BusinessLDN's response to DfT's Call for Ideas on Integrated National Transport Strategy

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1. In your opinion, how could the transport network be better 'joined-up'?

1.1. **BusinessLDN welcomes the Government's intention** to develop an Integrated National Transport Strategy (INTS). A joined-up transport network can enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction. The INTS must be shaped through extensive stakeholder engagement to ensure all needs are fully considered.

1.2. The starting point for a better integrated transport strategy is to think about the end goals and remember that transport is a means to an end. **Transport is a key enabler of economic growth, job access and tackling the housing crisis**. A holistic, multimodal – rather than on a mode-by-mode basis – approach is essential to address the needs of users, businesses and wider communities.

1.3. For a more joined-up transport network, we need greater physical and digital connectivity, improved data integration, better regulatory alignment and stronger collaboration between the public and private sectors. We would encourage the Government to establish **formal channels for business engagement** ensuring that the design and delivery of the INTS reflects the priorities of all stakeholders.

1.4. To enable a more integrated transport network, **legislative changes and policies are needed both at London and national levels.** This includes reviewing spatial planning frameworks, such as the London Plan, to remove complexity, increase agility and cater for all transport uses such as land allocation to accommodate additional port and freight capacity, and at national level, accelerating plans for Great British Railways to run and plan the railway network while integrating private sector expertise and involvement.

1.5. This call rightly focuses on empowering local leaders to deliver integrated transport solutions building on the English Devolution White Paper. The INTS must outline how the Government will create a fertile ground for local governments to operate effectively. The success of Transport for London (TfL) since 2000 shows how devolved powers can improve transport networks with innovations like the Oyster card and contactless payments. **Devolving more control to integrated transport authorities** allows them to reduce competition between modes and plan more strategically while still aligning with national standards.

1.6. The UK today finds itself in one of the most challenging and competitive global environments. There is a real need for the UK to be open for business with the rest of the world and improving connectivity through its capital is a key enabler for this. Key policies that will enable this to happen are summarised below.

1.7. Building on the recent one-year settlement, the Government **should secure a multi-year capital funding deal for TfL**, in line with settlements for other regions, Highways England and Network Rail. Long-term funding certainty would attract private investment and support major projects such as the DLR extension, the Bakerloo Line upgrade and extension and the West London Orbital, benefiting supply chains across the UK and supporting jobs. Across the UK, TfL investment underpins a nation-wide supply chain, which according to recent analysis contributed over £11 billion in Gross Value Added to the UK economy over the past two years and supported on average 100,000 jobs each year across the country.[1]

1.8. **Buses and coaches are key to** intra- and inter-city connectivity, offering an affordable and popular mode of transport. Reliable bus services require strong partnerships between local authorities and operators, alongside effective traffic management, including bus priority measures to increase bus ridership, which has heavily suffered in recent years. Ensuring buses and coaches services are well-integrated with train routes, airports, river services, walking and cycling is essential.

1.9. **Rail reform must involve close collaboration** between the Government, Network Rail, and train operators to simplify fares, introduce flexible ticketing, and encourage innovation. We welcome the Government's consultation on rail reform and are hoping that Great British Railways (GBR) will be **structured in a way that fosters the growth of passenger open access**, given the Government's acknowledgement of the valuable role these services play in the UK's rail network. The INTS should offer certainty over the future of open access operators and provide the framework for the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to make timely decisions on applications and enable private investment.

1.10. More must be done to **integrate UK airports with the wider transport network**, as many travellers still prefer private car over public or shared transport for airport access. The Government should continue to back the sustainable expansion of London's airports to maintain the capital's global hub status and ensure strong international connectivity. London and South East's airports are vital for UK trade, handling over three-quarters of outbound air freight. Expanding contactless payment across the entire transport network, including all London airports, will enhance accessibility and convenience. Additionally, the Government should commit to long-term funding for the revenue support mechanism to establish a domestic Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) industry. This will incentivise SAF producers to invest in new plants in the UK, accelerating the transition to greener aviation.

1.11. Strategic road investment is crucial to alleviating congestion and reducing emissions, while policy interventions need to recognise that some road journeys remain essential for individuals and the economy. Increased investment in the road network will support more reliable trips, including **essential trips made by taxis, private hire and freight vehicles**. It is important that these modes are seen as a core part of the UK's transport offering and that the strategy explores ways to strengthen modal integration to offer users a seamless travel experience.

1.12. At the same time, expanding electric vehicles (EV) charging infrastructure is essential for meeting net-zero targets. Concerns over the slowing momentum of EV adoption must be addressed, with the INTS **setting out clear commitments to accelerate the transition** and ensure national support for greener transport options.

