carry out the legal supervision of the contract with the operator of the system and rely on the latter for defining the transport services to be provided.

Outside the PTUs the *départements* are, within their own area, responsible for interurban passenger transport. The powers of the *Conseil Général*, the elected assembly of the *départements*, cover scheduled coach services, on-demand services and school transport; the latter forms the principal public transport activity at this level. In practice coordination between urban and interurban transport is often poor, and the imbalance between the resources of the two types of authority does not help to integrate them. In addition, the *départements* have a major role in the management of the road network,

and this continues to grow, with transfer of 18,000 kilometres of national roads from 2006.

The regions, which became public authorities through the decentralization act (1982), constitute the third level for organization of local transport. They are responsible for regional rail transport. The annual budget allocated to public transport by the regions forms their second highest item of spending. The transfer of railway services from central government to the regions has increased the disparity of service provision between the regions and has also led to the run-down of inter regional services not on the network of *trains a grande vitesse* (TGV). Under LOTI it is possible to set up formal agreements establishing the relationship between the responsible regional authorities and one operator: SNCF. However, in a system where central government continues to subsidize rail significantly, the cash flow appropriate to organization on a regional basis was set up only in 2002, following a period of experiment carried out in seven regions. Implementing this regionalization raises several difficulties, including: the scale of investment needed; congestion and allocation of train paths, which raises the issue of infrastructure charges; the dependence of the regions on the national system of passenger fares; the need to establish expertise at regional level. Furthermore the *Loi Solidarité et Renouvellement Urbain* (SRU) of 2000 proposed policies favouring the creation of *Syndicats Mixtes* bringing together different levels of responsible authorities (urban, departmental, regional). In this framework, the regions could better play the role of coordinating the actions of different public authorities. However, although this has been discussed, no applications have so far taken place.

Within the overall national picture the Ile-de-France forms a separate case in terms of both local authority structure and of transport organization. Under a regime which differs

from LOTI, central government controlled the authority responsible for urban and regional transport until 2005. The departments were represented on it but it was not until SRU that the region gained a seat on the *Syndicat des Transports d'Île-de-France* (STIF), which remained under the direction of central government. The latest situation is that the act on "local responsibilities" of 2004 has proposed withdrawal of central government and transfer of the responsibilities for transport to the region. However, process of bringing the Ile-de-France in line with this standard approach is proving difficult. The current difficulties essentially reflect the debate on maintaining central government's financial contribution after its withdrawal from the decision making bodies.



#### **x.4 Transport and spatial development**

The British 1998 White Paper envisaged close links between transport policy and land use development. Effective spatial planning would encourage the right choices of travel, leading to more sustainable transport. To achieve these objectives, clear links were established through mechanisms at both regional and local level, and were set out in various guidance documents on planning strategy (PPGs and PPSs).

Following radical changes to the UK planning system (discussed elsewhere), links between the new local Development Framework (LDF) and the LTP are set out in the Government's Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12). This states that

'The integration of transport and spatial planning is central to the development and delivery of effective local development frameworks. Local transport policies need to reflect and support the aims of the core strategy development plan document. Land use planning, in turn, needs to take account of the existing transport network and plans for its development. To deliver integration, local development documents outside London should be consistent with the local transport planning policies of the local transport authority for their area. The local transport plan sets out the local authority's transport policies and detailed investment priorities over a five year period.'

It adds that

'Consistency between local development documents and local transport planning policy (as set out in the local transport plan or equivalent) is particularly crucial in shire counties where the district authority prepares local development documents and the county is responsible for transport planning.'

However, the formal mechanisms for ensuring that such integration actually happens are in practice very limited. In two tier areas especially, the county council retains its transport powers but no longer has its former powers to prepare the planning strategy; all spatial planning powers are in the hands of district councils. Furthermore there are also timescale differences. The LDF sets out policies for a 10-year period, and there are no defined periods, so that one local authority's LDF may cover a different period to that of its neighbours. In contrast the LTP is produced for defined 5-year periods. This can make it very difficult to evaluate and fund transport projects to properly reflect spatial planning policies.

