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TRANSPORT IN THE METROPOLITAN COUNTIES:
CURRENT PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

VOLUME II : EVIDENCE

This report was prepared by
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papers, forms the basis for our conclusions on the performance and the likely effects of organisational change. County politicians, and representatives of districts and transport operators were also consulted.

1.1.4 The structure of this report is as follows. In the rest of this chapter we discuss the way which the present local government system was developed, and the changes that are proposed. We draw some comparisons with the current approaches to the same problem in Western Europe and finally derive some general objectives against which it appears appropriate to test alternative structures. In chapter 2 we analyse the salient features of the present system as we see them, and in chapter 3 discuss the structure of transport demand and supply in the metropolitan areas. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 then set out the evidence which we have found to be most relevant to the assessment of the proposed reorganisation with respect to each of our selected objectives.

1.2 The Historical Background

1.2.1 The local government system in England has developed organically since mediaeval times in response to changes in the geographical, economic and political structure of the country. During the last century it has been subject to two major structural reorganisations, each preceded by a long period of study and discussion. These are reviewed in more detail in Resource Paper 1.

1.2.2 The first was embodied in the Local Government Acts of 1888 and 1894, which attempted to rationalise into a uniform structure of democratic local government the proliferation of ad hoc bodies which had grown up over the centuries. In towns of over 50,000 population unitary authorities (county boroughs) were given responsibility for the whole range of local government services. For the rest of the country a two tier system emerged with the county councils as the highway authorities, but with the second tier of urban and rural districts able to exercise delegated highway powers. This structure, which lasted for 80 years, reflected the process of urbanisation in its distribution of powers. It did not reflect the subsequent process of suburbanisation which created tensions over territory, tax base and status between counties and the county boroughs lying within them. These tensions were compounded as the scope of local government was diminished by the piecemeal transfer of responsibilities for gas supply, electricity supply, and local bus licensing, to higher level specific authorities.

1.2.3 Despite the attention given to these problems by a series of government Commissions, the second major structural reform did not proceed until, in 1966, a Labour government committed to major reform appointed a Royal Commission on Local Government under the chairmanship of Lord Redcliffe-Maud. The Redcliffe-Maud report contained both a prescription of the desirable properties of a local government system and an analysis

of the defects of the existing system in respect to those properties. This analysis was common ground in much of the subsequent discussion.

1.2.4 The desirable properties of a local government system were identified as the ability to perform efficiently a wide range of important tasks concerned with the well-being of people in different localities; the ability to attract and hold the interests of its citizens; the ability to develop enough inherent strength to deal with national authorities in a valid partnership; and the ability to adapt itself to the process of change in the pattern of peoples activities.

1.2.5 In the light of these objectives the then existing system was seen as suffering from four major defects:

- local government areas no longer fitted the patterns of life and work, and this misfit was expected to increase;
- the fragmentation of England into 45 counties and 79 county boroughs was making proper planning impossible;
- the division of responsibilities between counties and districts, and the position of county boroughs as islands in the counties, fragmented performance of functions;
- many local authorities were too small to sustain the highly qualified personnel and specialised equipment necessary for the efficient performance of the functions.

1.2.6 The Redcliffe-Maud Report considered that the fundamental question concerned the size of authority necessary for the democratic and efficient provision of particular services and for local self government as a whole. Four general principles were adumbrated for determining that issue.

1.2.7 The first principle asserts that local government areas should match the pattern of living and should give an authority sufficient space to assess and tackle its problems so that effective use of resources can be promoted, particularly in respect of planning and transportation.

1.2.8 Secondly, as regards the grouping of functions, it was argued that all services concerned with the physical environment (planning, transportation and major development) must be in the hands of one authority and also that all personal services (education, social services and housing) must be grouped in one authority. Moreover, where possible all these services should be in the hands of a unitary authority so that through allocation of priorities and co-ordinated use of resources, such an authority could relate its programmes for all services to objectives for its area considered as a whole. However, such

unitary authorities were seen as inappropriate in large conurbation areas.

1.2.9 The third principle, on absolute size, required that authorities should be large enough to command the resources needed for efficient provision of services. A minimum population size of 250,000 was identified as necessary for the employment of "...the range and calibre of staff and the technical and financial resources, necessary for effective provision of (services)..." On the other hand, a maximum population size of one million was designated to avoid disadvantages deriving from managerial and administrative inefficiencies and lack of democratic control by elected representatives. Consequently, where 'coherent' areas on the pattern of living criterion contain substantially more than a million people, the two-tier solution should be applied.

1.2.10 Finally, it was regarded as desirable that wherever possible the new units of local government should be formed out of existing areas in order to respect the common interests, traditions and loyalties inherent in the existing structure.

1.2.11 The application of these principles resulted in proposals for 58 new unitary authorities covering most of the country, responsible for all local government services. These included one for Tyneside, two in what is now South Yorkshire, and five in the present West Yorkshire. In the three main conurbations of Merseyside, SELNEC and West Midlands, however, the size of the authorities required for effective treatment of planning and transportation problems meant that a single authority would be too unwieldy, too difficult to control democratically and too remote for the 'personal services'. Consequently, in these conurbations the two-tier solution was proposed with the component metropolitan districts responsible for the personal services, whilst a conurbation-wide upper tier was seen as essential to the development of effective policies in respect of the 'environmental' group of services.

1.2.12 The 1967 White Paper on Transport Policy gave a definitive statement of the principle of bringing together public transport, highways, traffic and strategic planning in the conurbations. This general application of the principle was foreshadowed in the Buchanan Report (1963), the Planning Advisory Group Report (1965), and the 1968 Transport Act. The more general structural reform, essentially as proposed by Redcliffe-Maud, was formally proposed by the Labour government's 1970 White Paper.

1.2.13 That more general reform did not in the event come until after the change of government in 1970, and then in a radically amended form. The new Conservative government rejected the unitary model in favour of a two tier system, arguing that some services required large administrative areas while others did not. Whilst transport was seen as an upper tier responsibility the boundaries of the new metropolitan

counties (now including West and South Yorkshire) were drawn sufficiently tightly around the cores of some of the conurbations as to negate the city region concept. Also the clear division of functions was blurred by allowing districts to claim maintenance of unclassified roads. There was no suggestion, however, that the argument for a county-wide, strategic level transport function was under fundamental challenge.

1.3 The 1983 Proposals

1.3.1 In the White Paper "Streamlining the Cities", published in October 1983, the government proposes to abandon the two tier structure in the conurbations. Two supporting Green Papers, on transport responsibilities and on the planning functions, contain some relevant detail of the proposals as they affect local transport and the arguments that they will improve the efficiency of local government. The proposals and comments on them are set out more fully in Resource Paper 7.

1.3.2 The government argues that the metropolitan counties were designed for the pursuit of a strategic role for which there is little basis in real needs. It is claimed that the search for such a role, by authorities with little else to do, has led to undue infringement of more local interests and to conflicts with both central and local government. Consequently, it is asserted, the metropolitan counties have consistently exceeded their financial targets, have given inadequate attention to providing value for money, and have thereby had to impose higher rate increases than the shire counties. The governments own proposals purport to remedy these difficulties.

1.3.3 The metropolitan county councils would be abolished, and all their transport and planning responsibilities devolved to the metropolitan districts or, in the case of public transport, to a joint board of those districts. Abolition would occur in April 1986, but for their final year of operation they would be controlled by members nominated by districts.

1.3.4 The metropolitan districts would take over responsibility for structure planning and hence for the formulation of broad transport policy objectives in their areas. They would be expected to cooperate with their neighbours in doing so, and might be required to submit their plans simultaneously with adjoining districts in an attempt to ensure compatibility. However, until this was done, they would be expected to adhere to the existing county structure plan. They would become highway and traffic authorities for all roads other than trunk roads in their area, and consequently be responsible for all the functions related to highways and traffic management from broad highway strategy formulation to detailed implementation. They would be expected to limit their additional manpower requirements in taking over these functions, and to make maximum use of the private sector.

1.3.5 They would be expected to co-operate closely with adjacent districts and would have a statutory duty to consider the overall traffic needs of a wider area. It is suggested that the Regional Controller of the Department of Transport would help in resolving differences between districts and in allocating scarce resources between them, and the Secretary of State would have reserve powers to these ends. The Green Paper lists certain traffic management and planning functions for which it suggests that districts may wish to establish voluntary joint committees, or to delegate responsibilities to one district. Urban traffic control (UTC), road safety, modelling, forecasting and monitoring are mentioned directly in this context, although in the last of these the main concern appears to be with protecting the availability of data for national purposes. Lorry routing, bus lanes and parking controls are also mentioned as areas in which co-operation will be needed. No clear guidance is given as to the structure of these voluntary joint committees, and it would be for the districts concerned to decide how to allocate the costs.

1.3.6 The passenger transport executives (PTEs) would continue in their existing role, but would be responsible to a joint board of the constituent districts. The joint boards would also take over responsibility for airports. They would have a much clearer requirement than now to formulate broad public transport objectives and to determine strategies, and would retain their existing role as providers and purchasers of public transport services. There would, however, be no obvious mechanism for ensuring compatibility between public transport and highways objectives, or for developing combined, or alternative, public transport and highways strategies. The joint boards for public transport would be formed by nomination of members by the conurbation's district council, the numbers of seats being in proportion to the electorate. Members would be expected to be nominated in proportion to the numbers of seats held by individual parties on the district council. The joint board would have powers to employ staff, acquire land and premises, and precept the district council rates in proportion to the districts' rateable values. One important provision is for individual districts, if they wish, to operate their own public transport services, or to contract them out. The government would consider such proposals on their merits in the light of the need for economy and to provide support for conurbation-wide service.

1.3.7 British Rail (BR) and the National Bus Company (NBC) would continue to act as at present, although could also be contracting to provide services to individual districts.

1.3.8 The White Paper proposes that the financial controls currently available to the government (see Section 2.3) will be maintained. Grant Related Expenditure Assessments (GREAs) would relate to districts and joint boards and would be used as the basis for allocating block grants. Targets and penalties would continue to operate, but would be replaced in due course by

the provisions for selective rate control proposed in Cmnd. 9008. Permitted capital expenditure levels would be shared as appropriate between districts and joint boards.

1.3.9 DTp would control decisions on detailed local resource allocation to a much greater extent than at present. Districts and Public Transport Joint Boards would all be eligible for Transport Supplementary Grant (TSG) and would each submit a Transport Policy and Programme (TPP). No indication is given of the ways in which consistency between TPPs would be ensured, but presumably this would be a task for the Regional Controller. Joint boards would still be controlled by Protected Expenditure Levels (PELs) but these would be reviewed in the light of experience. The White Paper accepts that there would be some reallocation of grants and rate levels between districts, but suggests that there should be no undue financial advantage or disadvantage. 'Safety nets' would be used to limit any transitional effects. Apart from the reserve powers proposed to achieve consistency between districts, the main new controls would be a staff monitoring scheme to check on district staffing levels over the first three years (but apparently with no powers of control) and a direct control on PTEs' staffing and subsidy levels over their first three years of operation.

1.3.10 In addition to the much more detailed responsibility for resource allocation set out above, the Secretary of State would have a reserve power to ensure co-operation between districts and to resolve differences between them, and would exercise direct control over the precepts and manpower of the PTEs for the first three years of the new arrangements. The possibility also exists of some increase in the trunk road network, under direct DTp responsibility, where strategic needs justify such action. Districts would act as agents for trunk roads, though not necessarily solely for those in their areas. The role of central government is thus greatly expanded.

1.4 International Comparisons.

1.4.1 The present government proposals argue that "strategic metropolitan" issues are of relatively little significance, and that therefore it is appropriate to give the primary power to the most basic local units that are of an adequate size for operation. We have therefore concentrated our international comparisons on the examination of two countries, the Netherlands and West Germany, which have long traditions of a similarly "localist" philosophy. Our comparative study is summarised in a Resource Paper 8, but some strong conclusions emerge.

1.4.2 In both countries, where a conurbation level institutional tradition does not exist, the pressures of modern conurbation development have led to the creation of conurbation wide authorities, particularly in the transport sector. The German "verkehrsverbund" and the Dutch "gewesten" are both associations of this kind superimposed on a fragmented structure of financially responsible basic units. In both cases, however,

the superimposition has been lubricated by generous financial input from central government, and by the fact that there is considerable agreement between central and local government, particularly on the need to support public transport. It must not be presumed, therefore, that voluntary associations of the same kind would be equally effective in England in the absence of that consensus or that financial commitment.

1.4.3 The corollary of the open ended financial support in the Netherlands is that central government has needed to control standards and to monitor performance. Because of the difficulties involved, the government is now committed to seeking institutions which put the onus more on the local authorities to get best value for money by separating control of the total finance available from the details of local policy formulation and implementation.

1.4.4 It is also of interest that, despite the fact that there is a will to decentralise policy implementation within the largest Dutch municipalities, it has still been decided that a substantial body of strategic transportation functions and powers should be retained at the municipality level.

1.4.5 Experience has also led the Dutch government to worry about the separation of the financial responsibility for interacting aspects of local transport policy at different levels. They are therefore trying to locate the greater part of those responsibilities at the municipality level; it is clear that in the larger cities they would be happier if the main municipality could be expanded to encompass the whole conurbation.

1.4.6 This experience suggests that, even where the traditions of very localised local government are strong, modern conditions require a metropolitan scale activity for the transport functions. The successful achievement of this scale through voluntary association of the basic units appears to require the catalytic aid of external financial support, which in its turn involves central government in detailed supervision of local activities which it is not best placed to perform.

1.5 The Major Issues

1.5.1 Redcliffe-Maud identified the ability of a local government structure to perform a wide range of functions efficiently, to attract the interest of citizens, to deal effectively with national authorities and to adapt to change as the basis for his proposals. While this emphasised efficiency and strength, it said less about the importance of the allocation of resources to the community's needs. Indeed, one of the present government's criticisms has been that the changes in 1974 were made at a time when management of scarce resources was not seen as the critical issue.

1.5.2 The government's criticisms also emphasise efficiency and strength, although by implication their preference is for weaker local government in order to avoid conflict with central government. The White Paper questions the existence of a strategic role for the counties, and of strategic as opposed to local needs. Other commentators have stressed the importance of allocating limited resources to objectively identified needs, of using the full range of available transport and land use policies to achieve such allocations, of implementing policies at the most cost effective level of operation, and of maintaining local democratic accountability for resource allocation and implementation.

1.5.3 In the light of these various specifications of the desired role and objectives of local government, we have identified three main objectives against which it appears appropriate to test alternative structures, and which appear, in principle, to be common ground. These objectives are that the structure of local government should be able:

- to achieve efficient allocation of resources amongst alternative uses;
- to achieve cost-effective provision of transport services at the local government level;
- to provide democratic accountability for decision making.

1.5.4 Under the objective of efficient resource allocation we consider in Chapter 4 the four processes of needs identification, strategy formulation, resource allocation, and programming and budgeting. For needs identification we question whether there are strategic needs for which districts might not be able to identify, whether there are clearly identified priorities between needs which might be misperceived by districts, and whether there are differences of view as to those priorities. For strategy formulation we assess the extent to which strategies need to be formulated at county wide level, to integrate land use and transport policies, and to combine private and public transport policies. For resource allocation, programming and budgeting we seek evidence of procedures for allocation between transport and non-transport budget heads, between different transport budgets, and between individual transport schemes. We also look for any constraints on the efficient allocation of such resources and any evidence of cross-subsidy between districts.

1.5.5 Under cost effective service provision we consider the existence of economies of scale in scheme and programme design and implementation, the importance of linkages between different transport functions, and the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of organisation. In respect of economies of scale Chapter 5 looks at the role of specialist teams and area teams and the implications for different scales of operation of variations in workload. Among the potential linkages, it

considers those between different users of common skills and equipment, and those between different programme areas. Among the different types of organisation, it reviews experience with the use of Agency and Section 42 agreements and private sector skills and equipment, and the implications of organisational change for these arrangements.

1.5.6 Under democratic accountability the specific issues considered are the extent to which local opinion is brought to bear on problems; the ability of local politicians to identify and decide the crucial local issues on which consensus is lacking; and the ability of the electorate to understand and properly attribute responsibility for the distribution of powers. Chapter 6 looks in particular at the effectiveness of current arrangements for public participation and county level decision making, and the implications for democratic accountability of joint boards, joint committees, agency agreements, and an increased central government role.

1.5.7 In the time available we have not been able to consider each issue, for all functions, in all counties. We have selected examples which best illustrate the issues outlined above. We have concentrated on determining how the form of organisation affects the ability to make the right decision and to implement them efficiently, rather than on making judgements as to whether the right decisions have been made in practice.

2 THE CURRENT ORGANISATION OF TRANSPORT FUNCTIONS

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 In this chapter we describe the ways in which transport functions are currently planned and implemented in the metropolitan counties. We distinguish between two stages of decision making: policy formulation, whose structure is similar in all counties, and implementation, for which arrangements differ between counties.

2.1.2 Section 2.2 describes briefly the roles of the different agencies involved, concentrating particularly on the strategy formulation stage. Section 2.3 outlines the various ways in which central government imposes controls on the resources available to, and the policies adopted by, the counties. Section 2.4 summarises the differing ways in which policies are implemented in the six counties. Finally, in section 2.5, we summarise briefly several reviews of the current arrangements.

2.1.3 This chapter draws particularly on Resource Paper 2, which describes in greater detail the differing arrangements for implementation and the sources of information used in this study, and provides further information on the reviews summarised in section 2.5. Some of the material in resource papers 3 and 4 is also relevant.

2.2 The Roles of the Organisation Involved

2.2.1 Central government's main roles are in providing the legislative framework within which local government operates, in approving the plans of local government and in providing a substantial proportion of the financial resources for the implementation of transport policies (see section 2.3). It also has sponsoring responsibility for NBC, BR and the British Waterways Board (BWB), on which it imposes both strategic and executive overriding financial objectives. Finally it has direct responsibility for all aspects of the trunk road and rural motorway network, although the counties usually act as agents for the implementation stage.

2.2.2 The metropolitan counties are responsible for both policy formulation and implementation for the bulk of transport functions. They formulate policy through Structure Plans and TPPs and as Passenger Transport Authorities (PTAs) are responsible for the approval of Public Transport Plans prepared by the PTAs. They are the highway and traffic authorities for all roads in their areas other than trunk roads and motorways. As PTAs they have a statutory duty to "secure or promote the provision of a properly integrated and efficient system of public passenger transport to meet the needs of the area with due regard to the town planning and traffic and parking policies of the county council and to economy and safety of operation". However, implementation of many of these functions may be performed by others, as explained below and in section 2.4.

2.2.3 The metropolitan districts are responsible for the preparation of most local plans, for development control and for the implementation of planning standards, including those for parking provision. These functions must be performed within the context of the county's structure plan, and the county is responsible for the transport input to them. The districts may provide and operate public off-street car parks, although their provision, charging policy and relevant traffic orders require county approval. In addition the districts are responsible for noise control, amenity cleansing, footpath lighting and taxi licensing, although in some cases counties perform functions on their behalf. Finally the districts are responsible for education, housing and social service policies which can substantially influence the demand for transport.

2.2.4 The PTEs are responsible for implementing the PTAs' (and hence the counties') public transport policies. Three of the six counties have a Joint Transport Planning Unit; in two of these county engineering, planning and finance staff work alongside PTE staff in the formulation of strategies and the design of major schemes. Greater Manchester, Tyne and Wear and West Yorkshire have no such formal arrangements and coordination is achieved instead through steering groups or specific joint teams. All six PTEs provide bus services and have strategic control over, and financial responsibility for, services operated by NBC within the county. All six support local rail services; in addition Tyne and Wear has its own metro rail network.