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[1] Transport for London Supply Chain: Economic Impact Assessment 2023/2024

1.13.   The Government must also ensure INTS is **a strategy for goods as well as people**. Changes in consumption patterns impact transport demand, requiring an integrated approach. Helping the industry shift road-based freight, which accounts for 90% of London's activity, to rail, water and cycle freight should be a key priority of the INTS. Last mile logistics is one good example where transport modes are well-integrated, with several good applications in the capital. Passenger and freight transport – whether by road, rail, water, or air – must complement each other rather than operate in silos.

1.14.   Finally, a **more strategic approach to water transport** is needed, so that the use of rivers and waterways is maximised. This will need better integration with other modes of transport such as public transport, walking, cycling and cargo bikes. It also requires stronger collaboration between TfL, London Boroughs, the Port of London Authority, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. To encourage more efficient use of rivers and accelerate the electrification of water transport, further incentives are needed, such as grants (e.g. Zero Emissions Vessels Infrastructure competition) and tax relief measures for greener fuel technologies.

2.   How could data be used to improve the transport network?

2.1.   **Transport planning relies heavily on data, from real-time traffic management to predictive analysis and integrated planning**. Data is key to both making the case for projects like Tube line extensions or EV charging infrastructure allocation, as well as supporting their delivery. Effective data-sharing is key to enabling successful, long-term strategies like the INTS and fostering effective public-private collaboration.

2.2.   BusinessLDN's Place Commission[2] set out a vision for a digitally connected London where real-time information enhances urban experiences and drives innovation. Good progress has been made though the GLA's Data for London programme and the revamped London Datastore. **The Government should collaborate with local authorities to maximise data-sharing benefits and support further innovation**.

2.3.   The Government should also explore ways to make open data freely available to third parties and to encourage developers to deliver new products and services. In London, over 17,000 developers have registered for TfL's open data, with more than 42% of Londoners using apps powered by this information. TfL's open data generates annual economic benefits and savings of up to £130m a year[3]. **Expanding this open policy approach across UK transport authorities** would provide significant socio-economic advantages, enhancing efficiency and data accessibility nationwide.

3.   How could technology be used to improve the transport network?

3.1.   New transport technology, driven by smartphone use and artificial intelligence, has transformed mobility in recent years. Investment in new services like electric vehicles, e-scooters, car clubs, autonomous vehicles, delivery robots and drones, is expected to continue worldwide. The UK has the potential to emerge as a global leader in creating a carbon-neutral and technologically advanced transport network. This necessitates **flexible regulatory approaches and innovation-minded policies** outlined in the INTS.

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[2] Place Commission, BusinessLDN, 2023
[3] Assessing the value of TfL's open data and digital partnerships, 2017

3.2.   **Technology enhances transport safety** through, for example, advanced AI-powered features, in-app emergency buttons used in private hire vehicles, predictive maintenance for rail assets, AI-driven air traffic control and smart surveillance systems.

3.3.   Additionally, **technology promotes greener transport** by reducing reliance on fossil fuels and cutting emissions. The adoption of electric vehicles and alternative fuels like hydrogen and biofuels is transforming UK's public transport, aviation, shipping and freight, paving the way for a more sustainable future.

4.   **How, if at all, would you improve the way decisions are made about the transport network?**

4.1.   For the INTS to be effective, it must align with other Government initiatives, including the 10-year Infrastructure Strategy and the Industrial Strategy. A **future-proofed INTS, co-created with the industry and well-aligned with other key strategies**, is vital for providing the transport sector with certainty needed to plan and invest.

4.2.   Enhancing decision-making can be achieved by **making better use of data, strengthening stakeholder engagement and devolving more powers to local authorities**. The UK has abundant data and smart technology but improving decision-making in transport remains crucial, as it often lacks pace, consistency and a unified vision. We are hoping that the INTS will tackle these issues, fostering certainty within the industry and unblocking long-term private investment.

4.3.   **Using robust evidence** from pilot projects, user surveys, and transport modelling is essential for guiding investment decisions. By utilising real-time data, AI, and predictive analysis, authorities can make informed choices about transport investments. Digital simulations, like Digital Twin technology, can help assess policy impacts before implementation.

4.4.   The INTS should create the **conditions for stronger public and private sector collaboration** to ensure policies align with the needs of both users and businesses. Engaging transport providers and stakeholders in strategic planning ensures all modes are represented. Policies should be flexible and evidence-based, allowing for trials of new technologies, systems and services (e.g. autonomous vehicles, innovation on rail ticketing) before full-scale implementation.

4.5.   The Government should continue to **empower London and other regions to make their own transport decisions**. This could be achieved, for example, through meaningful devolution of local rail services to transport authorities similarly to TfL's successful London Overground model.