While the concern for better integration of transport and urban planning is common to the two countries, the overall structure for putting it into practice follows fundamentally different principles. In England each level of authority is allocated a single power; in France powers in both fields are available at both regional and local level.

In this context, recent French legislation has encouraged planning which links transport and spatial planning on two levels: on one hand, the conurbations, with the authorities responsible for urban transport charged with creating *Plans de Déplacements Urbains* (PDU) and the municipal associations responsible for *Schémas de Cohérence Territoriale* (SCOT); on the other, the regions, which draw up *Schémas Régionaux de Transport* (SRT) within the framework of *Schémas Régionaux d'Aménagement du Territoire*.

The PDU is an old process, established by LOTI (1982) but changed by recent acts. Thus in 2000 the SRU Act extended the reform of the PDU in the context of municipal coordination renewed by the emergence of *Communautés d'Agglomération*, and brought

together policies on housing, transport and urban planning in the same document to create conditions for better coordination. For the current *Plans Locaux d'Urbanisme* (PLU), the allocations must be compatible with the PDU, and this can particularly affect the standards for parking provision. The SRU Act however cannot avoid the contradictions which reflect the difficult compromise between network and area. In particular it provides that the joint municipal bodies responsible for the SCOT can take responsibility for drawing up a PDU. While it is satisfactory from the viewpoint of geographical coherence, this provision deprives the organization responsible for urban transport – defined within the PTU, whose boundaries are much smaller than those of SCOT – of the principal mechanism which they have to promote coherence between sectors.

At the regional scale, the linking of transport and spatial planning was, following the first acts of Decentralization (1982), solely achieved through the *Contrats de Plan Etat - Région* (CPER). In these contracts, of 5 to 7 years length, which set out the agreed choices in terms of facilities, notably transport, central government's decision is dominant. However, the evolution of the planning system has provided the regional tier with new tools for coordinating sectoral processes. Thus the *Loi Pasqua* introduced *Schémas Régionaux d'Aménagement et de Développement du Territoire* (SRADT) and the *Loi Voynet* integrated the *Schémas Régionaux de Transport* (SRT) into them. Through this strategic step the connections between transport and planning are explicitly defined at regional level. However, the regions do not have available all the levers needed to ensure coordination of spatial policies. On one hand the municipalities remain in control of land use planning. On the other hand the requirement for coherence between different levels of authorities is now unbalanced: the SRADT must oversee the

coordination of the various SCOTs but the latter do not have to follow regional choices, and links between the PDUs and the SRADT are non-existent.

## **x.5 Public transport provision - railways, buses and trams**

Public transport in Great Britain is provided on a basis that is both centrally controlled and yet fragmented. Railways, buses and tramways each have their own regime and set of controlling policies.

The former national railway corporation, British Railways (BR), was totally restructured by the 1993 Railways Act. Despite some major changes (through Acts of 2000 and 2005), the 1993 structure remains largely intact:

- The infrastructure, initially allocated to a new private company, Railtrack plc, is now managed by a non-profit 'stakeholder company', Network Rail, which is responsible for maintaining the network and producing plans for investment in it.
- Provision of passenger services is through franchises, let for periods of 7 to 15 years. Between 2000 and 2005 the Strategic Rail Authority was responsible for letting franchises but it is now the duty of the Department for Transport. The powers formerly held by the PTEs have been withdrawn.
- All rail freight operations are now owned and managed by private companies.
- Regulation of the system, including guidance on the level of funding required for the infrastructure over five year periods, is the responsibility of the Office for Rail Regulation (formerly the Office of the Rail Regulator).