2.2.5 The police are responsible for the enforcement of most traffic management regulations and are consulted on their design. They are directly controlled by the counties' police committees, within the constraints set by the Home Office on staffing levels and policing methods.

2.3 The Nature of Central Government Control

2.3.1 The main central government controls over local government take the form of requirements for the approval of structure plans and a series of financial controls on the resources available for implementing transport policy. Finance for transport comes broadly from three sources: income from transport services (predominantly fares), rates, and government grants in the form both of Rate Support Grant (RSG) and TSG. As well as determining its grants government exercises control on rates and, indirectly through PELs, on public transport revenue support and hence on fares. Separate controls are imposed on capital expenditure.

2.3.2 The counties' broad planning policies are set out in their structure plans, which identify present and future problems and the strategies to be adopted to meet them. Structure plans and their reviews are approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment in the light of an 'Examination in Public'. As part of the approval process he is able to withhold support from

particular policies which he considers either unacceptable or unrelated to land use. While counties are still able to pursue such policies, the lack of structure plan backing can make implementation more difficult. Conversely, approval does not necessarily ensure that the government will in future endorse the implementation of the approved policies, as has become apparent recently with revenue support policies. More detailed policy statements appear in the form of annual TPPs and the PTEs' three year plans. The TPP indicates the county's transport policies, its expenditure plans over the next three years, a detailed expenditure estimate for the forthcoming year and its progress in meeting its objectives. Approval for these is tied to the financial controls discussed below.

2.3.3 Rate Support Grant is provided to local authorities by central government as a block grant which is determined on the basis of central government's assessment of expenditure needs. These GREAs are calculated by separate formulae for the individual services. The formulae themselves change frequently, but for 1983/4 those for transport were based on the following:

- highways maintenance, road safety and passenger revenue support: population and loaded train miles;
- debt charges on passenger transport: past annual expenditure;
- debt charges on roads: principal and other road mileage in built up areas;
- parking: population;
- concessionary fares: the number of elderly people;
- local transport administration: TSG accepted highways expenditure and built-up road mileage.

Block grant is paid as a percentage of these sums, and the government issues guidance on the ways in which it considers that it should be spent. More recently these sums have also been used as the basis for controls on overall expenditure.

2.3.4 Transport Supplementary Grants were introduced in 1974 to replace the range of project specific grants which had become unwieldy to administer and were thought to introduce bias in favour of capital projects and of larger authorities. The scheme was designed to eliminate bias towards capital or current expenditure or towards particular forms of expenditure; to distribute central government grant in a way that reflects as far as possible the needs of individual areas; to reduce the degree of detailed supervision by central government over individual schemes; to promote the development and execution of comprehensive transport plans; and to allow local authorities more discretion on priorities. The grant level is determined by specifying a population related threshold and paying grant at a

nationally determined rate on all expenditure above that threshold. The government determines the accepted level for each county on the basis of the bid made in its annual TPP statement; most items of transport expenditure are eligible for grant. The grant announcement is made for one year at a time about three months before the start of the financial year and there has been some criticism of the effects of this short notice and time horizon on efficient resource planning and allocation. While TSG is a block grant, the government separately itemises the accepted expenditure for revenue support, highway maintenance and capital expenditure. Technically these are presented for advice only, although the government has on occasion penalised authorities which have not followed its advice.

2.3.5 Government is imposing increasing control on that part of transport expenditure financed through rates. Since 1982 it has imposed penalties on local authorities by reducing the block grant on an escalating basis where expenditure exceeds the GREA level, thus increasing substantially the proportion which has to be raised through rates. As an example, every extra £1 of revenue support in 1984/5 will cost an extra £4.36 in rates in West Midlands. Comparable figures in the other counties range from £3.43 to £2.31. In 1983 the government announced proposals for the selective control of the rates of the highest spending authorities. The precise nature of these controls and the ways in which the target authorities will be identified have not yet been specified, but several metropolitan authorities have been mentioned as targets. While most authorities have been able to avoid the worst effects of the existing controls it is clear that the "rate capping" proposals would severely limit their ability to obtain finance for transport from ratepayers.

2.3.6 The 1983 Transport Act introduced a new process for the determination of public transport revenue support. The PTE submits a three year plan to the Secretary of State, who determines a Protected Expenditure Level which represents the maximum amount of revenue support which he considers necessary. He reviews the three year plan and may advise on any changes which he considers necessary to avoid exceeding the PEL. While it is open to the PTA, in approving the plan, to exceed the PEL, such action may be open to challenge through the Civil Courts. Experience is only now being obtained with the new system but it appears that the PELs are being specified at a level which for most authorities would mean fares increases or service cuts. Moreover, it appears that little advice is being provided on the basis for the Secretary of State's calculations or on the reasons for inconsistencies between the PELs and accepted levels for TSG.

2.3.7 As part of their TPP and Public Transport Plan (PTP) submissions counties are required to specify details for all schemes costing over £1m. Capital spending allocations are announced at the same time as TSG, and specify the maximum sums for which counties may raise loans. These are specified in blocks one of which covers both TSG-aided and non-aided transport expenditure. Virement between blocks, and of up to 10% between

years, is permitted. However, government expenditure target controls include debt charges and other revenue consequences and as a result capital expenditure is constrained by the grant penalty system even where capital resources could be made available.

2.4 Implementation Procedures

2.4.1 This section describes briefly the differing arrangements for implementation of the more important transport functions, considering in turn highways, traffic management, public transport and transport planning functions. More detail, case studies, and coverage of the minor functions, can be found in Resource Papers 2 and 4.

2.4.2 One of the main ways in which arrangements differ is in the level at which a function is performed. We distinguish between four types of arrangement:

- a function performed by one unit for the county as a whole; we refer to this as being performed centrally;
- a function performed by a number of teams of county staff, each usually with a geographical area of responsibility, but often with flexibility in the allocation of work between teams; we refer to this as being performed by area teams, although the work may well be carried out from a central office;
- a function which the county elects to allocate to the district as agent but over which it maintains policy and financial control; we refer to these as being performed under Agency;
- a function which the district has claimed under Section 42 of the 1980 Highways Act (and preceding legislation) which covers solely maintenance of unclassified urban roads; we refer to this as a Section 42 arrangement.

Consultants and contractors may be employed under any of these arrangements.

2.4.3 It has been suggested in the White Paper that because many functions are performed under Agency or Section 42 arrangements the districts would be able easily to take over full responsibility for them. It may also be thought that an area team arrangement is a tacit admission that districts could perform the task themselves. Of particular interest to that discussion are the changes which have taken place in these arrangements and the reasons for them. We discuss these issues in chapter 5.

2.4.4 Trunk roads and rural motorways are the responsibility of the Department of Transport, but for most functions counties act as agents. All counties act as agents for construction and improvement; the work is performed by one team in each county.

Major schemes are, however, frequently allocated directly to consultants. All counties act as agents for maintenance; all do the work in one team except Greater Manchester, for whom the districts in turn act as agents for non-motorway trunk roads, and Tyne and Wear, where districts perform cyclic maintenance. The only major changes in arrangements involved the abandonment of district agencies in Tyne and Wear and the use of area teams in West Midlands at the request of the DTp.

2.4.5 Major county road schemes are implemented centrally by all counties, although South Yorkshire involved the districts as their agents until 1977 on former County Borough schemes. For minor schemes arrangements are more variable. Greater Manchester and Merseyside use districts as their agents, though Greater Manchester has proposed to withdraw the agency. West Midlands uses all districts except Birmingham as agents and has three area teams, one of which covers Birmingham. Tyne and Wear does all the work centrally, while South and West Yorkshire each have two area teams. Bridge design is carried out centrally by all counties, as is the related function of abnormal load routeing. Three counties have reduced the extent of their agency arrangements.

2.4.6 Arrangements for maintenance of county roads are also varied. Bradford, Birmingham and the four South Yorkshire districts have Section 42 arrangements. Except in Bradford, these arose from disputes over agency agreements. Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Tyne and Wear have full agency agreements; West Midlands has agency agreements with districts other than Birmingham for all except strategic routes. All counties except Tyne and Wear use area teams to carry out the work, to supervise the agents or to cover the classified and rural road maintenance not included in Section 42. All bridge maintenance is conducted by the counties, centrally in all but South and West Yorkshire, which have area teams.

2.4.7 With the exceptions of those covered in later paragraphs, all traffic management functions are performed in a similar way. All counties except South and West Yorkshire use the districts as agents for implementation and, in some cases, for minor design tasks. All counties except Merseyside and South Yorkshire use area teams for work not done under agency.

2.4.8 Signals and urban traffic control are performed centrally by all counties, although in the West Midlands operation is from two centres, one of which covers Coventry only. In all but South and West Yorkshire the districts are involved as agents in some aspects of scheme implementation. Three counties have withdrawn some or all agency arrangements.

2.4.9 Road safety education is conducted by county area teams in all counties except West Midlands, which covers the work centrally, and Merseyside, which has agency arrangements with all districts. Again, three counties have modified their agency arrangements. School crossing patrols are the responsibility of the police in Merseyside and South and West Yorkshire; elsewhere

the county takes responsibility, either in area teams or, in West Midlands, centrally.

2.4.10 Freight planning is a county responsibility in all cases, though some counties have developed much more detailed arrangements than others. In particular, West Yorkshire has a freight planning team which integrates environmental traffic management aspects and the arrangements for freight movement by rail and water.

2.4.11 All counties except South Yorkshire have airports, and South Yorkshire is currently investigating the need for one. Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire have joint airport boards of the county and one or more districts, and Tyne and Wear is involved in a regional airport committee which covers a wider area. By contrast Merseyside and West Midlands have sole responsibility for development and operation of their airports. The counties and, where relevant, the districts service the airport functions such as engineering, planning and finance.

2.5 The Organisation Reviewed

2.5.1 Since its inception in 1974, several organisations have commented on the organisational structure of transport in the provincial conurbations. These comments are outlined in resource paper 2; the following is a brief summary of them.

2.5.2 In 1979 the Labour Government reviewed the arrangements in the light of pressure from the larger shire districts for greater autonomy. It endorsed the current arrangements in the metropolitan counties, taking the view that coordinated strategic planning of land use and transport should be carried out on a county wide basis. It considered that the agency arrangements provided a convenient and effective means of involving districts directly in highways matters in their areas.

2.5.3 The House of Commons Transport Committee's 1982 report on Transport in London also reviewed provincial arrangements. It stressed the importance of integrated land use and transport planning for a conurbation as a whole, with common objectives for the whole transport system, and with a satisfactory balance between the need for local democratic accountability and for reflection of central government's important financial role. It considered that for implementation the best arrangements were those in which responsibilities were devolved to the smallest effective working units. It endorsed the provincial arrangements as meeting the majority of its criteria for successful organisation.

2.5.4 Academic observers have been more critical, particularly of the tightness of the boundaries of some conurbations and the conflicts which arise from split responsibilities. In particular the Agency arrangements are singled out for criticism as enabling those districts which had been county boroughs to retain some of their lost county borough

powers and to use the counties as a resource to be exploited.

2.5.5 The Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) has recently criticised the current PTA/PTE arrangements. Its main criticisms were that they resulted, in some counties, in policy decisions being taken by PTEs outside the democratic control of elected members, that they involved unnecessary duplication of activities between county and PTE and that they provided insufficient control and management information, particularly where NBC operations were concerned.

2.5.6 Two other recent studies are pertinent to the issue of the arrangements for public transport in the metropolitan counties. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission, though making various observations on the operating performance of the West Midlands PTE, was generally satisfied with the organisational arrangements. The study by the consultants Booz, Allen, Hamilton of the West Yorkshire PTE, in contrast, was severely critical of the inadequacies of management information which they held responsible for poor strategic control both over the PTE's own operations and over those of NBC within the county.

3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE METROPOLITAN AREAS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we outline the characteristics of the metropolitan areas with particular emphasis on their population, settlement patterns, networks and travel patterns. We identify some features common to all six counties and others that differentiate between them. In the light of the proposals to abolish the metropolitan county councils, we pay particular regard to the extent to which individual districts are component parts of the wider conurbation and to a comparison with other local authorities outside the metropolitan areas. Further information on these issues is given in Resource Papers 5 and 6.

3.2 Size

3.2.1 Table 3.1 shows the land areas, populations, densities and maintained road lengths of the metropolitan authorities together with those of the shire counties and the twelve largest non-metropolitan districts.

3.2.2 There is, of course, considerable variation between the different metropolitan counties; West Yorkshire is the most extensive, West Midlands and Greater Manchester are the most populous and West Midlands is the densest. On average, however, they cover little more than one third of the land area of the average shire county, but have $2\frac{1}{2}$ times the population. The combination of similar lengths of maintained road and much higher population densities implies substantially more intense use of infrastructure.

3.2.3 The metropolitan districts similarly vary in area, population, density, and extent of roads. For example, (South Tyneside has barely more than a tenth of the area of Doncaster and a sixth of the population of Birmingham; Doncaster is barely a tenth of the density of Liverpool. On average their area is much less than that of the smallest shire county and is indeed smaller than the vast majority of shire districts. Their average population is less than half that of the average English shire county. Indeed 30 of the 36 metropolitan districts have less population than all but the four least populous shire counties. Not only are the majority of metropolitan districts less populous than most shire counties but they are even smaller than some shire districts. Bristol is more populous than thirty of the metropolitan districts and no less than twelve shire districts have larger populations than at least one metropolitan district.

3.2.4 Furthermore, the majority of metropolitan districts contain less maintainable road than all but the smallest of the shire counties. For example, in West Midlands, all the districts except Birmingham have less road mileage than any English shire county and even Birmingham's total would be exceeded by all but the Isle of Wight.

3.3 Settlement patterns

3.3.1 Settlement patterns vary considerably from one metropolitan county to another; West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Merseyside each have one dominant centre, Tyne and Wear has two, South Yorkshire has three and West Yorkshire five.

3.3.2 West Midlands districts form a single, continuous built up area except for Coventry which is physically distinct, being separated from the main conurbation by almost ten miles of countryside. In Greater Manchester the main focus is Manchester itself but Bolton, Bury, Rochdale and Wigan are physically distinct. Merseyside is dominated by the built up area of Liverpool but is quite fragmented; Wirral is separated from the main conurbation by the Mersey and Southport by almost ten miles of open country; St Helens is joined to it only by a ribbon of development. The other three metropolitan areas are even more fragmented; Tyne and Wear has two distinct built up areas based on the Tyne and Wear respectively (although this division is becoming less marked with the development of Washington New Town), South Yorkshire has three major and distinct built up areas (Sheffield/Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley) while West Yorkshire's five districts each have a single distinct and physically dominant centre, (with the exception of Kirklees which contains both Huddersfield and the 'Heavy Wollen' towns). Tyne and Wear and the Yorkshires also differ from the other metropolitan areas in that they each contain significant areas of open country.

3.4 Transport Networks

3.4.1 The road and public transport networks reflect the settlement patterns described above and thus show great differences between the six counties. Generally speaking, the rail services show the greatest degree of concentration on a single focus with the roads and bus services showing the influence of sub foci.

3.4.2 In three of the counties, one centre (Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham) dominates the transport networks, although in West Midlands, Coventry forms a separate focus. The other three are polycentric, Tyne and Wear having two main centres, South Yorkshire three and West Yorkshire five.

3.4.3 In most cases, network links between metropolitan districts are stronger than those across the county boundary. The main exceptions to this are Coventry, Doncaster, Wigan and St. Helens.

3.4.4 Table 3.2 shows, for the bus and rail networks, the percentage of services crossing local authority boundaries. We note that in the case of local rail services the picture is quite consistent across the counties with about three quarters of services crossing at least one district boundary. The situation as regards bus services is less easily generalised. The

Table 3.1 Data on Selected Local Authority Areas

| | <u>Area (ha)</u> <u>(000s)</u> | <u>Population</u> <u>(000s)</u> | <u>Pop. Density</u> <u>(Persons</u> <u>per ha)</u> | <u>Maintained*</u> <u>Road Length</u> <u>(kms)</u> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| <u>Greater Manchester</u> | | | | |
| Bolton | 18.9 | 260.6 | 18.65 | 828 |
| Bury | 9.9 | 176.1 | 17.76 | 522 |
| Manchester | 11.6 | 448.6 | 38.61 | 1369 |
| Oldham | 14.1 | 220.0 | 15.59 | 710 |
| Rochdale | 15.9 | 207.4 | 12.98 | 578 |
| Salford | 9.6 | 243.8 | 25.17 | 683 |
| Stockport | 12.6 | 290.4 | 23.04 | 800 |
| Tameside | 10.3 | 217.7 | 21.09 | 621 |
| Trafford | 10.5 | 221.7 | 20.99 | 645 |
| Wigan | 19.8 | 309.0 | 15.54 | 877 |
| Greater Manchester | 128.6 | 2595.7 | 20.17 | 7633 |
| <u>Merseyside</u> | | | | |
| Knowsley | 9.7 | 172.9 | 17.76 | 470 |
| Liverpool | 11.2 | 509.9 | 45.17 | 1167 |
| St. Helens | 13.3 | 189.7 | 14.22 | 682 |
| Sefton | 15.0 | 299.7 | 19.91 | 818 |
| Wirral | 15.7 | 339.4 | 21.53 | 982 |
| Merseyside | 65.2 | 151.1 | 23.19 | 4119 |
| <u>South Yorkshire</u> | | | | |
| Barnsley | 32.8 | 225.0 | 6.85 | 969 |
| Doncaster | 58.1 | 289.5 | 4.98 | 1364 |
| Rotherham | 28.2 | 251.7 | 8.90 | 987 |
| Sheffield | 36.7 | 537.5 | 14.63 | 1849 |
| South Yorkshire | 156.0 | 1303.9 | 8.36 | 5169 |
| <u>Tyne & Wear</u> | | | | |
| Gateshead | 14.3 | 211.3 | 14.76 | 858 |
| Newcastle | 11.1 | 277.8 | 24.83 | 976 |
| North Tyneside | 8.3 | 198.2 | 23.66 | 719 |
| South Tyneside | 6.3 | 160.4 | 25.23 | 566 |
| Sunderland | 13.7 | 294.8 | 21.42 | 955 |
| Tyne & Wear | 54.0 | 1142.6 | 21.16 | 4074 |
| <u>West Midlands</u> | | | | |
| Birmingham | 26.4 | 1006.5 | 38.00 | 2054 |
| Coventry | 9.6 | 313.8 | 32.51 | 728 |
| Dudley | 9.7 | 299.7 | 30.60 | 801 |
| Sandwell | 8.5 | 307.9 | 35.98 | 745 |
| Solihull | 18.0 | 199.2 | 11.07 | 680 |
| Walsall | 10.6 | 267.0 | 25.18 | 653 |
| Wolverhampton | 6.8 | 254.5 | 36.94 | 654 |
| West Midlands | 8.9 | 2648.9 | 29.45 | 6315 |
| <u>West Yorkshire</u> | | | | |
| Bradford | 37.0 | 457.4 | 12.36 | 1556 |
| Calderdale | 36.3 | 191.1 | 5.25 | 929 |
| Kirklees | 40.0 | 371.9 | 9.07 | 1626 |
| Leeds | 56.2 | 704.8 | 12.54 | 2525 |
| Wakefield | 33.3 | 311.1 | 9.36 | 1212 |
| West Yorkshire | 203.9 | 2037.1 | 9.99 | 7848 |

