

average household spends more than £59 per week on transport, which is nearly 50 per cent more than it spends on food (*The Guardian*, 20th February, 2002). This is in the average weekly spending budget, and probably reflects the burgeoning costs of public transport and the greater use made of the car. Unless reversed, this trend is likely to continue. ‘The cost of travelling by bus or train will rise by more than 20 per cent by 2010, whereas the cost of running a car will fall by a fifth over the same period’ (*Planning*, 1st August, 2002). The weight of evidence reveals continuing public support for motoring backed by a powerful road lobby supported by a revived opposition party espousing road building. This suggests that, in terms of practical politics in the run up to an election, road building is back on the agenda.

The UK Government’s response to the pressure from the road lobby was to lift or ease its moratorium on new road building with the unveiling of forty major road schemes costing £6 billion in December 2002. This was the biggest proposed expansion of road capacity for more than a decade (*Planning*, 13th December, 2002 and 11th July, 2003). Road widening was suddenly in fashion again with major schemes for the M1, M11, M18 and M25. The 10 Year Transport Plan suffered severe criticism from the Commons Transport Committee: ‘The Government cannot continue to pretend that investing in infrastructure alone, even at levels far above those currently seen, while allowing car use to rise unchecked can reduce congestion’ (*Planning*, 18th April, 2003).

There are signs, however, that ‘all is not lost’. There have been some significant achievements. The Commons Transport Committee, though critical of some aspects of the 10 Year Plan, did praise the

professional and expert multi-modal studies – an integral part of the plan – which were launched to examine the most intractable congestion and safety problems on the strategic road network. An earlier government White Paper had pledged that building new roads was only to be considered after all plausible options had been considered. Many of the multi-modal studies backed the funding for railways and local transport schemes (*Planning*, 1st August, 2003 and 10th October, 2003). Most activists and professionals in the field of transport advocate road pricing as a viable method for reducing congestion. The success of the congestion charge in central London has given further support for the whole idea of road charging throughout the country in places where it might be viable. The first anniversary of road charging in London saw the release of a number of surveys. Cars entering the zone are down by nearly 40 per cent, and the average speeds for both cars and buses have improved. The mayor of London, recently re-elected, is considering the extension of the charging zone. In addition the first motorway toll road, around Birmingham has been opened and is operating, with other similar proposed motorway toll roads under active consideration. A recent white paper on the future of transport also suggests that road pricing could be implemented in the UK over the next 10 to 15 years (*Planning*, 23rd July, 2004).

THE ‘WAY TO GO’

The 10 Year transport plan is under review. A campaign has been launched that aims to put the plan on a greener footing. The ‘Way to Go’ campaign is a coalition of ten or

more environmental and social justice groups: its members include Transport 2000, Age Concern, Friends of the Earth and the National federation of Women's Institutes. The campaign has twelve demands, ranging from a 'cycle-friendly' road network and safe routes to school for children, to lower speed limits, improved public transport and pay-as-you-go road user charging (see Figure 3.6). The 'Way to Go' complains that the (10-year) plan favours large-scale, environmentally damaging infrastructure over small-scale improvements to public transport and schemes to encourage walking, whereas the campaign points out that all of the measures that it espouses have been tried and tested in the UK or elsewhere. It also calculates that they could all be funded by reallocating public expenditure in the current plan plus the additional revenue from road user charging (*Planning*, 13th February, 2004). The measures that the campaign group are proposing are all inexpensive when compared with road widening, and would improve the environment for all users, including the motorist. Those advocating road charging are 'pushing at an open door': it is now a question of when road charging will be introduced, what form it will take, and where it will operate. A far-reaching system of road charging is necessary for dealing with the expected rise in congestion, and also as a contribution to the reduction in the production of greenhouse gases. For it to be effective, road charging should be introduced as soon as possible and, if necessary, used to replace the present system of road tax for cars: this may be seen by the motorist as an acceptable compromise and a more equitable method of sharing the burden. Furthermore, if those

- A cycle-friendly road network and cycle training for all.
- Streets, lanes and paths made more pleasant for walking.
- Services and facilities brought closer together to reduce need to drive.
- Increased funding for public transport, particularly in rural areas.
- Quality standards for bus and rail services.
- Expand bus lane networks.
- Greater emphasis on safe routes to schools.
- Standard 20 mph speed limits in residential areas.
- Discounts for national railcards.
- Grants for rail freight projects.
- Greater incentives to buy smaller, less-polluting vehicles.
- Pay-as-you-go road user charging.

Figure 3.6 The 'Way to Go' campaign demands

road charges were to be allocated specifically to improvement of the transport system, it may make the charge more palatable – a strategy which was unfortunately overlooked when the unpopular 'fuel tax accelerator' was introduced in the 1990s (*Planning*, 21st June, 2002; 'Charge of the Toll Brigade'). There have also been other notable innovations in local transportation planning. In Manchester, the Metro; in Sheffield, the Supertram; and in Nottingham, the Express Transit, lead the way in the development of public transport systems which will change the ways in which people will move about in the city of the twenty-first century (Moughtin, 2003; see also Chapter 7). Unfortunately plans to extend Manchester's Metro link and light rail schemes in Leeds and south Hampshire have been rejected because of escalating costs (*Planning*, 23rd July, 2004). Edinburgh has put in place an integrated transport strategy aimed at mitigating the effect of the estimated doubling of congestion in the city by 2021: plans have been completed for tram routes linking the west and north of the city. A referendum is to be held on proposals for a congestion-charging scheme in the city, which is a good test of popular opinion about this vital policy area.