Under the Transport Act 2000 central government created the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) to be responsible for strategic planning for the railway network, the franchising of passenger services, and other functions. The Railways Act 2005 disbanded the SRA, its functions being split between the Department for Transport and Network Rail. There is

now no statutory requirement for long term network planning, even though growth in traffic has caused serious problems from lack of track capacity. Network Rail continues to prepare route utilization strategies for groups of lines, a process started by the SRA: these look to identify the most efficient way to operate the maximum number of trains. There has been little investment in new infrastructure for many years (apart from the Channel Tunnel Link), and significant increases in national rail capacity appear unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Bus services outside London operated until 1986 under a system of route licences, regulated by each region's traffic commissioners. Most bus companies were owned either by a municipal authority or by the state-owned National Bus Company (in England; the Scottish Transport Group in Scotland). The 1985 Transport Act removed this regulation, so that most bus services are now provided on a commercial basis by operators. The municipal and NBC (and STG) companies were sold off as individual small companies. A high proportion of most bus services are now run by subsidiaries of four large private corporations: First Group, National Express, Arriva, Go-Ahead. These groups also operate most passenger rail services under franchise. A few medium size independent companies and many very small ones also operate bus services. All three large French corporations (described in a later paragraph) are building up operations in Great Britain.

The PTEs and local transport authorities have powers to provide by contract services over routes which are not served commercially but these are limited by budget considerations. PTEs and local transport authorities may also publicise services and provide bus priorities on their roads. Many places have seen the establishment of bus Quality Partnerships, whereby the public authority cooperates with one or more bus

operators over major improvement to a group of routes: the bus operators put new buses on the route, the local authorities provide local infrastructure (priorities at junctions and lights, bus stops), and both groups cooperate over promoting the services.

These powers were strengthened by clauses in the Transport Act 2000. The Act also established powers for Quality Contracts, under which the public authority becomes responsible for the services and lets contracts to operators to run them; to date these powers have not been used. There remains however a serious barrier to operating bus services in an integrated way. Bus service provision is subject to the regulations of the Competition Acts as applied by the Office for Fair Trading (OFT), and these prevent operators from cooperating in any way which involves 'sharing the market', e.g. through agreements over timetables or common fares systems.

London has seen development of both a light metro (Docklands Light Railway) and a tramway network (Croydon) in the 1990s, and expansion is planned. Outside London only one light metro and one older tramway existed before 1990<sup>1</sup>, but since then four new city tram lines have been opened<sup>2</sup>. In 1998 the Government declared a strong interest in seeing more new systems and extensions built; but they insisted that schemes should still be developed by the PPP approach required by the previous administration. Substantial work has taken place since then to develop new systems and extensions to existing ones, but in 2005 the Government refused to provide funding for them, because costs had risen well above the budget allocated. The promoters attributed much of the increase to the PPP method of funding, with private companies seeking considerable risk premiums, primarily because they were uncertain about revenue, as unregulated bus operators could compete on any routes.

In the field of public transport provision, the French situation differs from the British as much in its structure as in its evolution. The geographical area remains the basis for organizing transport services, whether they are provided by public monopolies or private companies. Furthermore, since the 1980s many local authorities have developed and then implemented guided transport schemes, rail or road.

In France two operators hold a monopoly position on passenger transport: the *Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer Français* (SNCF) for national and regional rail links, and the *Régie Autonome des Transports Parisiens* (RATP) for metro and bus services within Paris. The RATP's area extends into the *départements* in the inner ring around Paris. Several recent measures have sought to open up these corporations to competitive activity; the extension of RATP's field of interest to provincial and international systems enables it to prepare for the probability of competition in the Ile-de-France.

In the provincial cities, the public authorities do not usually operate their own public transport system. They have to deal with a very limited number of transport companies. Three-quarters of the systems are in the hands of one of three groups: Keolis, Connex and Transdev, who carry more than 80% of the trips made in urban public transport. Of these groups, two are predominantly owned by public interests: Keolis, created in 2001, following the purchase of VIA-GTI-Cariane by SNCF, and Transdev, subsidiary of the state-owned financial institution CDC. Only Connex, subsidiary of Veolia-environnement (previously Vivendi-environnement), is fully owned by private funds. Since the middle of the 1980s the strategy of the groups has been marked by four common types of development:

- growth based on the emergence of new transport authorities in small cities



- growth through concentration by merging large companies and by buying up family owned companies;
- combining urban and inter-urban transport activities
- an aggressive international strategy, launched by VIA-GTI in 1989 and followed by Connex in 1996. In contrast, operation of urban transport systems in France by foreign companies remains at present marginal.