(b) Shire counties and districts

| | Area (Ha) (000s) | Population (000s) | Pop. Density (pers. per ha) | Maintained* rd lgth (kms) |
|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Avon | 134.6 | 930.9 | 6.9 | 4504 |
| Bedfordshire | 123.5 | 511.9 | 4.1 | 2202 |
| Berkshire | 125.9 | 700.5 | 5.6 | 3012 |
| Buckinghamshire | 188.3 | 580.8 | 3.1 | 3455 |
| Cambridgeshire | 340.9 | 598.6 | 1.8 | 4573 |
| Cheshire | 232.9 | 934.6 | 4.0 | 5262 |
| Cleveland | 58.3 | 566.9 | 9.7 | 2193 |
| Cornwall | 354.8 | 428.4 | 1.2 | 7439 |
| Cumbria | 681.1 | 482.5 | 0.7 | 7193 |
| Derbyshire | 263.1 | 912.0 | 3.5 | 5480 |
| Devon | 671.1 | 966.2 | 1.4 | 13040 |
| Dorset | 265.4 | 604.6 | 2.3 | 4599 |
| Durham | 243.6 | 608.1 | 2.5 | 3716 |
| East Sussex | 179.5 | 670.6 | 3.7 | 3518 |
| Essex | 367.2 | 1484.1 | 4.0 | 7208 |
| Gloucestershire | 264.2 | 505.5 | 1.9 | 5130 |
| Hampshire | 377.7 | 1486.3 | 3.9 | 8098 |
| Hereford & Worcester | 392.7 | 636.4 | 1.6 | 7199 |
| Hertfordshire | 163.4 | 967.5 | 5.9 | 4158 |
| Humberside | 351.2 | 855.8 | 2.4 | 5552 |
| Isle of White | 38.1 | 119.0 | 3.1 | 762 |
| Kent | 373.1 | 1487.1 | 4.0 | 8316 |
| Lancashire | 306.3 | 1384.1 | 4.5 | 7064 |
| Leicestershire | 255.3 | 860.7 | 3.4 | 4899 |
| Lincolnshire | 591.5 | 550.7 | 0.9 | 8455 |
| Norfolk | 536.8 | 704.9 | 1.3 | 8828 |
| Northamptonshire | 236.7 | 537.0 | 2.3 | 3650 |
| Northumberland | 503.2 | 302.0 | 0.6 | 4886 |
| North Yorkshire | 830.9 | 678.1 | 0.8 | 9180 |
| Nottinghamshire | 216.4 | 991.4 | 4.6 | 4441 |
| Oxfordshire | 260.8 | 547.6 | 2.1 | 3880 |
| Shropshire | 349.0 | 381.0 | 1.1 | 5579 |
| Somerset | 345.1 | 432.3 | 1.3 | 6261 |
| Staffordshire | 271.6 | 1020.1 | 3.8 | 6041 |
| Suffolk | 379.7 | 611.2 | 1.6 | 6156 |
| Surrey | 167.9 | 1013.9 | 6.0 | 4282 |
| Warwickshire | 198.1 | 477.3 | 2.4 | 3354 |
| West Sussex | 198.9 | 671.2 | 3.4 | 3610 |
| Wiltshire | 348.1 | 527.5 | 1.5 | 4713 |
| Bristol | 11.0 | 384.9 | 35.0 | 1179 |
| Derby | 7.1 | 214.4 | 30.6 | - |
| Hull | 7.1 | 266.8 | 37.6 | - |
| Leicester | 7.3 | 276.2 | 37.8 | - |
| Luton | 4.3 | 163.2 | 38.0 | - |
| Nottingham | 7.4 | 268.3 | 36.3 | - |
| Portsmouth | 3.7 | 175.4 | 47.4 | - |
| Plymouth | 7.9 | 240.7 | 30.5 | - |
| Southampton | 4.9 | 202.0 | 41.2 | - |
| Stockton-on-Tees | 19.5 | 171.9 | 8.8 | - |
| Stoke-on-Trent | 9.3 | 249.8 | 26.9 | - |
| Warrington | 17.6 | 167.1 | 9.5 | - |

* Excludes motorways and greenlanes etc.

Sources: - metropolitan and Bristol road lengths; private communication 1984
- shire road lengths, populations and areas: CIPFA SIS 1982-3
- non metropolitan district populations: metropolitan populations and areas: 1981 Census, County reports

Table 3.2 Cross boundary public transport services

| | SOUTH YORKSHIRE | WEST YORKSHIRE | WEST MIDLANDS | GREATER MANCHESTER | MERSEYSIDE | TYNE AND WEAR (includes metro) |
|---|-----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| LOCAL | | | | | | |
| 1. % RAIL SERVICES CROSSING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES | 66.7 | 60.0 | 71.4 | 100.0 | 63.6 | 100.0 |
| 2. % RAIL SERVICES CROSSING COUNTY BOUNDARY | 100.0 | 80.0 | 71.4 | 92.3 | 72.7 | 0.0 |
| 3. % BUS ROUTES CROSSING DISTRICT BOUNDARIES | 7.7 | 17.0 | 46.0 | 37.1 | N/A | N/A |
| 4. % BUS ROUTES CROSSING COUNTY BOUNDARY | 11.9 | 7.0 | 9.0 | 12.4 | N/A | N/A |
| 5. % NBC BUS ROUTES CROSSING COUNTY BOUNDARIES | 24.5 | 52.0 | 14.0 | (0.8) | N/A | N/A |
| 6. % NBC BUS ROUTES CROSSING COUNTY BOUNDARY | 30.1 | 25.0 | 100.0 | (5.2) | N/A | N/A |

Source: PTE annual reports (1982/3) supplemented by private communications
N/A: Not available

tendency is for a larger proportion of NBC routes than of PTC services to cross district boundaries. services but the pattern varies from county to county. In West Midlands almost half the PTE services cross district boundaries whereas less than 10% do in South Yorkshire. On the other hand over half of West Yorkshire's NBC services, cross district boundaries with just over 10% doing so in the West Midlands.

3.5 District boundaries

3.5.1 Examination of the individual district boundaries reveals that many of them were established with little regard to the transport system and networks. There are numerous examples of boundaries so located as to dissect coherent networks and of other boundaries which artificially unite component parts of separate sub networks.

3.5.2 In the West Midlands we note that Coventry District is isolated on a peninsular of the metropolitan county, protruding into Warwickshire, and Solihull District comprises the outer fringes of the Birmingham conurbation plus open country whose networks have more in common with Warwickshire. The remaining districts are all very much part of the main conurbation. We also note that the networks of southern Staffordshire are much more clearly associated with the West Midlands conurbation than with northern Staffordshire.

3.5.3 In Greater Manchester we note that Wigan, Bolton, Bury and Rochdale districts include their eponymous towns together with the northern fringes of the main conurbation. Trafford similarly comprises Altrincham and Sale plus parts of the main conurbation. Manchester district is a curious north-south slice through the built up area.

3.5.4 In Merseyside, Sefton district includes northern fringes of the Liverpool conurbation and, at several miles remove, the town of Southport. Knowsley district is a curious north-south slice of Liverpool comprising a series of distinct suburbs each oriented on an east-west axis.

3.5.5 In the other metropolitan counties the examples are less dramatic, though the 'Heavy Woollen' towns in West Yorkshire span the Kirklees/Wakefield boundary, and the Dearne towns in South Yorkshire span the boundaries of Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham district.

3.6 Patterns of Demand

3.6.1 Table 3.3 shows, for all the metropolitan counties and their districts, the extent of cross boundary trip making. We note that it varies by district, by county, by purpose and by mode.

3.6.2 Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Tyne and Wear each have about one third of their workers crossing district

Table 3.3 Patterns of Demand

| | Employed Residents: Percentage Working Outside District | | | | | | Percentage of 24 Hr. One Way Trips by Motorised Modes Originating in L.a. | | | |
|--------------------|---|--------|------|-------|------------|-------------|---|-------------|--------------|--|
| | | | | | | | Work | | All Purposes | |
| | All Modes | Car/MC | Bus | Train | Walk/Cycle | Inter Dist. | Ext-ernal | Inter Dist. | Ext-ernal | |
| Bolton | 24.8 | 33.9 | 16.9 | 88.5 | 3.7 | 19.6 | 8.0 | 14.9 | 5.3 | |
| Bury | 42.6 | 52.8 | 41.3 | 83.0 | 8.2 | 41.0 | 5.5 | 29.2 | 6.4 | |
| Manchester | 24.7 | 36.1 | 21.1 | 44.2 | 10.0 | 43.7 | 2.1 | 36.3 | 2.5 | |
| Oldham | 25.9 | 36.1 | 23.5 | 88.4 | 4.5 | 27.7 | 0.8 | 20.6 | 1.7 | |
| Rochdale | 34.7 | 43.8 | 41.6 | 89.6 | 6.6 | 31.7 | 2.3 | 21.1 | 4.6 | |
| Salford | 38.3 | 47.4 | 45.1 | 86.4 | 12.8 | 40.8 | 1.7 | 31.7 | 2.9 | |
| Stockport | 41.0 | 49.4 | 29.1 | 92.4 | 7.0 | 32.0 | 6.5 | 21.0 | 7.6 | |
| Tameside | 36.5 | 44.4 | 43.0 | 85.7 | 8.3 | 33.9 | 2.8 | 23.9 | 3.3 | |
| Trafford | 39.9 | 46.8 | 41.3 | 71.6 | 10.6 | 46.9 | 4.0 | 30.6 | 4.5 | |
| Wigan | 32.1 | 43.5 | 24.2 | 81.7 | 4.1 | 9.1 | 22.9 | 6.8 | 13.8 | |
| Greater Manchester | 33.3 | 43.2 | 30.6 | 80.7 | 7.6 | 33.4 | 5.5 | 24.3 | 5.3 | |
| Knowsley | 50.9 | 60.1 | 58.7 | 92.1 | 13.4 | - | - | - | - | |
| Liverpool | 19.8 | 31.7 | 13.1 | 35.3 | 6.8 | - | - | - | - | |
| St. Helens | 31.5 | 41.5 | 22.4 | 88.2 | 6.5 | - | - | - | - | |
| Sefton | 40.1 | 47.9 | 35.1 | 74.9 | 9.6 | - | - | - | - | |
| Wirral | 31.7 | 36.5 | 19.2 | 79.4 | 4.7 | - | - | - | - | |
| Merseyside | 31.8 | 41.0 | 24.5 | 70.9 | 7.7 | - | - | - | - | |
| Barnsley | 23.5 | 32.4 | 24.2 | 73.8 | 4.6 | 14.1 | 12.8 | - | - | |
| Doncaster | 13.5 | 20.2 | 10.3 | 60.6 | 3.2 | 4.8 | 8.5 | - | - | |
| Rotherham | 30.6 | 39.4 | 29.8 | 85.0 | 5.7 | 26.5 | 9.2 | - | - | |
| Sheffield | 9.0 | 14.7 | 4.7 | 57.9 | 2.4 | 9.6 | 7.6 | - | - | |
| S. Yorks | 16.6 | 24.3 | 13.0 | 65.8 | 3.6 | 13.3 | 8.7 | 10.9 | 7.7 | |
| Gateshead | 41.7 | 48.5 | 48.9 | 82.2 | 9.5 | 33.0 | 8.2 | 25.6 | 8.1 | |
| Newcastle | 21.4 | 32.7 | 15.6 | 34.8 | 7.2 | 31.6 | 3.5 | 26.1 | 4.6 | |
| N. Tyneside | 41.7 | 49.8 | 45.5 | 80.4 | 10.4 | 36.9 | 6.3 | 26.7 | 7.5 | |
| S. Tyneside | 28.4 | 37.4 | 24.9 | 68.0 | 7.9 | 18.8 | 3.3 | 15.1 | 2.7 | |
| Sunderland | 23.8 | 33.8 | 18.9 | 83.9 | 5.6 | 9.5 | 7.9 | 7.7 | 6.3 | |
| Tyne & Wear | 30.5 | 40.0 | 28.9 | 70.1 | 7.9 | 25.6 | 5.7 | 20.1 | 5.8 | |
| Birmingham | 12.5 | 18.2 | 8.5 | 16.8 | 4.3 | - | - | - | - | |
| Coventry | 13.8 | 18.6 | 10.8 | 90.3 | 2.6 | - | - | - | - | |
| Dudley | 37.1 | 44.7 | 35.1 | 89.3 | 12.9 | - | - | - | - | |
| Sandwell | 33.8 | 42.1 | 38.2 | 81.2 | 13.4 | - | - | - | - | |
| Solihull | 60.3 | 64.7 | 70.1 | 95.4 | 17.6 | - | - | - | - | |
| Wallsall | 31.8 | 41.0 | 29.7 | 79.5 | 9.4 | - | - | - | - | |
| Wolverhampton | 24.7 | 32.6 | 18.5 | 91.7 | 11.3 | - | - | - | - | |
| W. Midlands | 25.1 | 33.2 | 20.2 | 52.0 | 8.5 | - | - | - | - | |
| Bradford | 15.1 | 21.3 | 10.6 | 52.6 | 3.4 | 10.5 | 5.2 | - | - | |
| Calderdale | 16.4 | 24.4 | 10.1 | 75.4 | 1.9 | 11.7 | 9.0 | - | - | |
| Kirklees | 19.2 | 26.9 | 14.2 | 51.7 | 3.3 | 13.6 | 5.3 | - | - | |
| Leeds | 11.7 | 16.9 | 7.7 | 26.4 | 2.5 | 12.6 | 4.7 | - | - | |
| Wakefield | 19.4 | 27.7 | 17.2 | 72.3 | 1.7 | 13.9 | 12.3 | - | - | |
| W. Yorks | 15.4 | 22.2 | 10.8 | 43.8 | 2.6 | 11.5 | 7.4 | 8.7 | 8.6 | |

Notes on Table

1. '24 Hour Trips by Motorised Modes': data from household interviews and roadside surveys provided by counties relating to years between 1975-81; only trips by car, motorcycle and train generated inside the county are included.
2. 'All purposes': include home-based work, shopping, education and other and non home based trips.
3. 'Inter District': trips which cross district boundaries allocated to districts on basis of 'outward leg' of generated trips plus 'return leg' of attracted trips.
4. 'External': trips generated inside the county which cross the county boundary including both outward and return legs.
5. 'Employed Residents: workplace outside District': Economically active persons in employment who travel to work outside their district of usual residence; source is 1981 Census County Reports.

boundaries, West Midlands has about one quarter and the Yorkshires about a seventh. Examination of the variability in this statistic for individual districts in a county reveals something of the patterns of commuting. In West Midlands for example the high level of outcommuting from Solihull contrasts with negligible outcommuting from Birmingham. The concentration of both jobs and workers in the dominant Birmingham district is, of course, the reason for the West Midlands figure for inter district commuting being relatively low.

3.6.3 In most counties more than two thirds of rail commuters cross a district boundary and in some districts almost all do. Car commuters also have an above average tendency to cross district boundaries. Bus commuters have a slightly lower probability of leaving their home district. Walkers and cyclists are of course the most likely to remain within their home district.

3.6.4 In most counties for which data are available the majority of commuters who work outside their home district work within the metropolitan area. In Greater Manchester, for example, 33 of commuters work outside their home district but only 5 work outside the county. Once again the situation is rather different in the Yorkshires where commuters are almost as likely to work outside the county as in another metropolitan district, for example, Doncaster has stronger commuting links over the county boundary than it does with the other fellow districts of South Yorkshire.

3.6.5 The data for all trip purposes suggests that non-work trips are less likely than work trips to cross district boundaries, but equally likely to cross county boundaries. In the counties for which data is available there is a considerable difference between the component districts in terms of the amount of interaction with neighbouring districts, for example; Manchester, Trafford and Salford are each very much integrated into the Greater Manchester conurbation which Wigan has stronger links over the county boundary.

3.6.6 Table 3.4 shows, for West Midlands districts, the trend in outcommuting between 1971 and 1981. It is clear that an increasing proportion of journeys to work involve a cross-district-boundary journey. For the county as a whole the proportion rose from 26% to 29%. These increase occurred in all districts except Solihull and Dudley both of which already had above average levels of outcommuting. Table 3.4 also shows the change in the absolute number of employed residents and outcommuters. The figures demonstrate two important trends; firstly a dispersal of jobs from the declining industrial core out to the more affluent suburbs and secondly a rise in unemployment in the inner areas with those still in work increasingly dependent on jobs outside their own district.

Table 3.4 Trends in Employment and Commuting in West Midlands

| | Employed residents (000s) | | Employed residents working outside the district | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|-------|---|-------|-------------------------|------|
| | | | Absolute Nos. (000s) | | % of employed residents | |
| | 1971 | 1981 | 1971 | 1981 | 1971 | 1981 |
| Birmingham | 413.7 | 328.5 | 45.9 | 46.5 | 11.1 | 14.2 |
| Coventry | 114.2 | 97.0 | 13.7 | 16.6 | 12.0 | 17.1 |
| Dudley | 103.9 | 104.6 | 48.7 | 45.4 | 46.9 | 43.4 |
| Sandwell | 110.3 | 91.9 | 39.3 | 37.9 | 35.7 | 41.2 |
| Solihull | 73.2 | 76.0 | 55.1 | 51.5 | 75.2 | 67.7 |
| Walsall | 94.1 | 86.2 | 34.2 | 33.0 | 36.4 | 38.2 |
| Wolverhampton | 89.7 | 76.0 | 22.6 | 22.0 | 25.2 | 28.9 |
| West Midlands | 998.6 | 860.3 | 258.8 | 252.8 | 25.9 | 29.4 |

Source: 1971 and 1981 Journey to Work Census

EFFECTIVE RESOURCE ALLOCATION

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 In this chapter, which draws on Resource Papers 3 and 5, we review the evidence on the ways in which resources are allocated in the transport sector in response to needs. In particular we look for evidence of the performance of the existing arrangements for resource allocation and for pointers to effects of the proposed reorganisation on these arrangements.

4.1.2 The resource allocation process may be considered as involving five distinct but interrelated stages:

- identification of transport-related problems and needs;
- formulation of strategies to meet those needs;
- allocation of resources to preferred strategies;
- programming the allocation of resources and adjustment of programmes in the light of changing circumstances;
- monitoring the effects of allocation of resources on, and general trends in the identified problems, and needs.

The whole is a cyclic process in which the last stage can be considered as a repetition of the first. We consider in turn in this chapter each of the four first stages, including our consideration of the monitoring process in the first of these.

4.1.3 This formal division of the resource allocation process is not merely an academic exercise. The metropolitan counties may not be identifying broad goals and objectives for their transport policies, but they do base much of their decision-making on the solution of priority problems. Moreover, the continued decline in available resources over the life of the counties has made it the more important to ensure that those resources are effectively applied.

4.1.4 The issues at stake in assessing the implications of the proposed reorganisation are whether the reduction in scale of operation from county to district will make any of these stages more or less effective, and whether the separation of responsibilities between organisations results in inefficient resource allocation.

4.1.5 Under the issue of needs identification we review the types of need and problem which counties now identify and the ways in which they are monitored. We ask whether any of the problems can be considered to have a county-wide or strategic dimension which would make them harder for districts to identify. Conversely we look for any signs that counties fail to perceive problems which the districts would consider important. We then

consider the determination of priorities between problems in different districts; we look for evidence that the counties already do this and that the districts or the Regional Controller could do so in the absence of the counties.

