

Appendix 1

Comments by Belfast City Council on the Detailed Policy Proposals and the Department's Responses (*Council Comments have been paraphrased by DRD)

Q1. “Do you agree that the Department should have the necessary authority to implement the Rapid Transit proposals?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
<p>Belfast City Council welcomes the initiation of work to progress the development of a rapid public transport system for the city and would support the proposals as the first step towards introducing Rapid Transit in Belfast but would emphasis the need for a city-wide integrated network.</p>	<p>Support and comment noted. The Department’s objectives for Rapid Transit include the requirement that it integrates with the other forms of public transport, trains, buses, taxis, etc., to provide the best possible public transport solution for people travelling into and around Belfast</p>
<p>The Council would request clarification on the role of local councils and their relationship with the new agency proposed under public transport reform. There should be a role for the Council to engage with the Department in the planning and implementation of the pilot Rapid Transit network and other transport proposals. This will allow for better integration between transport and local land use planning which is proposed to transfer to councils under the review of public administration.</p>	<p>The Council is a key stakeholder for the Rapid Transit project and will be fully involved in taking forward the proposals for the system. It is the Department’s intention that the new agency proposed under Public Transport Reform would have responsibility for Rapid Transit therefore ensuring that it is part of the integrated public transport network for Belfast.</p>
<p>The Council would also request clarification on the use of developer’s contributions to fund the Rapid Transit system and if the opportunities for private sector contributions are being considered.</p>	<p>The Department will, where possible, seek developer’s contributions towards the Rapid Transit system. In order to ensure that Rapid Transit proposals are taken into account in plans for new developments Rapid Transit Division have arranged to have sight of, and where appropriate comment on, any planning applications adjacent to the proposed routes.</p>
<p>Key issues for the Council are the integration of the proposed Rapid Transit system with the existing public transport service and an integrated ticketing system along the route alignment.</p>	<p>Noted. Belfast Rapid Transit will be one element of an integrated public transport system in Belfast. As such integration, in terms of operation and ticketing, with other forms of public transport is essential.</p>

<p>Current Rapid Transit proposals do not include plans for the North and South of the city. The Department should ensure an equitable high quality public transport system throughout the city.</p>	<p>Noted. The current proposals are for a pilot network connecting East Belfast, West Belfast and Titanic Quarter to the city centre. The decision on if and when to progress extensions to the network will depend on the levels of funding available and the success of the pilot network. Any decision to extend the pilot network would, of course, be subject to public consultation and the necessary impact assessments.</p>
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Q2 “Do you agree that the Department should take land acquisition powers for the implementation of the Rapid Transit system?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
<p>Belfast City Council would call for close engagement and endorsement from the local council on the route alignment and proposed halts of the Rapid Transit network.</p>	<p>Noted. The final details of the Rapid Transit system, including the route alignment options and the location of halts, have yet to be determined. The Council is a key stakeholder for the Rapid Transit project and will be fully involved in taking forward the proposals for the system.</p>

Q3 “Do you agree that the Department should have the power to purchase, lease and dispose of goods, services and facilities for the Rapid Transit system?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
<p>Belfast City Council would recommend that they have a clear role in relation to route alignment and halts.</p>	<p>The Council is a key stakeholder for the Rapid Transit project and as such will be fully involved in taking forward the proposals for the system.</p>

Q4 “Do you agree that a performance-based contract should be introduced for the operation of the Rapid Transit system?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
<p>Belfast City Council would support the introduction of performance based contracts to ensure that the proposed operator is meeting or exceeding certain clearly defined minimum performance indicators. The Council would advocate that there are social benefits in the performance based indicators which will balance against any commercial benefits. The Council would request a role for local councils in developing performance based contracts to ensure they are transparent and locally accountable.</p>	<p>Support and comment noted. The Council is a key stakeholder for the Rapid Transit project and as such will be fully involved in taking forward the proposals for the system.</p>