In addition to the three groups mentioned, the association AGIR, which represents independent operators, plays an important role (9% of urban systems), essentially in small and medium size cities.

Different types of contract between the operators and the responsible authorities are possible, depending on the allocation of risk and its form. However, the situation of oligopoly in urban transport which limits the impact of competition means that the public authorities, who often have limited expertise of their own, have to rely on contracts which limit the industrial and commercial risks of the transport companies.

The development of guided transport systems in French cities has seen a striking evolution since the 1980s. Nantes (1985) and Grenoble (1987) started the wave of new tramways, assisted by an industrial policy underpinned by central government. Seven other conurbations followed suit, and from 'standard' the vehicles became 'modular' and 'personalized' in order to meet the conurbations' objectives of a positive image and affirmation of their identity. In addition to its significant impact on the use of urban transport, the tramway formed a tool to revitalize city centres and to create local centres in the suburbs of French conurbations. The new French tramway is thus both a mode of travel and a means of reallocating public urban space. This enthusiasm shows up in the number of schemes: 17 cities currently aim to gain or develop a tramway system, almost

half of all identified systems of guided transport on own right of way. In comparison the development of the VAL has been much more limited, and in France has only involved Lille (1983), Toulouse (1993) and Rennes (2002). The range of technological solutions has recently widened to include new intermediate transport systems, both guided and on rubber tyres. They are considered less expensive than the tramway, and their market extends to smaller cities, but also covers major conurbations wishing to complement their heavy transit system (Rouen or Ile-de-France). Furthermore, schemes are now coming forward to use the concept of the tram-train to address the problems of outer urban areas. Its implementation will however require the establishment of authorities with specific responsibilities, which will experience problems in finding their place in the current institutional landscape.

## **x.6 Comparison of British and French policies and practices**

It is clear from the short reviews of British and French approaches that there are strong differences between the two. Some of these concern matters of detail rather than substance. But some differences are fundamental. The following paragraphs consider those areas where the most significant differences appear to exist.

Perhaps the most crucial is the level at which real influence lies. The form and development of transport affects people and places at local level especially, because most journeys are short distance, carried out as part of people's daily lifestyle. The regional level, in the sense of intermediate level between conurbation and central government, is also important, because regional decisions set the framework for many local ones. Therefore transport decisions need to be taken primarily at regional and local level. This is the case in France, where intercommunal bodies and regional councils both have substantial responsibilities for transport. The French government's role is mainly limited to providing the broad policy framework, and encouraging and guiding authorities to follow this.

The current trend is for this delegation of responsibilities to continue. By 2002 the regions had taken over full responsibility for administering all regional and local rail passenger services. Strengthening the role of the *départements* in road transport with the transfer to them, in 2006, of part of the national road network forms another example of this. Government is also withdrawing the substantial funding which it has been granting to conurbation authorities for fixed track urban transit systems. This has led to some authorities becoming doubtful over the effectiveness of developing new public

transport; especially as ridership is generally not growing and the systems are facing increased operating losses, which the intercommunal bodies must underpin.

In contrast, the British approach is highlighted by strong central control, with government both setting out policies and keeping a tight control on the programmes and funding of local transport by local authorities. It is in effect micro-management from the centre. The LTP offers in principle the opportunity to establish a strategy for the area's transport. However, its form and contents are closely prescribed by government guidance, and its programmes are approved for funding on a year-on-year basis. This seriously inhibits local transport authorities from acting positively, so they have very little room to achieve real change in their area's transport. This can reduce the morale of both elected members and professional staff and breed cynicism among the public.

The French system has its weaknesses: some of the relationships between municipalities, intercommunal bodies, *départements* and regions remain unclear; and the links between transport and spatial planning are not fully defined. Because it remains a fundamental principle that no one public authority has control over another, the new planning tools which are aimed at permitting coordination between transport policies and urban development are likely to prove limited in their effectiveness. Thus the coordination of policies is restricted in France by the large number of local authorities which retain their privileges, while in Great Britain the weakness of coordination is due to the centralized control of power and the fragmentation of responsibilities.