4.1.6 For strategy formulation we look for evidence that strategies need to be, and are, formulated at a county-wide level. We then consider whether combined land use and transport strategies, and combined public and private transport strategies are required. To the extent that they are, we consider the implications of the proposals for these issues.

4.1.7 For resource allocation we assess the current procedures both between and within transport budget heads. In particular we consider here the impact of the growing level of government control on counties' freedom to allocate resources based on their own assessments of need. We then look for evidence of reallocation of resources between districts and assess the impact on less advantaged districts of the government's proposals.

4.1.8 Finally under the heading of resource programming and budgeting we look at the procedures which counties now use for avoiding over or under-spending and assess the likelihood of the districts being able to operate such procedures as effectively.

4.1.9 In the main this chapter is based on a review of procedures in three counties: Merseyside, West Midlands and West Yorkshire. We do, however, draw from all counties in our review of strategy formulation and resource reallocation. The assessment of programming and budgeting is based primarily on Greater Manchester and Tyne and Wear.

4.2 Identification of Needs

4.2.1. The structure plans for Merseyside, West Yorkshire and West Midlands all demonstrate an emphasis on the identification of problems as the basis for plan formulation. In all cases there is evidence that the severe shortage of resources has led counties to orientate their policies to the amelioration of the most severe problems rather than identifying a series of idealised policy objectives. The White Paper's criticism that the counties are seeking a strategic role for themselves which may not exist in practice needs to be assessed in this light.

4.2.2 The major transport-related problems identified by the three counties are:

- decline of the local economy, especially for certain industrial sectors, producing high unemployment and population loss with impacts concentrated on particular areas and population groups;
- threats to the economic viability of major centres from unemployment and outmigration;

- accessibility problems for particular groups, particularly those without cars in inner urban and outer rural areas;
- declining public transport patronage and resulting pressures for increased revenue support;
- congestion on the highway network;
- freight traffic accessibility particularly in inner areas;
- deteriorating condition of the transport infrastructure;
- environmental impact of the transport system;
- accidents;
- problems for pedestrians and cyclists;
- consumption of energy resources by the transport system;
- airport facilities and access.

4.2.3 Most of these problems are identified by all three counties, although their specific nature varies depending on the structure of the county.

4.2.4 It is important to note that all three counties have recognised that transport is essentially a means to the achievement of wider social and economic ends. This point was underlined by the Secretary of State's Examination Panel for the Merseyside Structure Plan:

"We are satisfied that the County Council correctly recognise transport as a means, not an end in itself. Public transport is seen as the important element of transport activity in achieving the strategy of the Plan. We believe that an effective public transport system will contribute to regeneration because it will broaden the range of accessible job opportunities, especially for the less well off and will extend the catchment area within which an enterprise on Merseyside can recruit".

4.2.5 Many of the problems identified are directly related to land use policy issues. Some districts have suggested to us that the counties did not take sufficient account of land use issues in identifying transport problems. It seems probable that the contrast is between strategic land use issues, of which the counties are clearly aware, and local ones to which they may not give the emphasis which districts would like.

4.2.6 The counties clearly accept that, with limited resources, it is important to determine priorities for their treatment. As West Yorkshire express it:

"...in the likelihood of limited funds and with the desire to derive maximum benefit, it is essential to concentrate resources on solving/ameliorating the most severe problems first (though having regard to the value for money)."

4.2.7 In the structure plans which we examined the condition of the local economy and the related social and environmental problems, particularly in the inner areas, are identified as the fundamental problems. Transport problem priorities are determined in relation to these overriding problems.

4.2.8 The most serious of the specific transport problems is seen as that of poor accessibility for noncar users, together with the related problem of declining public transport use. The second specific transport problem is seen as the condition of the existing transport infrastructure. This in turn leads to an emphasis on the allocation of resources to maintaining and making best use of existing transport facilities. Other problems which are regarded as being important are those of safety and the environment. However, the relative priority of these two differs between counties, and they are generally considered to be of lower priority.

4.2.9 Generally it is clear that the counties have carefully considered the relative priorities of the problems which they are tackling. The basis for doing so is not always clear, but it is important to note that these definitions and priorities have found favour with the Secretary of State at the time of plan approval.

4.2.10 We argue above that it is important to the allocation of scarce resources that problems are not only identified, but regularly monitored to ensure that progress is being made in solving them and, if not, to reallocate resources accordingly. We outline briefly the ways in which the priority problems are monitored.

4.2.11 Accessibility is difficult to define precisely, and harder to measure, because it requires information on the characteristics of the person requiring access, the availability of facilities to cater for individual journey purposes and the provision of transport to those facilities. Neither Merseyside nor West Midlands carries out regular accessibility monitoring, although journey time and access to bus routes are used as proxies. West Yorkshire conducted a comprehensive accessibility survey in 1975, and the survey methodology has since been simplified to permit more frequent updating. Even so, information for 1981 is only now being obtained.

4.2.12 Two systems for assessment of maintenance needs, MARCH and CHART, are currently available. While they differ in

detail, both involve collection of objective data on highway condition, and production of priority rankings for treatment and recommendations for suitable remedial measures. All three counties studied use MARCH, although the application varies. West Yorkshire use an annual visual inspection to identify roads to be assessed in that year; Merseyside adopts an 18 month cycle; and West Midlands a three year cycle. Both the latter conduct annual inspections of the more important routes.

4.2.13 The analysis of accidents and their causes is undertaken by the counties as a statutory duty under the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 1974. The collection of accident data over the whole county increases the reliability of statistical analysis and the opportunities for reliable disaggregation to determine priority needs.

4.2.14 Monitoring of environmental conditions is less fully developed. All three counties use traffic flows as a proxy for environmental intrusion. West Yorkshire developed a much more complete series of environmental indicators in its 1975 studies, but these have not been used comprehensively since.

4.2.15 Progress in monitoring has therefore been greater for those more readily quantifiable problems. There is evidence that some initiatives to develop improved monitoring methods (in West Yorkshire) have not been followed up and there is perhaps more progress that could be made, particularly with the highest priority problem of poor accessibility.

4.2.16 However, quantification of problems is not the only approach to monitoring them. We have found substantial evidence of consultation between counties and other interested bodies to identify priority problems.

4.2.17 The highest priority problem, poor accessibility, is a function both of patterns of land use and of transport facilities. Its assessment has led to the identification of priority areas of multiple deprivation for which both better access and more facilities are required. It is clear that, particularly in Merseyside and West Midlands, the counties see solutions to these problems in terms of facilities in districts other than those in which the deprivation is concentrated. In four of the six counties the level of interdistrict commuting is high and there is some evidence that it is rising. This suggests that those seeking employment will increasingly need to do so in other districts. The identification of problems of poor accessibility therefore requires analysis at a level larger than the district. The county is the obvious unit for such analysis.

4.2.18 The remaining problems of infrastructure deterioration, accidents and environmental intrusion are not so obviously strategic or county-wide in nature, and might be identified at a more local level. However, their causes are in considerable part the interdistrict movements, both of cars and heavy vehicles. This suggests an emphasis on their solution at a county level.

4.2.19 Were the counties to be abolished the districts would be responsible for problem identification, either individually or through a joint monitoring team. We suggest above that the former arrangement would not adequately identify the interdistrict accessibility problems which are generally accepted to be the most serious. The latter arrangement should do so, but would depend on individual districts accepting the implications of the joint team's findings. We suspect that in either case there will be a greater onus on the Regional Controller to assess the nature and relative priority of problems in the conurbations if resources are to be efficiently allocated to needs. We have therefore looked for evidence of the DTp's procedures for identifying needs.

4.2.20 At the time that the TSG system was introduced, the Department of the Environment (DoE) set up a transport indicators working party to devise methods of identifying need for transport investment. The group was disbanded without achieving its objective and we understand that no further progress has since been made.

4.2.21 The government now incorporates some measure of 'need' in its GREA allocations. For transport, the indicators are set out in para 2.3.3. One example of the results of the government's procedures for need identification is given in our analysis of the accepted expenditures for highway maintenance in the six counties (section 4.4). It is thus clear that such crude indicators do not adequately reflect the distribution of problems in the conurbations. We conclude that the DTp has currently no adequate procedures for determining needs and priorities at a local level.

4.3 Strategy Formulation

4.3.1 It can be argued that strategy formulation should be performed at a county-wide level if the problems to be solved are county-wide; if solutions are needed in one district to problems arising in another; if there are good reasons for concentrating resources in parts of the county; or if there are economies of scale or operational considerations which justify the implementation of the strategy at a county-wide level. We consider the last of these points in chapter 5.

4.3.2 We have seen above that the problems of accessibility occur at a county-wide level; they therefore require the development of solutions at that level. In the main, as instanced in the Merseyside Structure Plan, they rely on public transport solutions, since it is the carless who experience the worst accessibility deficiencies. This alone argues for public transport strategy formulation to be conducted at a county level, and in the main this is accepted in the government's proposals. We note in chapter 6, however, our concerns over the effectiveness of the proposed joint boards and the implications

of possible separate district public transport undertakings.

4.3.3 We also note above that many of the other transport problems are caused in part by heavy interdistrict movements. Provision for such movements requires the establishment of a strategic road network and the pursuit of both maintenance and improvement of that network at a county level. Indeed we note that at least one of the districts which supports abolition stresses the importance of maintaining a county-wide body with executive responsibility for strategic highway planning.

4.3.4 One example of a road plan which requires a county perspective is the Black Country Route in the West Midlands. The route has been proposed in response to strategically identified economic, social and environmental needs. It would increase the industrial land within 10 minutes of the motorway from 60 to 170 hectares, would relieve three existing substandard routes and divert traffic from three shopping centres. The northern section, costing £40m at 1983 prices, would pass through two districts, while the southern section, yet to be agreed, would involve a third. Although individual districts might perceive the need for such a scheme they would be unlikely individually to be able to justify or finance it.

4.3.5 Particularly in the four counties with high levels of inter-district travel there are examples from throughout the range of transport functions of the need to develop strategies in one district to solve problems in another. Examples have been quoted of the use of UTC in Gateshead to relieve congestion in Newcastle and of coordinated parking control in Salford and Manchester.

4.3.6 Most of the examples quoted are, however, road and traffic management schemes. One particular example arises on the northern corridor in Merseyside, where one of three parallel routes is environmentally sensitive and another has spare capacity. The district concerned has been resisting rerouting of traffic. Under present arrangements the county council can resolve such disputes in the interests of the conurbation as a whole; under the proposed arrangements the onus for this would fall on the Regional Controller.

4.3.7 We have argued earlier that the major problem to be tackled in the conurbations is that of decline, and that the counties see transport policies as one basis for tackling the problem. Moreover, the most serious of the transport problems, poor accessibility, can be overcome either by improving transport facilities or by increasing the availability of particular types of land use. These demonstrate the importance of a link between transport and land use planning at both a strategic and a local level. Such a link is also valuable in ensuring that major new developments occur where transport facilities are able, or can be improved to accommodate the additional demand.

4.3.8 Again, road schemes provide useful specific examples. The Dearne Towns Link in South Yorkshire is designed to provide easy access to land with development potential in an area with an unemployment rate 1.7 times the national average. The alignment, design and phasing are intended to help existing industry and to attract new industry, and are being synchronised with development.

4.3.9 A similar example in West Yorkshire is the East Leeds radial and associated Kirkhamgate-Dishforth route. Taken together these will provide direct access to existing and proposed industrial areas south-east of Leeds and generally improve access to the inner-urban area which, over the period 1975-81, suffered the largest absolute loss of manufacturing jobs in the County and also has one of the highest unemployment rates. Without the scheme, current highway conditions in east Leeds are such that further industrial development at some sites would be undesirable.

4.3.10 Greater Manchester's traffic and environmental management schemes for the city centre provide another example. The revitalisation of the city centre is a major element of the county's land use strategy. A series of pedestrian streets and bus only schemes has been designed to improve the environment and public transport access to this end.

4.3.11 The districts agree on the need to integrate transport and land use planning; they argue, however, that the current arrangements provide an insufficient link between transport and local land use planning. Some counties have similarly noted that problems arise in the planning of the transport input to General Improvement Area (GIA) and other local plan issues because of differences of view as to policy. There is a clear choice here between integration at the county level, which provides a link with strategic land use planning but runs the risk of divorcing transport and local land use planning, and integration at the district level, which runs the risk of ignoring the strategic land use issues. While we do not belittle the importance of integration of transport with local land use planning, we believe that there is less at stake for local integration under the present system than there would be for strategic integration under the White Paper proposals.

4.3.12 It is clear that the counties' major problem of economic decline is being tackled through both public and private transport strategies. The structure plans and the transportation studies, such as that in West Yorkshire, all show evidence that at the strategic level broad public and private transport orientated policies are considered as alternatives. Similarly in overall budget formulation, clear trade offs are being made between expenditure on public and private transport, despite the selective controls imposed by government.

4.3.13 At the most detailed level of scheme design there are several examples of particular schemes being designed or assessed with other modes in mind. The London Road bus priority scheme in

Liverpool was made possible by the dualling of Islington Road; the new St. Helens bus terminal has been integrated with changes in the road pattern; and West Yorkshire has a policy of protecting Light Rail Transport alignments in its highway schemes. Similarly, programmes for interchange development and park and ride facilities at stations require the integration of road and rail strategies.

4.3.14 It is at the intermediate level of development of solutions to problems in particular areas that there is least evidence of choice between modes. Solutions are sought within the overall framework of the structure plan, and public and private transport solutions rarely arise as alternatives. Even so, both public and private transport are being considered in the treatment of city centre revitalisation plans in both Liverpool and Manchester. For example the Liverpool City Centre Plan Study is attempting to balance the needs of public transport users, traders, suppliers and customers, and therefore involves an integrated package of bus route changes, pedestrian streets and new access routes.

4.3.15 It seems likely that the need for integrated public and private transport planning will increase as public transport patronage declines. The restrictions on revenue support are already raising questions about the future of some local rail services, and Greater Manchester, for example, is currently studying a wide range of options from line closure to upgrading with LRT services. Both ends of this spectrum are likely to affect road conditions by transfer of demand or by right of way requirements.

4.3.16 In the freight transport sphere West Yorkshire's Comprehensive Freight Policy provides a valuable example of the benefits of coordination of different transport modes and of transport and land use planning at a county-wide level. The policy is designed to maintain and improve the environment, encourage economic development, improve the economic efficiency of freight movement, encourage the use of existing resources and reduce damage to infrastructure. It involves the development of a county lorry route network, the identification of lorry action areas, the encouragement of rail and water-borne freight, the provision of routes for hazardous substances and the use of planning controls. The programme clearly benefits from having one authority responsible for policy development, for negotiation with operators and for planning for county-wide movements.

4.3.17 The government's proposals imply that strategy formulation, except for public transport, would not occur at the county level unless it were pursued by the Regional Controller. As we have already noted, some districts have in their response, stressed the importance of maintaining a county level organisation for road planning and we endorse this view.

4.3.18 The government's proposals would maintain a link between highway and land use planning, but at the local level. We

suggest above that it is more important to protect the link with strategic land use planning than to improve that with local planning. Moreover, the link between land use and public transport planning would only occur through the district input to the joint boards, and we argue in chapter 6 that this link is likely to be weak.

4.3.19 That same weakness will affect the increasingly important interaction between public and private transport planning. Moreover, the government seems intent on imposing controls on local authorities' freedom to choose between, for example, revenue support and traffic management strategies. Although we have found little evidence that the government's controls to date have had much effect on counties' choices, there is an expectation that the penalty system on overspending will begin to have such an effect, and that rate controls will intensify it. The proposed controls on joint boards' staffing and precepts are bound to restrict choice in strategy formulation even more severely.

4.4 Resource allocation

4.4.1 In all three counties studied, allocation of resources between budget heads in the transport sector is determined in broad terms within the structure plan by formulating priorities between strategies. There is less evidence of procedures for comparing value for money between individual schemes of different types, although we understand that attempts are being made to develop such procedures.

4.4.2 Merseyside gives priority in its structure plan to making the best possible use of public transport, followed by maintaining the highway system, improving the strategic highway network and implementing low cost ameliorative measures. The intention is to tackle identified problems in order of severity, and priorities are also set within individual budget heads. There is no indication, however, of procedures for determining how to allocate resources between public transport and highway schemes at the margin; indeed officers have suggested that there is no objective means of doing so.

4.4.3 West Yorkshire's priorities are established to support the main economic and social objectives of its structure plan, with a dominant emphasis on 'regeneration areas'. Within this context the major priority is to support an effective public transport system, followed by highway maintenance, safety improvements and provision of access to new development. In the latter cases the strategic highway network is given priority treatment. The county's recent structure plan review has enabled the development of explicit criteria for the evaluation of expenditure proposals in the light of these priorities.

4.4.4 West Midlands have set out a rather fuller basis for allocating resources. Priorities are developed from the two basic principles of maintaining and making the best use of existing

facilities, and developing the system where existing facilities are inadequate. A set of priorities similar to those in Merseyside is established, but all individual transport schemes are assessed in terms of the criteria of relief of congestion, assistance to priority areas and new development, improvements to the environment, benefits to public transport, benefits to industry and commerce, road safety, pedestrian and cyclist needs, and energy conservation. The appraisal method permits flexibility in the priorities to be afforded to the different criteria.

4.4.5 The West Midlands method represents the basis of a procedure for comparative evaluation of individual schemes within different budget heads. Several unsuccessful attempts had previously been made to develop such procedures from the existing highway scheme appraisal methods, described below. We understand that a new initiative is currently underway.

4.4.6 Procedures have been developed for determining expenditure priorities in all the three main areas of expenditure: highway construction, highway maintenance and revenue support. The origins of the three procedures are, however, very different.

4.4.7 The highway appraisal methods stemmed from the need, after reorganisation, to discard the least worthwhile highway schemes inherited by the counties. Although individual counties developed their own methods they are similar in nature. Their main requirements were an ability to be applied quickly to a long list of schemes; to reflect the range of objectives for which urban road schemes are designed; and to avoid the need for substantial data. A goals achievement procedure rather than a cost benefit approach was adopted to reflect the wider range of objectives, which were often weighted, and simple points scoring methods were used to shorten the analysis process and reduce data needs. While all the methods incorporate assumptions which are open to question, they represent some progress in the development of a methodology for urban transport appraisal.

4.4.8 Highway maintenance assessment procedures, using the MARCH and CHART systems referred to in para 4.2.12, were developed by a group of local authorities and by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory (TRRL) respectively, primarily to identify priority maintenance needs. The methods produce both priorities for treatment and suggested treatments based on engineering experience. This enables a given level of resources to be allocated based on need and the implications of different resource levels to be assessed. As a result both Merseyside and West Midlands have been able to demonstrate that structural condition is deteriorating over time as a result of restrictions on maintenance expenditure by central government.

4.4.9 By contrast, the procedure for assessing the value for money of public transport subsidies was developed by the Department of Transport, using a social cost benefit model. The counties and their PTEs have expressed considerable reservations

about the use of the model as it presently stands, but have welcomed in principle the application of appropriate evaluation methods. They are therefore working through the AMA with DTp to extend and improve the framework, particularly to incorporate accessibility, environmental and accident analyses. In addition all three of the PTEs studied have developed their own evaluation models, either under the aegis of the Joint Transport Planning Unit in Merseyside and West Midlands, or within the PTE in West Yorkshire.

