

Objection number**OBJ03**
Objector's Name Fergal Barr
Date submitted..... 29 January 2015
NIMVO plot numberN/A

TransportNI has considered the correspondence in the above objection and responds as follows:

1. I am writing to oppose the York Street Interchange on the basis of cost. The proposed £125 – 165 million pound project does not represent value for money at a time of budget cuts.

Value for Money

- a) A detailed Traffic and Economic assessment has been undertaken using Cost Benefit Analysis (COBA) and Queues and Delays at Roadworks (QUADRO) techniques and computer models, in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, to quantify the effects of the Proposed Scheme. Detailed costs have been prepared and included in the assessment to determine the economic value of the scheme. A range of sensitivity tests has also been undertaken to examine the extent to which results from the computer models vary under different scenarios.
- b) The method adopted for the Traffic and Economic assessment is in line with the requirements of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.
- c) The results of the COBA economic assessment, reported in the published Proposed Scheme Report, indicate that the Proposed Scheme represents good value for money with an overall Net Present Value of £99.780m and a Benefit to Cost Ratio of 2.334.
- d) The results of the various sensitivity tests indicate that the Proposed Scheme would generate a positive Net Present Value over a range of test scenarios where the overall benefits exceed the cost of the scheme. It is concluded that the Proposed Scheme would improve operating conditions in the York Street area and represents good value for money.

2. More seriously given the lack of investment in the roads infrastructure West of the Bann where the proposed A5 improvements are not due for completion until 2028 (if not further delayed) and where there isn't even a date for the proposed improvements to the A6, the spending of a further £165 million on Belfast's roads is unjustifiable, does not target social need, does not promote balanced regional development and accordingly does not pass equality impact analysis.

The priority of strategic roads development should be the completion of the A6 between the two main in cities in the state and A5 Western corridor. Only then should any further road development happen in Belfast.

Development priorities

- a) The existing junction consists of a signalised gyratory 'box' system with traffic signals at each corner, serving over 100,000 traffic movements per day. It is a source of traffic congestion and requires careful traffic management, particularly in peak periods, to ensure that the gyratory system does not become blocked as this would result in significant traffic delays.
The existing junction is therefore considered a 'bottleneck' on the Strategic Road Network, in accordance with the definition established by the Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012, i.e.:

“...where localised restrictions cause undue congestion and thereby delay for freight, public transport and cars.”

- b) The programme to improve transport links in Northern Ireland has been developed and is based on a series of key documents which include:
- The 1998 White Paper ‘*A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone*’;
 - ‘*Moving Forward: The Northern Ireland Transport Policy Statement*’ published in 1998;
 - ‘*Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 - Shaping our Future*’ published in 2002;
 - ‘*Regional Development Strategy 2035 – Building a Better Future*’ published in 2012;
 - ‘*Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2002-2012*’ published in 2012;
 - ‘*Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future – A New Approach to Regional Transportation*’, published in 2012;
 - ‘*Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan 2015*’ published in 2005;
 - ‘*Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015*’ (BMTP) published in 2004;
 - Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-2015;
 - Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2008-2018;
 - Investment Delivery Plan for Roads;
 - Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021; and
 - Expanding the Strategic Road Improvement Programme 2015;
- c) The Regional Transportation Strategy recognises the importance of removing bottlenecks on the Key Transport Corridors. The bottleneck at the York Street Interchange is identified in the BMTP and the Consultation Document ‘*Expanding the Strategic Road Improvement Programme 2015*’ published in 2006.

Social Need

- d) The Proposed Scheme has been subject to a Section 75 Equality of Opportunity Screening Analysis as part of the scheme development process. Schemes are progressed on the basis of need and the importance of this project in relation to the transport network, Belfast Harbour and the City Airport is recognised by its inclusion on the Trans-European Network.

Priority of Schemes

- e) Subject to satisfactory completion of the Statutory Processes, the ultimate decision regarding timing and relative priority of schemes lies with the Minister for Regional Development.