This is also reflected in the two countries' widely differing frameworks for public transport administration and investment. Broadly speaking, British public transport is seriously fragmented whereas in France it is strongly integrated. This reflects several factors.

In France most local public transport services are franchised out by the responsible public authority. Some measure of fragmentation exists, because different elements of public transport are the responsibility of different levels: railway passenger services for the regions, inter urban coach services for the *départements* and urban transport services for the municipalities. The three levels do not in practice always work together, leading to poor coordination of services; especially a lack of through tickets.

Within each French urban area, however, full responsibility for provision of public transport lies with the conurbation authority, which represents all the municipalities within the conurbation, and sometimes beyond. The whole urban network is let to a concessionaire for a period of years. The network is developed by the conurbation authority, in cooperation with the concessionaire. This approach produces a network that is fully integrated, in terms of operations, tickets, and general promotion. It also enables the public authority to plan system changes and extensions on an integrated basis; and it is able to fund them because it controls much of its funding, especially through the *Versement-Transport*.

This has led to the construction of 15 new fixed track transit systems of various types, in the last twenty years. However, the new peri-urban areas developing beyond the formerly compact cities are generally not well located for public transport. To address this, plans are now being developed in a few places for tram-train services, applying light rail techniques to underused local rail lines.

Local railway passenger services in France are now determined by the regions. In principle, this enables them to decide on which services they should develop in relation

to their regional spatial strategy and other responsibilities. In practice, the implementation remains limited by the rise of railway transport costs and by the power of SNCF.

In Great Britain public authorities have very limited responsibilities and powers for public transport. Bus services are operated largely on a commercial basis, mostly by the few major public transport companies. Local transport authorities may contract with bus companies to operate services on other routes but this function is limited by legal and budget factors. Coordination of timetables and joint ticketing are prevented by the competition law. In consequence local services are run on a fragmented basis rather than as a cohesive network.

Very few new light rail transit lines have been built outside London; currently 6 cities have them. Plans for three further systems, together with extensions to the existing ones, have been rejected because their capital costs, under the complex PPP system preferred by government, have risen considerably above original estimates.

Railway service franchises are administered centrally by the Department for Transport, whose main focus is to restrain cost rises, and there has been little real investment for many years. There is no effective link between railways and regional or city planning strategies. Planning strategies such as the Sustainable Communities (major expansion of housing in the regions around London) are not matched by any railway expansion, with even the two cross-London projects (Thameslink 2000 and Crossrail) trapped in uncertain processes.

So public transport in Great Britain is largely controlled by central government and by the transport providers (most of them commercial). Therefore it is very difficult for local transport authorities to have any meaningful input. Thus public authorities at regional and local level are not in practice able to employ transport as a tool of spatial planning or sustainable development. This is further exaggerated in two tier areas, where land use planning is carried out by district councils, who have no real involvement with transport anyway. In contrast, the substantial controls that French conurbations and regions have over their public transport allows them to integrate their planning; especially in the case of new transit systems, which are usually planned to serve the main regeneration and development areas of the city, with the bus network in the area restructured to provide local links, with through travel by integrated ticketing.

In France, in the continued application of LOTI, the tendency is to seek new local contributors to support public transport systems, rather than to leave this primarily to market forces, as is the case in Great Britain.

However, the French system is running up against the problem of scale: the size of responsible urban authorities is too small in relation to the scale of everyday travel and the regional level is too large. In this respect the scale of the British counties where the LTPs are prepared appears more suitable than that of the municipal associations responsible for the PDUs. But this positive factor is rendered ineffective by the loss of the counties' planning powers, which means that they are incapable of ensuring real coordination between planning and transport.

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NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Blackpool Tramway, Tyne & Wear Metro

<sup>2</sup> Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield



# URBAN TRANSPORT SYSTEMS ON OWN RIGHT OF WAY IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IN FRANCE

(outside London & Paris regions)