4.4.10 We can therefore see that all three counties studied use methods which ensure that scarce resources in each of their three main areas of expenditure are being used in an effective way. Moreover, many of these methods are the result of the counties' own initiatives.

4.4.11 In particular, the achievements of West Midlands deserve special attention. They have conducted value for money studies in respect of both revenue support and highway maintenance; they have contributed significantly to the development of techniques in these fields; and they have developed a method for capital scheme assessment which represents current best practice.

4.4.12 However well the counties are able to perceive their own priority needs and to determine the most efficient allocation of resources to meet them, they experience constraints on their freedom to allocate resources in this way. The two main sources of such constraints are the districts and central government; of these the latter is already more dominant, and its constraints are likely to intensify.

4.4.13 The districts impose constraints in two ways. Firstly they may make policy decisions which impose demands on transport but which are based primarily on other considerations. Perhaps the best example is school hours, which impose an extra cost on PTEs. It is difficult however to assess such costs.

4.4.14 Secondly, agency arrangements can lead to distortions. The need to avoid major fluctuations in agents' workloads imposes some restrictions on the free allocation of expenditure between districts. Provided that flexible area team arrangements are adopted, such restrictions need not arise in the absence of agency agreements.

4.4.15 Of rather greater importance are the constraints imposed on the counties' transport expenditure by central government, which we describe in chapter 2. One effect of these controls can be seen in highways maintenance expenditure. The MARCH assessments in all six counties indicate that greater expenditure on maintenance would produce both a high short term return and a saving in expenditure in the longer term. The House of Commons Transport Committee Report on Road Maintenance supported this view by recommending that an additional 10% expenditure on maintenance should be provided over several years. While counties

can exceed their TSG allocation, they can only do so by drawing on their block grant allocations. This in turn involves either transfer from other areas of revenue expenditure or incurring reductions in block grant by exceeding GREA. The magnitude of this problem is demonstrated by West Midlands, who in 1983/4 considered it necessary to exceed their accepted expenditure by 50%.

4.4.16 The other important impact is on public transport revenue support. Again the restrictions on TSG can indirectly lead to reduction of block grant; the effects of this on the rates for 1984/5 are indicated in para 2.3.5. In addition the PEL system may impose further control if overspending is challenged. Since the first year's PELs are only now about to come into operation it is difficult to estimate their effect, but it is important to note that, for example, in Merseyside the PEL announced appears to bear no relation to the accepted expenditure level for TSG. Moreover the Secretary of State in his announcement to Merseyside has indicated that the PEL should enable the county to maintain reasonable service and fares levels, without giving any indication of the basis of his calculations. Since the Secretary of State for the Environment's panel have separately endorsed the importance of public transport fares and service levels to Merseyside's primary objective of regenerating the economy, the inconsistencies and lack of associated advice in the government's controls are a cause of considerable concern.

4.4.17 There is evidence that to date the counties have been able to avoid the most direct effects of these controls by reallocating expenditure, by drawing on reserves, and by increasing rates. The last of these courses of action will be removed if the government's present proposals for selective control on the rates are introduced. As a result the impact of the existing controls is likely to be intensified.

4.4.18 In addition, the government's abolition proposals contain two further forms of control which are likely to bite particularly on public transport. Firstly, the joint boards will raise separate rate precepts which will be much more obvious to the ratepayer and thus much more exposed to local pressure than rate levies for other transport expenditure. Secondly, and more directly, the White Paper proposes that the Secretary of State should approve the levels both of precepts and staffing of the joint boards over their first three years of operation.

4.4.19 The question of the degree of central government control over total local government spending is an issue of macroeconomic policy which is outside our terms of reference. However, it is clear to us that the tighter those controls are, the more important it is that the remaining resources are allocated efficiently. If such allocations are to be based on locally identified needs then it is essential that local government has the freedom to decide on the best use of resources to meet those needs. The degree of centrally imposed control on freedom to

select maintenance and revenue support strategies is in our mind totally unjustified, the more so since it appears to be based on an inadequate assessment of problems and their alternative solutions.

4.4.20 We note above that the DTp has no adequate basis for allocating resources to needs. This would not be a problem after reorganisation if cruder allocations based, say, on population, were to provide adequate proxies for need. However, if need can be shown to vary on a per capita basis between districts then it can be assumed that, unless the DTp's procedures were to change, those districts with higher per capita needs would suffer from a resource allocation procedure controlled by the DTp. We examine the evidence on this issue, both for individual years and in terms of variations in need over time.

4.4.21 Ideally such evidence needs to cover both the distribution of problems and of resources between districts. The only major expenditure area for which such data are available is highway maintenance. Table 4.1 indicates for three counties the percentages of MARCH assessed needs, resource allocations populations and highway mileages by district for 1983/4. It shows generally that resource allocations are more closely related to need than are population or road mileage. In particular, population considerably underestimates need in Birmingham, Sefton, Oldham and Rochdale, and considerably overestimates need in Dudley, Solihull, Wolverhampton, Bolton and Wigan. In the worst cases, a population based allocation would have reduced Oldham's allocation by over 40%, and increased Solihull's by over 80%.

4.4.22 Analysis of similar information over a longer time period demonstrates that counties have been gradually redressing the imbalances which they inherited in 1974. In West Midlands, for example, Walsall, with only 10% of the network length, justified over 25% of the expenditure in 1975. On the other hand, Solihull's roads justified a much lower pro rata expenditure. Gradual adjustment of expenditure over the last eight years has resulted in resource allocations being within a few percentage points of identified needs. Greater Manchester data shows a similar picture, with Rochdale and Tameside initially receiving fewer resources than justified, and Bolton and Wigan more, but with the situation now being broadly in balance. On Merseyside, St. Helens and Wirral initially received fewer resources than justified, and Sefton received more. Again, the situation is now broadly in balance.

4.4.23 For highway construction only resource allocations are available, although we have seen in para 4.4.7 that these are closely related to need. Table 4.2 indicates for two counties the percentage of currently projected major highway expenditure for the outstanding structure plan period by district. Again population and highway mileage distributions are shown for comparison. They show marked differences between possible indicators and projected expenditure. While two of the 15

districts have a zero allocation, a population based allocation would have reduced projected expenditure in Wigan by over 60% and in Gateshead by almost 50%.

4.4.24 Table 4.3 shows for South and West Yorkshire the fluctuation in highway expenditure by district over time. In South Yorkshire allocations have varied from 6% to 39% in Doncaster and from 1% to 33% in Rotherham. In West Yorkshire there have been fluctuations between 2% and 43% in Bradford and 12% and 65% in Leeds.

4.4.25 It is clear from this analysis that in both these major areas of expenditure needs are not adequately determined by population or highway length. Moreover the needs are likely to vary substantially from year to year, particularly for road construction. It seems unlikely that the DTp would be able to reflect this in its resource allocations. Equally it seems clear that they would not have identified the maldistribution of maintenance needs which the counties inherited, or made the adjustments which the counties have.

Table 4.1 Percentages of MARCH assessed needs, highway maintenance, resource allocations, populations and highway mileages by district (1983/4)

| | DISTRICT | ASSESSED NEED | RESOURCE ALLOCATION | POPULATION | MAINTAINED ROAD LENGTH |
|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|------------|------------------------|
| W. MIDLANDS | Birmingham | 51.0 | 46.0 | 38.0 | 32.5 |
| | Coventry | 10.5 | 10.0 | 11.8 | 11.5 |
| | Dudley | 7.0 | 8.0 | 11.3 | 12.7 |
| | Sandwell | 14.5 | 12.0 | 11.6 | 11.8 |
| | Solihull | 3.0 | 4.0 | 7.5 | 10.8 |
| | Walsall | 10.0 | 13.0 | 10.1 | 10.3 |
| | Wolverhampton | 4.5 | 7.0 | 9.6 | 10.4 |
| MERSEYSIDE | Knowsley | 7.0 | 10.5 | 11.4 | 11.4 |
| | Liverpool | 34.0 | 33.0 | 33.7 | 28.3 |
| | St. Helens | 11.5 | 13.0 | 12.6 | 16.6 |
| | Sefton | 28.0 | 24.5 | 19.8 | 19.9 |
| | Wirral | 19.5 | 19.0 | 22.5 | 23.8 |
| GREATER MANCHESTER | Bolton | 6.7 | 8.6 | 10.0 | 10.8 |
| | Bury | 7.6 | 7.2 | 6.8 | 6.8 |
| | Manchester | 16.1 | 17.3 | 17.3 | 17.9 |
| | Oldham | 15.4 | 14.5 | 8.5 | 9.3 |
| | Rochdale | 16.6 | 9.5 | 7.8 | 7.6 |
| | Salford | 6.2 | 6.7 | 9.4 | 8.9 |
| | Stockport | 9.6 | 10.8 | 11.2 | 10.5 |
| | Tameside | 9.4 | 11.0 | 8.4 | 8.1 |
| | Trafford | 5.7 | 6.6 | 8.5 | 8.5 |
| Wigan | 6.7 | 8.0 | 11.9 | 11.5 | |

44

Table 4.2 Percentage distribution of currently projected major highways expenditure population and road length by district

| | DISTRICT | CURRENTLY PROJECTED MAJOR HIGHWAYS EXPENDITURE | POPULATION | MAINTAINED ROAD LENGTH |
|--------------------|-------------|--|------------|------------------------|
| Greater Manchester | Bolton | 9 | 10.0 | 10.8 |
| | Bury | 1 | 6.8 | 6.8 |
| | Manchester | 23 | 17.3 | 17.9 |
| | Oldham | 2 | 8.5 | 9.3 |
| | Rochdale | 0 | 7.8 | 7.6 |
| | Salford | 11 | 9.4 | 8.9 |
| | Stockport | 10 | 11.2 | 10.5 |
| | Tameside | 1 | 8.4 | 8.1 |
| | Trafford | 4 | 8.5 | 8.5 |
| Wigan | 39 | 11.9 | 11.5 | |
| Tyne & Wear | Gateshead | 33 | 18.5 | 21.1 |
| | Newcastle | 31 | 24.3 | 24.0 |
| | N. Tyneside | 0 | 17.3 | 17.6 |
| | S. Tyneside | 14 | 14.0 | 13.9 |
| | Sunderland | 22 | 25.8 | 23.4 |

45

Table 4.3 Fluctuations in major highways capital expenditure by district over time
(South and West Yorkshire)

| COUNTY | DISTRICT | PERCENTAGE OF COUNTY CAPITAL EXPENDITURE | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------------|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|--|
| | | 74/75 | 75/76 | 76/77 | 77/78 | 78/79 | 79/80 | 80/81 | 81/82 | 82/83 | | |
| SOUTH YORKSHIRE | Barnsley | 36 | 23 | 15 | 21 | 20 | 15 | 18 | 17 | 21 | | |
| | Doncaster | 6 | 34 | 34 | 19 | 32 | 43 | 28 | 34 | 39 | | |
| | Rotherham | 22 | 23 | 33 | 18 | 8 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 12 | | |
| | Sheffield | 36 | 20 | 18 | 42 | 40 | 41 | 49 | 41 | 28 | | |
| WEST YORKSHIRE | Bradford | 43 | 16 | 12 | 3 | 18 | 34 | 13 | 10 | 2 | | |
| | Calderdale | 17 | 8 | 43 | 50 | 57 | 25 | 14 | 12 | 34 | | |
| | Kirklees | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 6 | | |
| | Leeds | 35 | 65 | 30 | 28 | 12 | 17 | 58 | 32 | 46 | | |
| | Wakefield | 1 | 10 | 15 | 18 | 13 | 24 | 13 | 32 | 12 | | |

4.5 Programming and Budgeting

4.5.1 At a time when resources are in short supply, it is essential that those available are used to the full. This is not an easy task given the opportunities for slippage which arise, particularly in highway construction, and the uncertainties of demand for some aspects of maintenance. It is made more difficult by the DTp's insistence on only allocating TSG and capital allocations for one year ahead and then only three months before the start of the year. We are convinced that this is an unnecessary imposition on the counties, and see no reason why it should not be possible to issue clearer guidelines for expenditure over a longer period.

4.5.2 The counties have responded to these challenges by establishing continuous financial review and amendment procedures. Where slippage occurs resources are reallocated to other projects which may well be in other areas of expenditure, and almost certainly will be in other districts. The procedures require a pool of available schemes on which work can start at short notice, and the skill is in knowing which scheme to call upon if slippage occurs or, as happened in 1982/3, the government makes additional funds available at short notice to be spent within a matter of months.

4.5.3 Table 4.4 indicates the success which Greater Manchester has achieved in this way. While budget and outturn were identical for maintenance, outturns for construction and revenue support were around 50% below budget in 1975/6. By 1980/1 those for construction were within 2% and by 1982/3 those for revenue support were within 4%.

4.5.4 Further analysis of the 1982/3 outturn in Table 4.5 indicates how the net slippage on highway schemes was distributed between districts and the resulting percentage increases in highways refurbishment and street lighting budgets for individual districts. It is clear that much of the reallocation occurs between districts in a way that would not be feasible under the government's proposals.

4.5.5 Conversely it is also important that resources are not over-committed. At a time of declining resources this is most likely to occur in capital programmes which have long lead times. This was a particular problem for the new counties which in 1974 inherited substantial road programmes at a time when resources were clearly not going to be made available to complete even the majority of the schemes.

4.5.6 All the metropolitan counties have objectively reviewed their inherited highway schemes and abandoned or reduced the

Table 4.4 Greater Manchester Expenditure by Head 74/5 to 82/3:
Budget V Out-turn

| Year | Highway Construction and Improvement | | Highway Maintenance Exc. Snow and Ice | | Public Transport Revenue Support | |
|---------|--------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|---------|
| | Budget | Outturn | Budget | Outturn | Budget | Outturn |
| 1974/75 | 22.1 | 9.8 | 8.4 * | 10.0 | - | - |
| 1975/76 | 22.9 | 11.2 | 10.2 | 10.2 | 28.2 | 13.3 |
| 1976/77 | 14.6 | 10.4 | 14.4 | 14.4 | 18.2 | 13.0 |
| 1977/78 | 13.3 | 11.1 | 15.7 | 15.7 | 13.4 | 12.3 |
| 1978/79 | 17.4 | 10.6 | 18.6 | 18.6 | 16.2 | 15.2 |
| 1979/80 | 21.3 | 16.0 | 21.1 | 21.1 | 20.0 | 17.7 |
| 1980/81 | 11.5 | 11.7 | 24.9 | 24.9 | 32.3 | 34.5 |
| 1981/82 | 11.7 | 11.4 | 28.1 | 28.1 | 34.3 | 44.4 |
| 1982/83 | 14.7 | 14.8 | 31.8 | 31.8 | 47.0 | 45.9 |

£M at outturn prices (except * - November 1973)

- Sources: 1 - GMC except 1974/75 highway maintenance budget and outturn and all public transport
2 - Public Transport and 1974/75 highway maintenance - CIPFA 815.

Table 4.5 Programming and Budgeting Adjustments (Highways Capital, Highways Refurbishment, Street Lighting) GMC 1982/3

| District | Highways Capital Programme-Net Slippages and Savings (£K) | Percentage increment over initial allocation for: | |
|--------------|---|---|-----------------|
| | | Highway Refurbishment | Street Lighting |
| Bolton | 0 | + 33.3 | + 80.0 |
| Bury | + 34 | 0 | + 169.6 |
| Manchester | - 239 | 0 | + 147.1 |
| Oldham | - 17 | 0 | + 73.3 |
| Rochdale | 0 | + 19.8 | + 77.5 |
| Salford | - 62 | 0 | + 114.5 |
| Stockport | - 59 | + 20.4 | + 116.4 |
| Tameside | - 61 | + 32.5 | + 77.5 |
| Trafford | 0 | N/A* | + 157.5 |
| Wigan | + 50 | 0 | + 171.9 |
| Non-District | + 112 | N/A | N/A |

* Trafford was allocated £45,000 of the funds newly made available although it had not received any in the initial allocations.

scale of the least beneficial schemes. As a result, for example, Tyne and Wear reduced its highway scheme programme from £860m to £290m (at 1983 prices). West Yorkshire quotes a 70% reduction and Greater Manchester an 85% reduction.

4.5.7 This has led to an avoidance of unproductive design work but more significantly has lifted blight and released land for alternative development. For example the abandonment of the northern half of the Manchester/Salford inner ring road released 28 ha. of land from blight. 57% contained existing development whose future has now been secured; a further 27% has since been developed, predominantly for housing.

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 In this chapter we present some evidence on the cost effectiveness of the current arrangements for the transport function and the relevant implications of the White Paper proposals. We consider firstly (in sections 5.2 - 5.7) the question of economies or diseconomies of scale and secondly (in sections 5.8 - 5.9) the importance of those linkages between separate transport functions and between transport and non-transport functions which might be affected by the proposed changes. In the remaining sections we examine some issues raised by institutional considerations, the current Agency and Section 42 agreements, the use of the private sector and the transitional impact on efficiency and effectiveness.

5.1.2 It is not possible, in the limited space available, to present all the evidence we have collected. Further material is available in Resource Paper 4. The material presented here, and the case studies from which they are drawn, were selected to provide evidence on a range of functions drawn from a variety of counties. The absence of information on a specific county should not be taken as implying that that county was inferior (or superior) in any respect. Since, in this chapter we make such frequent reference to individual authorities, we have chosen to refer to them by initials*.

5.2 Economies and Benefits of Scale

5.2.1 We have noted examples of substantial cost savings and other benefits arising from bulk purchasing, stockholding, and maintenance of various items at a county scale. These savings have, in some cases, only been possible following the adoption of county-wide standard specifications (e.g. for street lighting systems). In some cases the savings have accrued primarily from the ability to negotiate favourable terms from suppliers while in others they have been enhanced by internal administrative savings.

5.2.2 In the case of traffic signal maintenance, benefits have included:

- the economies from central purchasing and storage (GM's costs were reduced from £600k to £325k when contracts were taken centrally rather than by individual districts, WM has similarly reduced costs by an estimated 10-15%);

* GM = Greater Manchester; MS = Merseyside; T&W = Tyne & Wear; SY = South Yorkshire; WM = West Midlands and WY = West Yorks.

- the faster access to specialist equipment provided by centralised storage;
- the reduction of stock levels possible in conjunction with centralised storage;
- the justification of county-wide automatic UTC fault reporting systems (WY and GM).

5.2.3 In the case of street lighting, benefits have included the following:

- reduced annual energy costs (GM saved £400k following withdrawal of this function from the districts, the savings comprised:
 - i) £88k discount from NORWEB in appreciation of reduced administration and guaranteed cash flows;
 - ii) £163k saving in internal administrative costs;
 - iii) accounting savings of £149k following computerisation of records);
- reduced annual lamp costs (GM saved £240k following computerisation of records);
- reduced annual maintenance costs (GM save £50k - 100k by central tendering);
- long term savings from standardisation on low energy lamps (WM claims a saving of £1m p.a., savings are also claimed by GM, SY, and WY);
- enhanced road safety which is generally accepted to arise from adoption of common lighting standards where adjacent boroughs had previously maintained different standards.

5.2.4 In the case of contract documentation, administrative and stationery savings have accrued through adoption of county-wide standards and terms for all new contracts and tenders (T&W).

5.2.5 Publicity material used in road safety education and campaigns is produced more cheaply at the county-wide scale. Economies result from bulk printing, centralised storage (allowing reduced stock levels or improved access) and purchase of media space. GM demonstrated these savings when it withdrew the road safety education agency from its districts.