Q5 “Do you agree that the Department should be responsible for:
 -specifying Rapid Transit service requirements, quality-of-service and the fare levels;
 -awarding the Rapid Transit contract; and
 -monitoring and reporting on Rapid Transit operator performance?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
<p>Belfast City Council are concerned that enforcement of the regulations on the operator will remain the responsibility of the Department of Environment.</p> <p>They recommended that the responsibility for monitoring and enforcement are carried out by one department with a clear separation of roles and responsibilities to ensure efficient procurement, monitoring and enforcement.</p>	<p>Under the proposals the Department of the Environment (DOE) will be responsible for granting a bus operator’s licence to the Rapid Transit operator.</p> <p>In doing so they will consider the operator’s repute, financial standing and professional competence. They will also be responsible for ensuring that the terms of that licence are adhered to. DOE carry out this function for all public transport providers in their role as licensing authority. However the monitoring and enforcement of the performance of the Rapid Transit operator under the terms of the Rapid Transit contract will fall to the Department for Regional Development.</p>

<p>The Council would request assurance that the Rapid Transit vehicles and halts are fully accessible for disabled groups.</p>	<p>Noted. The Department will ensure that the Rapid Transit system is accessible to all. The Department will consult fully on the access arrangements for the system.</p>
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Q6 “What are your views on the proposal to offer financial incentives to the Rapid Transit operator to grow the Rapid Transit market, introduce innovation and improve services?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
<p>Belfast City Council would support setting targets and incentives in order to maintain and improve standards on the Rapid Transit system. However, it should be recognised that a broader policy approach will have an impact on the attractiveness of Rapid Transit and the use of demand management to deter commuters travel by private car may have the potential to increase the Rapid Transit market. The Council would support initiatives to improve standards and services however a realistic standard must be set for an improvement to service.</p>	<p>Support and comment noted. Rapid Transit is one of a range of Departmental measures to encourage public transport use. The other measures, which fall outside the scope of this consultation, include an integrated public transport network for Belfast, car parking control and enforcement and integrated ticketing. Rapid Transit will contribute to the development of these measures. Rapid Transit is a major element of the Department’s Sustainable Transport Policy and, as such, will contribute to the provision of an integrated public transport system for Belfast</p>

Q7 “Do you agree with the proposed powers to regulate passenger conduct on Rapid Transit Vehicles and in/on Rapid Transit premises?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
<p>Belfast City Council would support powers to regulate conduct on Rapid Transit vehicles and this should be standard across all forms of public transport.</p>	<p>Support and comment noted.</p>

Q8 “Do you agree that the dedicated public transport corridors on which Rapid Transit operates should be strictly enforced?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
<p>Parking facilities for local businesses along the route must be protected or alternatives provided.</p>	<p>Noted. The details of the route alignment options have yet to be finalised. However parking surveys have been carried out on all the route options to ensure that the essential parking requirements are addressed in considering the final route alignment.</p>
<p>Consideration should be given to how the pilot network will integrate with other public transport services operating on the route.</p> <p>The proposed routes suggest that Rapid Transit will not be segregated from other traffic in major sections of the route particularly close to the city centre. It is not clear how the system will perform or deliver a modal shift in these circumstances. Belfast City Council would request evidence from the Department on their commitment that preference in the use of road space to public transport will be made.</p>	<p>Noted. Belfast Rapid Transit will be one element of an integrated public transport system in Belfast and, as such, integration with other forms of public transport is essential.</p> <p>Noted. It is the Department’s intention that Rapid Transit will operate on designated public transport corridors with maximum priority and strict enforcement. This will allow journey times to be guaranteed and thereby provide an attractive alternative to the use of the private car. Rapid Transit Division is working closely with Roads Service in relation to the use of road space for Rapid Transit. The Council is a key stakeholder for the Rapid Transit project and as such will be fully involved in taking forward the proposals for the system.</p>

Q9 “Do you agree with the proposed powers for the Department to install, operate and maintain off-board ticketing machines?”

Council Comments*	Department’s Response
It is essential that the ticketing is integrated with the other public transport operators.	Noted. Belfast Rapid Transit will be one element of an integrated public transport system in Belfast. As such integration, including ticketing, with other forms of public transport is essential.