5.2.6 Purchase of buses, ancillary equipment (such as ticket machines) and spares by PTEs rather than by smaller operators obviously brings with it savings similar to those discussed above.

5.2.7 Although some of the benefits of joint purchasing and stockholding might be achieved by voluntary joint arrangements we note that this was rarely achieved pre 1974 and that some districts (eg in MS) have withdrawn from such arrangements set up since 1979.

5.2.8 Some counties maintain county Direct Labour Organisations (DLOs) while others, often for historic reasons, do not. Those that do (notably SY and WY) have demonstrated substantial savings following rationalisation of their depots and manpower and the adoption of sophisticated inventory accounting and job scheduling programmes. WY, for example, showed a reduction in DLO manpower from 1800 to 1200 and an annual saving of some £800k. Some of the savings have undoubtedly been spurred by the Local Government Planning and Land Act requirement to compete for all large contracts and a proportion of smaller ones. Although some of the savings might have been achievable at district scale, (we note that most of the new depot territories are compatible with district boundaries), we are persuaded that the stock, plant and manpower levels are all lower than they would be if the possibility of sharing these facilities between depots did not exist.

5.3 Probable Disbenefits of Scale

5.3.1 Tangible diseconomies of scale are restricted to cases where remoteness of control or size of territory produces extra communications costs (travel time, mileage costs, telephone charges etc.). We have not found any examples of such diseconomies being other than minor. Current arrangements for geographically based teams ensure that such costs are kept to a minimum. Costs do accrue among staff who have county-wide responsibilities but these are not significant. We note that in the specific case of UTC the costs of high quality video monitoring is distance related but, again, this does not appear to be a significant expenditure.

5.3.2 Intangible disbenefits of large scale operation could comprise bureaucratic inefficiencies, departmentalism, in the form of lack of cooperation or empire building, reduced effectiveness of control or reduced responsiveness to local needs.

5.3.3 We have noted some examples of departmentalism within the county council staffs but we make the following observations: firstly it is generally most marked between counties and their PTEs (which division would be exacerbated by the White Paper proposals); secondly, it seems as much a function of personality as of scale and thirdly, once recognised by the counties, steps have apparently been taken to eradicate it.

5.3.4 We have not been able to find any significant examples where the distance inherent in a county scale operation has reduced the quality of control. Typical of the minor examples is

that in WY the control of Huddersfields' UTC system from Bradford rules out use of video monitoring which is generally thought beneficial. Complaints about poor county control over district implementation of functions under agency agreements and about underutilisation of testing laboratories located in another authorities area seem to relate to institutional problems rather than geographical separation.

5.3.5 It is, of course, almost impossible to quote definite examples where geographical separation has resulted in an insensitivity to local needs. All that can be said is that the districts generally give a higher priority to local concerns at the expense of strategic ones, and that the public, other things being equal, find it easier to communicate with a locally based authority. In practice, of course, it is usual for the counties to maintain a local presence to meet this very need. Nevertheless we are aware of public concern over their access to officers dealing with such matters as school crossing patrols and road maintenance. We are also aware that there have been occasions and issues on which even members of the county councils have thought county policies insensitive to the needs of their own wards. Whether this is an avoidable problem of remoteness or an unavoidable consequence of the strategic and county-wide nature of the issues addressed is, however, a matter of argument.

5.4 Benefits Resulting from Specialisation of Function

5.4.1 The county scale of operation justifies the retention of in-house specialist expertise, equipment and services which could not be justified in all but the very largest of the districts. We examine here the degree to which the retention of these specialist resources brings efficiency or quality of service benefits.

5.4.2 The nature of specialist expertise retained by the counties varies. Firstly, there are the technical fields such as UTC design, transport modelling and bridge design, wherein the supply of suitably qualified and experienced people is strictly limited in the short term. As a result 36 individual districts would find it difficult to recruit them even if they could justify their employment. Secondly, there are those experts in functions such as abnormal loads routeing, Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) procedures, accident investigation and the processing applications for freight operators licences which, although they may require a less exacting formal training, become expert in their field only after a considerable amount of experience. Again there must be some doubt as to whether there are sufficient of these people available to serve the immediate needs of 36 districts.

5.4.3 If the districts were unable to recruit or justify in-house expertise in these and other areas they would be faced with a variety of options. They could train their own staff to take on these specialist functions (this is infeasible for some functions and would be time consuming in others); they could hire

in experts from the private sector (the advantages and disadvantages of which are discussed in section 5.12); they could share access to such experts with other districts (which would reduce the benefits of maintaining an integrated function - see section 5.8); or they could simply attempt to do without the expertise the consequences of which are considered next.

5.4.4 Our attention has been drawn to the fact that prior to 1974 many local authorities did not employ specialists in such fields as bridge inspection and traffic engineering. The result in the former case was a well documented backlog of bridges requiring urgent attention and, in the latter case, the adoption of highway construction solutions in areas where sophisticated traffic management might have been more cost effective. Examples in this area are difficult to evaluate since there have obviously been important technical advances since the pre-1974 situation and traffic management solutions are more to the fore than once they were. We do note, however, that a number of schemes, (eg Moorfoot in SY) were, before 1974, due for grade separation solutions but, since 1974, have been given cheaper and more effective traffic management solutions.

5.4.5 The employment of specialists can be seen to have improved the quality of service offered to the public in various areas. Although it cannot be categorically stated that these improvements would not have come about without those specialist teams in the metropolitan counties, study of the circumstances makes this a very reasonable assumption. It seems that the combination of specialist teams, large budgets, a variety of technical challenges and a thorough knowledge of local needs and circumstances make the metropolitan counties very fertile ground for technical innovation and adoption of state-of-the-art technology.

5.4.6 In the case of structural design and highway engineering, specialist teams employed by the counties have produced high quality, innovative, or award winning schemes such as the Niffany Viaduct on the Skipton by-pass and Trent Bridge (both designed by WY), Beighton Viaduct (an advanced design in SY), and Rother Valley cable-stayed bridge (also SY). Specialist teams have also produced technical innovations such as:

- new reinforced/anchored earth technology (WY);
- the Beany block (WY's combined kerb and drainage unit);
- the use of steel industrial slag in road construction and maintenance (an interesting but minor development for which SY estimates a saving of £5k per single carriageway kilometer constructed)
- the development of 55% (rather than the traditional 30%) content rolled asphalt (WY - where consequential annual savings in the order of £160k have been estimated).

Other examples are quoted in Resource Paper 4.

5.4.7 In the case of UTC systems, many highly praised and cost effective design solutions have been provided. For example in the Sheepscar junction scheme in Leeds a UTC solution was implemented at a cost of £4.5m compared to the £20m of the original grade separated solution. Technical developments and innovations have included the development of local linking of outstation data transmission (GM), county-wide stock control, fault reporting and energy billing systems (WY), and involvement in the development and initial trials of the state-of-the-art techniques such as SCOOT, variable intensity pelicans and micro-processor controller trials (WM).

5.4.8 Among other prize winning schemes, technical developments and innovations we also note the development of bridge inspection software (T&W); prize winning lighting schemes (GM and MS); numerous transport and traffic modelling programs (e.g. PROBUS in MS), scheme and project programming software (e.g. SIS in MS); and involvement in the development and early implementation of state-of-the-art technology such as Metro (T&W), MAGLEV (WM), guided buses (WM), articulated buses (SY) and dual-energy buses (SY). Over and above these there are the numerous examples of county experts adapting sophisticated programs and software to meet their own needs and working with suppliers of such products to produce more sophisticated versions, for example, the SATURN traffic assignment suite (MS, GM and WY); rail demand forecasting models (WM) and transportation model packages (GM and WY).

5.4.9 If individual districts wished to maintain a capability in these specialist matters (if only to be in a position to assess the claims of competing private sector suppliers or effectively to manage the work of consultants), or if they wished to avail themselves of the advantage of having their own resident experts in such matters as freight operator licencing or accident investigation they would face problems of the indivisibility of much of this expertise.

5.4.10 Indivisibilities are most obvious in those functions where, even at the county scale, only a handful of specialists are employed. Thus we note bridge design (where WY has a staff of 8 engineers and 3 technicians) and bridge inspection where team sizes are: 6 in T&W, 10 in MS and 15 in GM. These teams include technicians and specialists in different types of structure. Examination of the numbers of bridges in individual districts reveals that some districts have so few bridges (e.g. South Tyneside has only 80 of T&W's 780 county and trunk bridges and Wolverhampton has only 50 of WM's 1100) that they could barely justify one inspector let alone a team large enough to provide sub specialists, emergency cover and independent checks. Examples of this kind of indivisibility of expertise are legion; for instance, transport modellers (WM have a team of only 5);

motorcycle training officers (2 in WY, 1 in SY); abnormal loads routing officers (generally one per county, often located in the bridges section); and freight operator licencing officers (again normally one per county). The argument can be extended, albeit with reduced force, to include the value of multidiscipline teams for such functions as transport modelling (teams frequently include people trained in engineering, economics, geography and computing science); the presence of experts with such a variety of backgrounds could not be maintained in the smaller teams which districts might seek to establish.

5.4.11 The consequence of these indivisibilities under the reorganisation proposals would be either an increase in the total number of specialists employed or a greater reliance on generalists. This latter course might bring some increase in job satisfaction for the people concerned but would eventually lead to a decreased quality of service due to inexperience, atrophied skills or lack of background or of appropriate technical expertise.

5.4.12 If the districts sought to maintain the current range of specialists in-house then staffing levels might increase substantially, even allowing for a certain amount of absorption at senior management and clerical grades. Estimates of these increases for functions where agencies have recently been withdrawn can be made on the basis of staffing levels before and after withdrawal although these are complicated by the fact that, against a background of central government curbs on manpower, the levels might not rise as high as they were before withdrawal of agency. Bearing this in mind we note that when GM withdrew road safety agencies from its districts total staff engaged in the function fell from 80 to 40. When T&W withdrew their design agencies costs were reduced by an estimated 10%. For transport modelling where WM currently employ only 5 staff for the whole county whilst assuring a minimum effective team size of 3, the aggregate of district teams would be 21. For bridge design/inspection where WY calculate that, based on probable allocation of DTp work, manpower would have to increase from 66 to at least 84 plus some 18 extra support staff. Staffing levels such as these would, presumably, not be possible given the tight control on local government spending and so we would expect the districts to have to forego some of the advantages of employing in-house specialists.

5.4.13 We do suspect, however, that the advantages of having in-house specialists are not always fully exploited. The approachability of an expert may be constrained by his nominal attachment to a team based on a different geographical area within the county or indeed by his personality. In particular, we have noted some examples of staff stationed in area offices apparently unaware of expertise held in other area offices.

5.5 Specialist Resources and Services

5.5.1 We have noted the ability of the counties to maintain and make efficient use of specialist facilities such as: soils and materials laboratories; road safety training stations; scientific and control computers; specialist equipment for, among other things, construction, maintenance, snow clearing and bridge inspection; support services for in-house computing, software, data processing, staff training and general management services.

5.5.2 Arrangements for access to soils and materials laboratories differ from county to county. For example: SY and WY each have relatively large well stocked laboratories (SY inventory cost £600k) while T&W has a small in-house team (inventory cost £45k) and supplements this by using outside organisations for the most specialised tests. GM has a very small team reflecting its heavy reliance on districts for agency services in construction and maintenance. Manchester District's laboratory is indeed larger than that of GMC, but some districts within GM apparently do very little testing while others share facilities. Specialisation within the laboratory teams is clearly only possible in the largest units. SY has its own geologists, chemists, physicists and civil engineers. We note that it is the larger laboratory which can point to technical innovations developed in-house (e.g. SY & WY use of locally available waste materials in road construction).

5.5.3 One of the benefits stemming from the use of laboratories is the ability to enforce high standards of materials specification (T & W's programme of random testing revealed 35% of grading analysis to be below specification and showed that problems of sub-standard sub base material was concentrated on particular suppliers). This benefit clearly does not require in-house facilities - some of GM's districts write materials tests into their contracts with suppliers/contractors. But there is evidence (vide other of GM's districts) that lack of easy access to facilities may result in decisions to do very little testing. This short term economy may have serious long term consequences. We note for example the case of Millfields Road canal bridge in Wolverhampton where, before 1974 when laboratory facilities were available only from neighbouring Staffordshire and were thus used only sparingly, insufficient site investigation led to very serious foundation problems.

5.5.4 Counties differ in their arrangements for computing facilities. For example WY has a specialist computer unit dedicated to technical and scientific computing with its own staff and computers while GM and MS each make use of computing facilities shared with their PTEs. We have noted a range of specialist resources (graph plotters, dedicated micro computers, data loggers, design software, advanced graphics etc) used by the counties in their transportation and engineering functions which are quite different from the resources needed for the financially-oriented computing which is the dominant function of most districts' computing facilities. These specialist resources

are now regarded as essential to efficient operation of transport planning and design functions and would need to be duplicated in each district if adequate access is to be provided.

5.5.5 Another resource held by the counties and which provides efficiency or quality of service benefits is specialist maintenance/construction plant. SY for example has one each of: slot cutter, lining machine, mobile drilling rig, landrover bulk gritter, and percussion rig, two each of: tracked shovel/blade, batch concrete mixer, and full slew excavator, and three rotary snow blowers. All these facilities, like T&W's sophisticated mobile testing and analysis unit and SY's plant workshops, are available for use across the county and can only be justified on that basis. The same arguments hold for the specialist road safety and education facilities such as motor cycle training centres (of which SY has 3), and driver training centres (of which SY has 1); the specialist data collection facilities (e.g. SCRIM and deflectograph); and some of the county-wide fault monitoring equipment used in UTC systems. Although arrangements for shared access to some of these facilities might be possible between the districts on a co-operative basis, the absence of such arrangements pre 1974 must cast some doubt on this possibility.

5.6 Temporal Variation in Workload

5.6.1 Many of the transport functions show considerable variation in the year-on-year workload. This variation reflects both the agreed and prioritised programme of works and external causes such as harsh winters. This variation is to some extent constrained at both county and district level by overall resource availability but variation in the underlying needs is intuitively more evident at district level. Table 5.1 for example shows the year-on-year variation in MARCH assessed needs and in workloads for two counties' districts. Table 5.2 shows how, at the county scale, expenditure on various items varies year-on-year and shows that winter maintenance, although not the least variable, is the least predictable (compare original with out-turn budget).

5.6.2 Peaks in the workload at county scale are dealt with either by hiring outside assistance (e.g. design of the Redheugh bridge in T&W), by permitting backlogs to build up (WM has now hired in outside assistance to clear its backlogs on bridge inspection), by allocating teams from one function to work on another (as is the norm for emergency winter maintenance), or less commonly by varying the size of the labour force. All of these options would be available to districts as much as they are to the counties.

5.6.3 When attempting to deal with workload peaks at the district scale, an attractive option which the counties have but which would not be available to the districts, is simply to reallocate resources between districts. Where there is no agency this strategy is the norm for all planning and design work and, where area based teams can be used flexibly, for implementation. We should note here that underuse of design resources was quoted as a major source of the inefficiencies which existed in T&W prior to all such work being brought in from agencies. We contrast this with the position in WM and MS where troughs in bridge design work in some districts have been compensated by peaks in others leaving the county workload comparatively constant.

5.6.4 Forward planning and initial appraisal of schemes by transport planners is carried out in response to the perception of needs and priorities rather than in terms of district quotas. It is thus inevitable that the team will, at any given time, be concentrating its efforts in selected areas. This concentration of effort is usually associated with a local plan or a strategic issue (e.g. the A1-M1 link in WY and the Metro in T&W). It is possible at the county scale to direct the available resources to work on schemes or projects as and when necessary regardless of the district in which they fall. Districts would not have this flexibility.

5.6.5 Similar arguments hold in respect of the locational concentration of UTC system design work at any given point in time. We note that, to date, the teams have concentrated their efforts in certain districts to the exclusion of others (e.g. in

Table 5.1 Temporal Variation in Maintenance Needs and Allocation

| AUTHORITY | 1976/77 | | 1977/78 | | 1978/79 | | 1979/80 | | 1980/81 | | 1981/82 | | 1982/83 | | 1983/84 | | 1984/85 | |
|----------------------|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|---------|----|
| N : % NEEDS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A : % ALLOCATION | N | A | N | A | N | A | N | A | N | A | N | A | N | A | N | A | N | A |
| MERSEYSIDE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Knowlsey | | | | | | | 12 | 14 | 12 | 13 | 11 | 13 | 10 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 6 | 10 |
| Liverpool | | | | | | | 34 | 34 | 32 | 34 | 32 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 33 | 30 | 31 |
| Sefton | | | | | | | 29 | 19 | 26 | 21 | 25 | 22 | 30 | 24 | 29 | 25 | 31 | 26 |
| St. Helens | | | | | | | 11 | 14 | 11 | 14 | 11 | 14 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 13 | 11 | 12 |
| Wirral | | | | | | | 14 | 19 | 19 | 18 | 21 | 18 | 16 | 19 | 20 | 19 | 22 | 21 |
| WEST MIDLANDS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Birmingham | 37 | 34 | 37 | 36 | 32 | 35 | 37 | 36 | 37 | 36 | 41 | 40 | 51 | 45 | 50 | 45 | 40 | 41 |
| Coventry | 10 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 9 | 11 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Dudley | 14 | 15 | 14 | 13 | 17 | 16 | 12 | 16 | 11 | 14 | 7 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Sandwell | 5 | 12 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 5 | 9 | 15 | 12 | 24 | 15 |
| Solihull | 3 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Walsall | 26 | 15 | 26 | 17 | 26 | 18 | 25 | 17 | 26 | 19 | 24 | 18 | 19 | 15 | 10 | 13 | 8 | 12 |
| Wolverhampton | 5 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 10 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 7 |

NOTES:

* MARCH assessment of need for a given district as a % of total county assessment.

+ Actual maintenance allocation for a given district as a % of total county allocation (projected for 1984/85).

Table 5.2 Highway Maintenance Budgets and Expenditure Over Time (WYMCC)

| MAINTENANCE GROUPS | Budgets and Expenditure (millions of pounds) | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1978-79 | | 1979-80 | | 1980-81 | | 1981-82 | |
| | Original | Outturn | Original | Outturn | Original | Outturn | Original | Outturn |
| Maintenance of Structures | .3 | .3 | .4 | .4 | .8 | .9 | .9 | .9 |
| Reconstruction & Resurfacing | 3.3 | 3.0 | 4.1 | 4.2 | 7.1 | 7.8 | 6.3 | 5.8 |
| General Maintenance | 6.5 | 6.5 | 8.2 | 8.8 | 6.1 | 8.5 | 7.6 | 11.4 |
| Surface Dressing | .9 | .9 | 1.6 | 1.7 | 1.1 | 1.3 | 1.5 | 1.7 |
| Horticultural Maintenance | .4 | .4 | .5 | .5 | .5 | .7 | .5 | .6 |
| Safety Sweeping | 1.7 | 1.7 | 2.0 | 1.9 | 1.9 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.5 |
| Gully Emptying | .8 | .6 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| Traffic Signs etc. | 1.2 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.4 | .8 | .8 | .8 | .7 |
| Winter Maintenance | .9 | 4.9 | 1.9 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 6.3 |
| TOTAL HIGHWAYS | 16.0 | 19.8 | 21.1 | 22.0 | 21.3 | 25.7 | 23.3 | 31.1 |
| Street Lighting Maintenance | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 3.1 | 2.9 | 2.9 |
| Street Lighting Energy | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.8 | 2.7 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 3.2 |
| TOTAL STREET LIGHTING | 4.2 | 4.6 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 5.2 | 6.0 | 5.9 | 6.1 |
| TOTAL HIGHWAYS & LIGHTING | 20.2 | 24.4 | 26.1 | 27.1 | 26.5 | 31.6 | 29.2 | 37.2 |
| Capital Construction | | | | | | | 1.1 | 1.4 |

GM neither Wigan nor Rochdale have any UTC linked signals). The current programmes for system extensions do include work in most districts (e.g. WM has proposals for work in Wakefield, Kirklees, Calderdale, Leeds and Bradford) but the planned phasing of this work would result in great variation in the workload related to any one district.

5.7 The Wider Perspective

5.7.1 A number of transport functions require a county-wide perspective if they are to be effectively performed. Examples include the analysis and forecasting of travel demand, statistical analysis of accident data, vehicle and abnormal load routing and the establishment of county strategy and standards for route signing, speed limits, street lighting etc. We examine here the extent to which the cost effectiveness of these functions might be affected by the White Paper proposals.

5.7.2 We have already noted (see chapter 3) the variable extent to which travel patterns within the metropolitan counties cross district boundaries. Where interdistrict flows are relatively minor, as for example in West Yorkshire, it may be possible to do analyses of local traffic on a district by district basis. Even here, however, through traffic can only be estimated by looking at more than one district. In the more densely populated counties analysis of travel demand must clearly involve information from groups of districts if not the whole county. In GM for example the county-wide model is used as a data base for virtually all scheme assessments and even for small study areas the county-wide model is used to provide information on through trips. Thus the Stockport Study required data from a county wide model while the East Manchester study, which appraised three schemes entirely within Manchester district, required data from seven other districts.

5.7.3 Even for very local studies it is clear that districts would often have to rely on each other to provide compatible data. Experience from pre-1974 is that such data was not always forthcoming and was rarely compatible even where an ad hoc joint transportation planning team (e.g. WYTS and SELNEC) was established. In the case of SELNEC for example, an apparent consequence of multi authority involvement in the study was that the population/employment estimates and the agreed plans based on them were substantially over-optimistic because they were made up of individual, and to some extent competitive, forecasts and intentions each of which was designed to reflect an individual authority's aspirations rather than a realistic view of the conurbation as a whole. Such a situation is neither efficient of effort nor effective in result.

5.7.4 It is well known that analysis of accident data must be carried out over a large area if enough data is to be available for statistically significant results to be obtained sufficiently quickly to advise on trends and characteristics. The district scale is undoubtedly too small for this purpose. Although

national figures may be applicable in some circumstances they may be of reduced value if local conditions depart significantly from the national norm (e.g. daylight hours in T&W). In practice however, the opportunities for, and the necessity of, linkages with other functions are perhaps the most important factors in the decision as to the appropriate scale for these analyses (see section 5.8).

5.7.5 Functions such as abnormal load routing, route signing and speed limits must clearly be carried out with a view to the strategic perspective. If each component district were to be involved in these functions this would produce substantial inefficiency and duplication of effort. For example, each haulier would have to notify each district of his intended journey and the districts would in turn have to liaise. It can be shown that this would be liable to produce sub-optimal solutions. Co-operative arrangements and/or central government guidelines and standards ought to be possible in all these functions and could presumably ensure that the function was effectively if not efficiently discharged.

5.8 Linkage Between Transport Functions

5.8.1 In this section we present some evidence on the importance of linkages or co-operation between functions which might be institutionally separated by the White Paper proposals or by other changes which might be thought necessary if the counties were to be abolished.

5.8.2 Teams responsible for the various transport functions normally co-operate with one another in their joint use of specialist resources such as forecasts, computer facilities, materials laboratories and so on. To the extent that functions might be institutionally separated this efficient joint use of services would be jeopardised by virtue of the necessary arrangements being more complex. For example, most PTEs, highways and traffic teams currently share access to common data and forecasts and, in some cases, jointly own computing facilities. In WM, T&W and MS they are institutionally assisted in this by joint transport planning units (JTPIUs). We also note that materials laboratories are used not only by teams involved in implementing construction and maintenance but also by traffic management/minor works and public transport and that the most common arrangement for specialist services such as quantity surveying, graphics and computing is to have them available centrally.

5.8.3 There are many examples of the benefits that have accrued from co-operation between teams working in the transport sector. We note in particular the case of UTC design teams which, through links with traffic signals, traffic management, PTE and highways teams have not only produced the innovative and successful schemes mentioned in section 5.4.7 but also a myriad of much smaller schemes. It has now become a matter of routine for UTC units to consider any highway scheme or traffic

management proposal which might benefit from linked signalling. This consideration will often result in the UTC engineer suggesting minor layout modification or, occasionally, complete scheme reappraisals. Other examples of beneficial joint working between UTC teams and others are the provision of vehicle count data from on line detectors (e.g. WY), the implementation of a computer program (BUS TRANSYT) to ensure bus priority in UTC schemes (WM), and the development of bus detectors to improve bus flows through signalised junctions (WY).

5.8.4 A notable example of close integration of teams working on separate functions bringing quality of service and efficiency benefits is the link between bridge inspection and abnormal load routing. In WM, for example, of some 10,000 notices of abnormal loads about a quarter will require some detailed assessment of routes with respect to bridges and other constraints, about 60 per year will require a bridge inspection and about 25 per year will require a detailed bridge inspection. The link between accident investigation and the prioritisation and design of remedial measures is also very beneficial. It allows remedial measures to be rationally programmed (eg via S.Y's blackspot identification software or WMs comparative analysis of accidents at differently signalised sites) and designed with the benefit of an accident investigator's in-depth knowledge of a site's accident history and the performance record of the remedial measure proposed (eg via WM's studies of accident rates at different types of pedestrian crossing and on different types of road surface). The link between accident investigation and road safety education and training allows resources to be targeted to topics (eg cyclist safety) or locations which are revealed in the statistics as requiring particular attention. Close working between project planning staff and county DLO managers clearly assist in the development of a cost effective implementation programme (eg in SY and WY).

5.8.5 Linkages and co-operation between teams are in some cases institutionalised (e.g. via JTPUs) while in others they may be more or less informal, involving ad hoc or semi regular meetings to deal with matters of common interest. Informal co-operation, in particular, benefits from centralisation in one office. In some cases the needs of a special study will require loan of equipment or secondment of staff from one team to another for a specified period (e.g. in WY to form a team to carry out a large data collection programme, and in GM when PTE and GMC staff were seconded to the GM rail study team). Co-operation is most efficiently organised if the co-operating individuals all have the same employer. Attempts to second staff between counties and districts have had mixed success. We note here that, as discussed in section 5.3, the departmentalism which can sometimes be observed within county councils or PTEs is considerably less than that between counties and PTEs (where we have seen examples of poor data flows and conflict over priority ranking of schemes in the TPP), and that this in turn substantially less than that between completely separate authorities (viz. county-district disputes over agency operation). Since departmentalism leads to

inefficiency, any proposals to separate the co-operating functions institutionally must therefore be retrograde.

5.8.6 The role of JTPUs in providing linkage between highways, traffic, public transport and implementation teams has already been mentioned. Close linkages are also implicit in the successful operation of the transport policy units whether or not it involves a JTPU. The transport policy units must work particularly closely with teams involved in data collection, intelligence and forecasting and with budget programming teams.

5.9 Linkage With Non Transport Functions

5.9.1 At the county scale close working between transport and non transport functions is common in several areas. Thus, for example, (6% of S.Y's materials testing laboratory's workload is concerned with non transport county functions such as waste. Engineering design services are also shared (eg in design of waste disposal plants). There is also liaison with the police over accident investigation, road safety training, school crossing patrols and, of course, traffic regulation enforcement policy. Finally, there is liaison with the fire services over emergency vehicle routing and priority. These efficient arrangements would all to a greater or lesser extent be jeopardised by the White Paper proposals. The arrangements for sharing of facilities would be likely to become institutionally complex and might founder (vide the low use of materials labs by some districts in GM which have no lab of their own). Although liaison with the police and fire service might theoretically occur at a lower level the resources devoted to liaison would have to be increased and the police might find it difficult to reconcile different policies in different districts (WY Police's 14 divisions are currently the largest operational units below county scale). District involvement in land use policy with joint board control of public transport would undoubtedly weaken links between these vital areas.

5.9.2 Liaison, joint working and shared use of facilities at other than a county scale does, of course, already exist. We have mentioned the shared use of laboratories and suggested that such arrangements, though possible, are not altogether satisfactory. Rather more satisfactory have been some of the agreements between counties, districts and others over environmental and safety related verge cutting (WM); provision of bus bays outside school (GM); co-ordination of maintenance work with other works (eg WY's liaison with statutory undertakers); provision of school crossing patrols (WM, GM and T&W); cooperative highway maintenance agreements (eg WYs agreement to maintain part of the North Yorkshire trunk network); regional cooperation on lorry routing (eg by T&W and County Durham); freight and waterways policy, (WY and SY have successfully co-operated with each other and with BR, NCB and B&WB over this); and inner city partnerships (T&W's involvement with the regional offices of the Department of the Environment, and the Newcastle and Gateshead Districts and Health Authorities).

5.9.3 Inefficiency or ineffectiveness of inter-institutional arrangements in the operation of functions for which both institutions have some responsibility have been apparent. Unfortunately the arrangements mentioned in the previous paragraph do not work in all counties, and other arrangements (eg parking policy and distribution of bus passes for the elderly) have suffered from and perhaps contributed to strained relationships between authorities. To the extent that the White Paper proposals reduce this type of shared responsibility they must be regarded as beneficial. We note, however, that whereas some links might be strengthened, others would be weakened by the proliferation of uni-function units and the absence of a county scale authority.

5.10 Institutional Issues

5.10.1 The White Paper proposals involve a considerable increase in inter-institutional liaison and an enhanced role for the regional offices of the Department of Transport. We present here some evidence relevant to the likely effect of these developments.

5.10.2 We have already suggested that cooperation and shared use of facilities is inhibited by spatial and institutional separation. We have quoted aspects of the history of the SELNEC transportation study, the under use of materials testing facilities in GM, and the sometimes less than perfect relationships between counties and their PTEs to support this.

5.10.3 The success of cooperative arrangements has depended on adequate resources being available to ensure proper liaison and on a commonality of view as to objectives. In the absence of these there has been misunderstanding, ill feeling and frustration and consequent lack of progress (eg in parking policy development)

5.10.4 The transport departments within county councils liaise with a great many agencies whose organisational structure is not compatible with district boundaries. In some cases (eg WY Police) there is no organisational unit between the county and relatively small local areas and in others the smallest unit is at county scale or bigger (eg DTp, DoE, NCB, BR, BWB). District scale liaison with such bodies, and with statutory undertakers, would require additional liaison resources from the cooperating body (each of whom would have to liaise with six (and in some cases seven) times as many metropolitan local authorities). We note that the Serpell Report, in discussing a proposal to make shire counties rather than DTp responsible for grant aiding, foresaw greatly increased liaison effort for British Rail in such circumstances.

5.10.5 The current arrangement for inter-institutional liaison and cooperation took some time to become established after the 1974 reorganisation. There was in the interim something of a

hiatus as far as cooperative developments were concerned. It seems likely that a further reorganisation would lend to a further hiatus.

5.10.6 In particular, the Department of Transport has over the last several years become less equipped, available or willing to provide specialist advice to local authorities. This trend, associated with reductions in manpower, would have to be reversed if the Department were to take on the high profile envisaged in the White Paper proposals.

5.11 Agency and Section 42 agreements

5.11.1 We note that the current Agency and Section 42 claims systems have been the subject of much criticism and dispute. They have undoubtedly been the source of public confusion over the responsibilities of various tiers of local government and have been the focus of friction between those tiers. In 1974 the decision to grant or accept Agencies or to make Section 42 claims was heavily influenced by the predecessor authority's status and role. The trend since then has been for many agreements to be withdrawn, surrendered or renegotiated by one other party.

5.11.2 Examples of this trend are T&W's withdrawal of design agency; GM's withdrawal of road safety agency; MS's withdrawal of agencies for design of highway maintenance and traffic management; WM's attempted renegotiation of its cleansing and maintenance agency with Birmingham, resulting in the termination of agency; and the continued redefinition of Bradford's Section 42 agreement with WY, culminating in Bradford's surrender of its claim.

5.11.3 One analysis of the evolving pattern is that in 1974 many of the districts inherited a monopoly over design and implementation skills from their predecessor authorities. This gave them the power to insist on agency for those functions which they regarded as their own and, perhaps, enabled them to charge monopoly rates. This position was eroded as the counties became more firmly established and particularly when, under the Local Government Planning and Land Act, districts lost their monopoly in tendering. This enabled the counties to force renegotiation of terms and even to withdraw agencies.

5.11.4 Criticisms of the existing system include its inherent inefficiency, its poor accountability and inadequate control. Some of the inefficiency seems to be a feature of the smaller scale of the districts with consequent indivisibilities of specialist equipment and expertise and reduced ability to overcome variability in workloads. GM's withdrawal of its road safety agency is estimated to have reduced manpower by 50% and saved considerable sums on centralised purchasing of equipment and publicity, T & W's withdrawal of design agency is estimated to have reduced costs by 10% largely due to more effective deployment of staff whose variable workload previously left them

underutilized for much of the time.

5.11.5 Another major source of inefficiency arises when the district and county share responsibility for different road types within an area, or for similar functions which could be combined, on the same stretch of road. Such situations are most often the case with Section 42 claims. This has often led to obvious inefficiencies for both authorities such as excessive dead mileage and double verge cutting (once for safety reasons and once for environmental reasons). Attempts to overcome the worst examples of this situation have involved renegotiations (e.g. Bradford's changing agreements with WY and T&W's redefinition of its agencies in 1980) to produce more sensible divisions of responsibility. Nonetheless some of the inefficiencies seem inescapable even where both parties have a will to minimise them.

5.11.6 A topic of criticism on both sides has been the fairness of financial provisions such as the size of the Agency fee (GM, for example reduced its fee from 10% to 5% on the assumption that another 5% is reclaimable through DLO administration). It has been suggested that a source of inefficiency inherent in the system is the ability of the Agent to reclaim from the county without providing proper accounting information. WM's attempts to tighten up on the financial aspects of its agreements with its districts contributed to the termination of its agency with Birmingham.

5.11.7 It is suggested that Agents sometimes carry out the functions without regard to the policy priorities and standards laid down by the highway authority. GM, T&W and SY have each found it necessary to do or redo work themselves to ensure compliance. SY had particular problems with Doncaster in its reluctance to proceed with a traffic management scheme, and with Sheffield's allocation of resources to housing action areas rather than to areas approved by the county. At another level we note DTp's dissatisfaction with WM's handling of its agency for the Midlands Link. This situation highlights the fact that different tiers do have different policies and that the present Agency and Section 42 system sometimes prevents either set of policies from being effectively implemented. Although some improvement in agencies is possible by tighter agreements and greater monitoring and control this could not be achieved without extra resource effort. It is also suggested that the counties' negotiating position is severely limited by the existence of the section 42 system which a district might evoke if pressed too hard on its agency terms (as happened in SY in 1977 and in WM, in relation to Birmingham, in 1979).

5.12 Use of Outside Agencies, Particularly in the Private Sector

5.12.1 The County Councils already make use of the private sector in certain circumstances. This usage might be expected to increase were the counties to be abolished so it is important to present evidence on the advantages and disadvantages of this mode

of working.

5.12.2 A major reason for using outside agencies to supply manpower, expertise, equipment or services is to satisfy a rarely met specialist need economically. T&W, for example, have used specialist consultants to identify asbestos, to analyse paint, water and hardened concrete samples, to calibrate specialist laboratory equipment and to carry out detailed load testing of iron and steel products. The specialist agencies used have included local research firms, Newcastle University, Northumbria Water Authority, NCB and the public analyst. Other examples include the decision by SY, MS and T&W to hire in rather than purchase SCRIM and deflectograph equipment, (although, at a daily hire cost of £1k and a purchase cost of about £250k we note that WY, whose annual requirement for SCRIM and deflectograph is about 60 and 110 days respectively, consider purchase to be the better option). A further example of counties using outside agencies to provide infrequently met specialist needs is the use of advertising agents to design road safety publicity (viz. SY's use of Austin Knight). Similar arguments justify the use of external agencies to instal and maintain UTC equipment.

5.12.3 Another reason for recourse to outside agencies is to deal with peaks in workload or staff shortages. For example T&W have brought in consultants to assist with the Redheugh bridge design, and WM have used external assistance to help clear their backlog on bridge inspection. At the more mundane level, WY have used external printers and data punching services at a time when their own resources were overstretched.

5.12.4 One further reason for using outside consultants is that, being divorced for internal pressures, they may be seen to provide an objective assessment of policies or procedures. We note in this context WYs use of the management consultants Booz, Allen Hamilton to assess the performance of the PTE.

5.12.5 Reasons for wishing to keep the use of external agencies to a minimum include cost, reduced continuity, reduced flexibility and availability; and confidentiality. We will deal with each of these in turn.

5.12.6 Other things being equal, use of an external agent will involve greater expenditure of public funds. This is due in part to the agent's requirement for a fee sufficient to cover overheads in contract administration and tendering as well as an element of profit. Costs are also increased by the need for the client to administer and monitor the contract. It has been calculated by central government* that use of consultants can increase costs to the public sector by between 10% and 20%. The necessity for authorities to devote some resources to project

* Report of inter-departmental committee on use of consultants in the PSA. Commissioned by Michael Heseltine, Sept. 1981; Reported Nov. 1982.

monitoring and quality control of work done on their behalf by outside agencies may be judged from the experience of T&W who calculate that having spotted 4 cases of suppliers' non-compliance with specifications for materials at least £70k was saved over a 5-10 year period.

5.12.7 It has been suggested that, over and above these costs, there may be further long term costs resulting from the consultants' having a limited frame of responsibility for the project and thus being concerned with minimising costs of construction rather than long term maintenance. The problems with the Midlands Link Viaduct (WM) and the Tinsley Viaduct (SY) have been quoted to us as evidence of this.

5.12.8 Each time a consultant is engaged he must devote some resources to familiarising himself with local conditions and requirements. This 'learning time' represents a wasted resource particularly in the case of short assignments. Desire to minimise this learning time can lead to pressures to re-employ a consultant who has been used previously, even if a different consultant might have been preferred. This is particularly true of transport planning where consultants have a familiarity with, and indeed may have helped to develop, a local data base or model suite.

5.12.9 Although ability to access the private sector accords a high degree of flexibility, if an organisation does not have its own resources it may be unable to switch resources quickly from one task to another, (contracts with external agents will not normally allow for this). Thus there is less scope for reacting to emergencies. At the county scale it is possible to meet localised emergencies by drafting in manpower from other areas and other functions. This would be extremely difficult if individual districts each contracted with separate agencies. The payment of a retainer fee to provide an emergency standby service is only a partial solution because some demands (e.g. for winter snow clearance) are so unpredictable and so large a resource requirement that any retainer fee would have to be very large.

5.12.10 On a related point it is clear that reliance on the private sector reduces the authorities' ability to seek the kind of informal expert advice which is so valuable in any multifunction organisation.

5.12.11 Much of the information used in planning, design and analysis is of a confidential or sensitive nature. This precludes, for example, household characteristics data; public transport commercial costings data; commercial design specifications; private firms' employment or production forecasts; and detailed information on road accidents - including police prosecution or insurance company information. It is argued that some such data might not be made available to the planning or highway authority if it was to be used by private sector consultants.

5.12.12 We note that the current situation, whereby the counties have a large body of in-house expertise which they supplement as and when necessary by external consultants, can be extremely fruitful. Not only do the in-house team themselves become so expert as to be sought out by the consultants to assist them in their work with other clients in UK and overseas (we note several examples of this in connection with traffic and UTC systems), but there is a very real and productive partnership with the private sector to adapt and develop techniques and facilities to suit local requirements. This results in enhancement of these techniques and their increased usefulness elsewhere (e.g. UTC systems in WY, Metro in T&W, transport and traffic models in WY, T&W and GM). It appears that this desirable situation is a function of the size, permanence and budget of the in-house team and might thus not survive dispersal of expertise to the districts.

5.12.13 Before leaving the question of private sector involvement we note that the provisions under which implementation of all schemes over £50k and 30% of schemes under £50k must go out to competitive tender seem to have been a spur to increased efficiency. The county DLOs in particular have met the challenge and now, with a rationalised workforce and modern management methods, are securing a high proportion of contracts in competition with the private sector (60-70% in SY and WY in 1982/83) and, when in competition with district DLOs, they are putting in the lower bids (in the limited number of cases where such direct competition has occurred in WM, it is the county DLO which put in the lower bid).

5.13 Transitional Problems

5.13.1 It is generally agreed that after 1974 it took up to two years for adequate procedures to be established for liaison with outside agencies and even for some internal procedures to be made effective. Indeed, because of the time required to change institutional procedures it has taken considerably longer than that to produce optimal arrangements for agency functions (note that there were changes in arrangements in 1977, 1979, 1980 and 1983).

5.13.2 It has been very apparent to us that the efficient discharge of transport functions depends not only on the co-operation and expertise of individuals but also on the effectiveness of the formal and informal links between them. These links would be disrupted by any reorganisation of the status quo and would take some time to reestablish during which time the system could not be expected to function adequately.

5.13.3 Other transitional inefficiencies would result from the disruption of established work programmes and policies (with a hiatus while new policies and programmes are established); the dispersal of established teams; the loss of personnel familiar with established procedures and equipment; and the incompatibility of former county and district equipment (e.g.

computer software and hardware peripherals used for example in transport modelling, highway design and data analysis, may prove incompatible with existing district computers).

6 DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY.

6.1 The Role and Meaning of Democratic Accountability

6.1.1 We have adopted democratic accountability as one of the criteria according to which the organisation of local government should be appraised because those favouring reform and those opposing it appear to agree that any arrangement should involve an appropriate degree of democratic accountability, even though they may disagree on its implications for the present proposals. Clearly democratic accountability means different things to different people. Although the issue is less susceptible to the analysis of purely "factual" evidence we feel that it is nevertheless necessary to confront it in this report because of the emphasis which has been placed on the issue in some of the public discussion.

6.1.2. The essence of the democratic process, as we understand it, is that the actions of government should be accounted for to those affected by them. The effects concerned may be favourable or unfavourable, arising directly from the immediate impact of a scheme or policy or indirectly through its fiscal implications.

6.1.3 In a very small state, with a limited population and range of government activities, and with a simple fiscal structure, it might be possible to engage in direct consultation with all affected parties on all significant issues. Such government by plebiscite, even if ideal, is impossible to attain in the modern state. In practice that directness of accountability is blurred in several ways:

- firstly, as a result both of the size of the state and of the range and complexity of the activities of government, it is not possible to refer more than the occasional matter to the whole population; hence we have "representative government";
- secondly, and for largely the same reasons, a large proportion of government activity cannot be efficiently managed or planned at the national level; hence we have "local government";
- thirdly, for a range of technical and political reasons, the level at which the direct effects are felt and that at which the indirect effects impact may be separated as many locally controlled activities are funded from nationally levied taxes;
- fourthly, companies, which pay rates on industrial and commercial premises, may have views on the effects of policies on them, and hence on the part of the population linked to them as workers, customers, or shareholders but have no part in the electoral process.

6.1.4 It is this multiplicity in the dimensions of the system of democratic government that makes it possible for the requirements of democratic accountability to be interpreted so differently. Whilst we cannot reconcile these philosophical differences we are able to make some observations on the way in which, and extent to which, the interests of affected parties are made to impinge on the process of government in the field of our study.

6.1.5 Our starting point is to distinguish between the direct local effects of local government activities and the more dispersed indirect effects. In the first category fall the social, environmental and local income effects of local projects or policies. As both the implementation and impact of these actions is local it would seem appropriate for the accountability also to be local. Whether that accountability should be exercised through direct consultation or through the representative political process seems to be primarily dependent on the size and technical nature of the issue.

6.1.6 It has been argued that because of the importance of non-local and corporate sources of finance, and because of the significance of local as well as national public expenditure in the macroeconomic context, central government has a legitimate interest in the level of central government grants for local transport, and in the aggregate level of local public expenditure, however financed. We consider these issues to be beyond our brief. Whatever the total level of local transport expenditure, however, there is a strong case for the balance of expenditure between different modes or policies to be struck in the light of local needs and perceptions. Hence it is important in the present context to examine the extent to which different organisational structures for local transport permit these decisions on the balance of expenditure to be responsive to local knowledge.

6.1.7 These local considerations may impact directly through a process of local public participation or indirectly through the representative political process. For local representative democracy to be effective it is necessary that;

- matters of significance are referred to the appropriate representatives;
- electors know where political responsibility lies;
- representatives know the wishes of their electorate in relevant matters;
- representatives do respond to these revealed opinions;
- representatives are sufficiently well informed to understand the range of issues involved;

- representatives are able to make effective impact on decisions and are not unduly constrained by external influences on the decisions for which they are being held responsible.

Conversely it would also seem to be important that:

- decisions should not be made by those who cannot be held responsible for them;
- constraints on local policy should only relate to issues for which the constraining authority has an explicit responsibility.

6.1.8 In this chapter we attempt to appraise the performance both of the existing arrangements and also the expected performance of the alternative arrangements which are proposed, bearing these criteria in mind. The cases which we have particularly examined are those of West and South Yorkshire.

6.2 Public Consultation

6.2.1 The essence of the case for local administration in any form is that it allows a more effective account to be taken of local issues and concerns. The extreme application of this would seem to be open public consultation with locally affected parties; one possible criterion of institutional change is the extent to which it provides more or less effectively for this than the present procedures.

6.2.2 A general caveat should be entered. Consultation does not necessarily breed consensus, and in the absence of consensus there still are judgements to be made. For example, in the two controversial cases of Heeley Bottom in South Yorkshire and the A660 in Headingley in West Yorkshire the problem involved spatially separated conflicting interests. One of the strengths of the present arrangements appears to be the ability of the consultative process to inform political processes in such difficult cases.

6.2.3 In both of the cases quoted the consultations sought views on both construction oriented solutions and management alternatives. The consultative process has made it possible to present the wide range of alternatives in a context in which the judgements were subject to the very maximum amount of local impact and were as free as possible from institutional pressures to accept one solution or the other. In the Heeley Bottom case a traffic management solution was found to what had been seen originally as a construction problem.

6.2.4 In the two counties examined in some detail on this matter, and we understand generally, all major construction schemes and traffic management schemes are subject to public consultation. Although there are no formal lower limits, schemes are usually referred to consultation where there are new

lines, effects on frontages or where there are significantly different options available.

6.2.5 The process of consultation is undertaken primarily by officers, with exhibitions and meetings mounted in appropriate locations. In West Yorkshire the local community associations have been extensively involved in the organisation of meetings, and both county and district members also take part in some meetings. Especially where transport issues related to a local plan are concerned the present institutions do imply a mutual interest for which a joint consultation exercise would be appropriate.

6.2.6 The nature of accountability to commercial and industrial ratepayers raises general constitutional issues beyond our brief. We merely presume that there is no distinction between the relationships of business to government at central and local government levels. If that is so, then the implication would appear to be that business has a right to be consulted on matters affecting it, but has no more determining role in the political process. In West Yorkshire the CBI and the Chamber of Commerce have been consulted on the budget; recently the introduction of a proposed parking card scheme was put off substantially because of the weight of business opposition. In Merseyside the Chamber of Commerce has also been engaged in regular consultation during the budgetary process. On more detailed matters it is common practice to consult with local commercial interests as well as with householders on proposals likely to affect them. Thus it appears that business interests are included to a substantial extent in the consultation process although not directly in the political process.

6.2.7 Our conclusions on public consultations are therefore that:

- public consultation on the local effects of transport projects and policies is as effective as is practicable;
- the present separation of function between county and district is not the cause of any significant difficulty in public consultation;
- public consultation does not necessarily, nor could it be expected to, eliminate conflicts of interest between groups, some of which are differentiated on a spatial, and hence possibly district, basis.

6.3 Reference to Members at County Level

6.3.1 The formal responsibility of members is made clear by standing orders in all counties; officers have delegated authority to approve finance only at a very low level (£500 in West Yorkshire). All matters of significance go to committee

for approval. Committee meetings are normally held in public and the press is excluded only where matters dealt with concern named persons in whose interest publicity is not deemed desirable. Hence in a formal sense a high level of democratic accountability prevails.

6.3.2 This formal reference would not by itself ensure that the elected members have real control if the amount of business going to committee was excessive or if the amount of time or information available for discussion was inadequate. Full committee approval is therefore supplemented by other member group considerations intended to ensure that both the strategic coherence and the local detail of the proposals going to full committee have been properly considered.

6.3.3 To maintain strategic coherence, major issues typically go first to some kind of party group involving the chairmen of the major committees; a form of local cabinet. In West Yorkshire this group meets regularly with the relevant officers and acts as the channel through which the strategic significance of particular sector proposals can be made explicit so that chairmen of the subject committees can inform the members of their committees, and particularly members of their party group in the committee. In West Yorkshire these meetings are reputedly the occasion of very frank and thorough testing both of the officers and of the members' positions. We are assured that the strategic issues of relationship between policy areas and the judgements concerning allocation between geographical areas are thoroughly confronted at this stage.

6.3.4 The local detail of proposals is subject to detailed member scrutiny through local area groups, the precise composition of which varies from county to county. In West Yorkshire there are five area subcommittees to which all construction schemes involving expenditure of less than £0.25 million, all public transport and traffic management schemes are first submitted. Major schemes of county wide significance would typically start at the main committee but would be referred down to the area subcommittees. The area subcommittee will consist of all of the members representing the area together with the chairmen and vice chairmen of the relevant committees. On the area committees there are also three non-voting district members to ensure a point of contact between the county and district responsibilities. The arrangements in South Yorkshire are similar, though with a rather larger proportion of proposals going to the area subcommittees in the first instance. No major matter can be initiated without the relevant ward representatives having the opportunity to discuss it in local committees.

6.3.5 One of the apparent advantages of the present system is that, because of the division of functions between county and districts, a certain degree of specialisation is encouraged in the elected representatives. As county and district wards coincide this can be achieved with no loss of closeness of the representative to his constituents.

6.3.6 Allied to this is the concern whether district members could handle the extra committee and consultation work associated with the increase in their functions unless there was an equivalent increase in their numbers. If that pressure did prove to be intense, the level of effective democratic accountability might actually be reduced by the transfer of extra powers to the districts.

6.4 Agencies, Delegated Powers and Duplication

6.4.1 The consultative paper argued that the reallocation of transport responsibilities would give the opportunity to eliminate the duplication of functions. The efficiency effects of any such duplication, or parallelism, have been discussed in previous sections. Our concern in this section is mainly with the extent to which the public are confused by the arrangements and are not able to find the appropriate point of contact for their representations, and the extent to which, in the parallel political processes, there is wasted or ill-directed effort resulting from the structure.

6.4.2 Two features of the present arrangements seem to blur responsibilities. Firstly, where local road maintenance is claimed under Section 42, or where agencies exist, district staff are performing the work whilst the county is allocating the resources. Defects in performance may then be attributed either to poor implementation or to inadequate resourcing. Secondly, where the same activities are being performed in an area by districts and county on different classes of road, between which the public are not able clearly to distinguish, responsibility may be wrongly attributed. The interests of effective democratic accountability thus strongly support those of efficiency in requiring the consolidation of these functions.

6.4.3 Some rather similar arguments have been applied in areas of contiguous responsibility between counties and districts. For example, in the case of pedestrianisation or traffic management schemes, there are roles for both the county and the district. Our discussions with county officers suggest that there is no inevitable confusion between the traffic and local planning roles and that in most cases joint action is successfully undertaken. We do recognise, however, that the configuity of responsibility provides at least the potential for public confusion as to the location of responsibility. In practice the main difficulties at officer and member level seem to derive from a misinterpretation by the districts of the powers assigned to them. In principle, traffic management schemes should only go to districts to ensure proper co-ordination with local planning, but we did find some evidence (e.g. in South Yorkshire) that districts use the opportunity to "second guess" the skills of the county traffic engineers rather than to perform their own planning function better.

6.5 Joint Boards, Joint Committees and Democratic Accountability.

6.5.1 We make the distinction between joint boards, which have precepting powers, and joint committees, which do not. Within the class of joint committees there also appear to be two types; those committees with executive arms which therefore need financial allocations from the constituent authorities, and those of a more consultative kind for which any expenses are directly incurred by the constituents. Whilst some of these joint activities would be restricted to execution of well defined policies, others, such as lorry routeing, would require very significant powers of policy determination.

6.5.2 The proposal for the organisation of public transport under the new regime is that it would be the responsibility of a joint board composed of representatives of the component district councils. The Board would be responsible for the determination of policies on public transport fares and service provisions and would have power to precept on the districts. The boards would be subject for the first three years to special control by the Secretary of State who would be able to limit expenditure, precept and staffing levels.

6.5.3 Provision is also made for individual districts to opt out of these arrangements and provide their own services. In the event of individual districts operating their own bus services, of course, the co-ordination of bus and rail services would be put in jeopardy.

6.5.4 It is fairly apparent that government concern with the level of public transport revenue support has been one of the motivating forces in their determination to reform the structure. Hence it is particularly important to explore how the proposals would be likely to alter policies and performance of public transport management.

6.5.5 The essence of these proposals for a joint board for public transport is that its members will primarily be concerned with the representation of district interests, rather than with the quality of public transport in the county as a whole. The mandated nature of the representatives on the boards, publicly emphasised by Lord Bellwin, and the fact that there will be little political advantage in being a representative on a joint board without any effective freedom of initiative, may well lead to a very passive management. This will almost certainly increase the powers of the professional managers at the expense of the processes of public accountability. This may perhaps be avoided by the development of a system of bargaining between districts through which dominant coalitions pursue policies of mutual benefit at the expense of those outside the coalition. Such an outcome might even require negotiations between district leaders or Chief Executives as the striking of such bargains would need to be approved at the highest level. The role of the joint board would be demeaned considerably if this happened, to

the further detriment of its attractiveness to men of calibre. There does appear, therefore, to be considerable danger that the level and quality of democratic accountability for such an important area as public transport would be reduced.

6.5.6 The effective powers of democratically elected representatives at the district level would also suffer in another way. Within a comprehensive transport planning responsibility at the county level it is possible for local concessions in one dimension of policy (say road investment) to be "traded off" for advantages in another. Where such transfers between districts are not possible the local representatives are gratuitously losing some part of their effective power. The proposed constraints on the precepts of the joint boards in the first three years of the new system would significantly bias transport policy. In the longer run the separation of control of the various transport budgets would centralise decision making and reduce local democratic control and accountability.

6.5.7 The joint board may also lead to a reduction in the democratic attention to local detail. Within the area subcommittees of the present system the ward representative has the opportunity to make his contribution to all public transport issues which touch on the interests of his constituents. In contrast, members of a joint board may only have knowledge of the local detail of some parts of the district they represent. The experience with the Leeds/Bradford Airport Joint Committee in the matter of the runway extension is an example of determination by coalition formation. Had the responsibility in this case rested with the county alone the contentious problem of whether it was desirable for the investment to be made would, of course, have still remained, but there would certainly have been a fuller and better directed involvement of the relevant local elected members.

6.5.8 The joint boards may weaken local democratic accountability in another more subtle way. Both because of the need for issues to be discussed in the districts and again by the joint boards, and because of the larger number of interfaces between authorities requiring coordination meetings, the amount of duplication in the discussion of issues will increase. That would not matter if the supply of representatives' time and effort was unlimited. The danger is that the duplication will be wasteful because it limits the range of issues and the level of effective discussion of important issues which representatives can achieve. There is, moreover, a danger that conflicts between authorities will not be properly resolved and that the policies which emerge will be weakened by the process of compromise through which they have developed.

6.5.9 On the face of it, the possibility for districts to opt out of the public transport joint board, with the agreement of central government, appears to be a protection of local democracy. For some districts, who might see their share of the

benefits of the joint board to be smaller than their share of the precepted contributions, the fiduciary duty to ratepayers may be a powerful impulsion to opting out. As we have argued earlier, that action would prejudice bus/rail co-ordination, and make the county-wide planning of fare and service levels very difficult. Such a reduction in the effective scope of policy might further enfeeble true local democratic control.

6.6 The Role of the Regional Controller

6.6.1 Under the new regime the regional office of the Department of Transport would have an expanded role, with important new duties, namely:

- it would play a major role in determining priorities between districts for financial resources;
- it would be responsible for giving "help and advice" in respect of those activities such as lorry routing and urban traffic control, where it is expected that districts would cooperate in maintaining sensible and consistent cross-boundary arrangements;
- it would have interim control over precept and staffing levels of the public transport joint boards;
- it would be the arbitrator in conflicts between districts;
- whilst the District councils would become the highway and traffic authorities for all roads in their areas which are not trunk roads, the Department would have the power to take over the preparation of certain new major highways which would at present fall to the county.

6.6.2 The power of the Department of Transport to determine allocations between districts centralises decisions which under the present regime are taken locally. This may tip the balance towards technocratic determination by virtue of the fact that the district engineers would have some incentive to get together to coordinate their plans whilst the elected members could lose interest because they had no obvious political impact or leverage in the matter. The control over precepts and the arbitration role could have similar effects.

6.6.3 Whilst "help and advice" in the performance of activities coordinated between districts is in principle desirably neutral, in practice it may offer the potential of substituting local determination by centrally determined procedures and standards, and hence further reducing effective local control and accountability.

6.6.4 The extension of the strategic role of the Department in highway planning and road construction inevitably involves

some loss of local democratic control. The Department officials are unlikely to be as responsive to the local interpretation and weighting of environmental and social objectives, and resources devoted to road construction within the conurbations may well be directed in ways other than those that the locally elected representatives would determine.

6.6.5 It might of course be argued that the local Member of Parliament has a function to perform in ensuring that the interests of his constituency are well looked after in the central resource allocation process. Given the very wide range of matters which are already part of the MP's interest, the capacity of the Department concerned to represent the allocation process as part of a much wider ranging calculation; and the fact that constituencies and districts accord only coincidentally, that appears to be a very unlikely and weak replacement for the attention to local detail that the present local political system provides. Even if the Department of Transport regional office could achieve the same level of technical cover and local knowledge in detail as the counties presently possess, as well as the procedures for evaluating local effects, there would still be a loss of local democratic accountability and control.