

# **THE MERITS OF SEPARATING PUBLIC TRANSPORT PLANNING COMPONENTS FROM THE INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PLANNING PROCESS**

## **The Case of the George CITP of 2009**

**J J BRITS**

Aurecon (Pty) Ltd, P O Box 905, Pretoria, 0001

### **ABSTRACT**

Preparation of the 2009 George Comprehensive Integrated Transport Plan (CITP) commenced at a time when the George Mobility Strategy (GMS), a plan that includes the implementation of a formal public transport system within the municipal area, was well advanced. As part of the GMS, detailed investigations of the public transport status quo and needs of the municipality were undertaken. Given that the GMS addressed the public transport sufficiently, the ITP process itself could place a greater emphasis on the other transport planning components such as non-motorised and scholar transport, freight transport, transport infrastructure and the actual integration of these components with the public transport plan.

These components are equally important but in practice tend to be over shadowed by the public transport related components. Municipalities, whether local, district or metropolitan level, place great focus on public transport, and rightly so. Unfortunately this sometimes occurs to such an extent that the ITP process becomes burdened by a limiting scope of works and budget.

This paper will elaborate on the unique experience gained from the coincidental concurrence of the George CITP and the George Mobility Strategy. It will attempt to create awareness around the merits of separating the preparation of the Current Public Transport Record, Operating License Strategy and Rationalisation Plan from the Integrated Transport Plan. The paper will conclude by advocating a shift in the ITP process towards independent formulation of transport planning component strategies, with integration taking place only upon completion of the various components.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to describe the ITP process and how it was implemented in the case of the George 2009 CITP. It continues by presenting a possible shortcoming of the transport planning system as it is currently being used in South Africa, and it concludes by providing a possible solution for this shortcoming or at the very least an improved alternative to the current approach.

## 2. INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PLANNING

Transportation systems are complex in nature, due to the many factors which influence these systems. It is commonly acknowledged that land use, economic development, safety and security and social concerns amongst many others influence the performance and development of a transportation system and vice versa (US DOT).

Integrated transport planning aims at finding the balance between these factors, to enable planning to impact optimally on all of the factors comprising the system, as well as on the system itself (Louw, 2003).

According to May et al. (2006) integrated transport planning is broadly advocated, yet few planning authorities around the world specify or define what is meant by integrated transport planning. It is suggested that integrated transport planning can take one or more of four forms, including:

- integration between policy instruments involving modes
- integration between policy instruments involving infrastructure provision, management, information and pricing
- integration between transport measures and land use planning measures; and
- integration with other policy areas such as health and education.

In the South African context integrated transport planning is also advocated and made a statutory requirement by the following guiding documents summarised in the National Department of Transport's Technical Transport Guidelines (2008):

### a) **The White Paper on National Transport Policy of 1996**

*"It is essential for land passenger transport planning to be carried out in an integrated fashion covering all modes. This planning should be done at as low a level as possible and by the relevant transport authority".*

**b) The National Land Transport Transition Act 22 of 2000**

*“Transport authorities and all municipalities must prepare an integrated transport plan dealing with such matters as may be prescribed by the Minister: provided that the Minister may prescribe different matters for different types or categories of municipalities”.*

**c) The National Land Transport Act 5 of 2009**

*“Land transport planning must be integrated with the land development and land use planning processes, and the integrated transport plans required by this act are designed to give structure to the function of municipal planning... “.*

**d) The minimum requirements for the preparation of Integrated Transport Plans**

The minimum requirements recognise the varying transport needs in the different areas of the country and therefore distinguish between three types of municipality and three corresponding types of ITP to address the needs of each specific municipality type.

**e) The Local Government Transition Act**

The Local Government Transition Act makes the development of an Integrated Development Plan (which has as a sector plan, the Integrated Transport Plan), mandatory for all municipalities.

These documents in themselves do not clearly stipulate what is meant by the term “integrated”. However, the prescribed principles of integration as set forth by the NDOT’s Technical Transport Planning Guidelines (2008), are quite comprehensive as per the definition of May et al. (2006), as ITP’s are required to ensure integration with:

- Other plans, in particular the IDP,
- Land use (Spatial Development Framework), to the extent that transport can be provided efficiently and effectively, and
- Between modes, identifying the optimum role of each mode including non-motorised transport.

The ITP is also required to adhere to, and fit into, the planning of the Provincial Land Transport Framework (PLTF), which in turn has to adhere to the National Land Transport Strategic Framework (NLSTF). The ITP’s interrelationship with the IDP, PLTF, and NLTSF, its acknowledgement of important influencing factors (especially land use), as well as its emphasis on multiple modes of transport, comply with all four types of integration outlined by May et al. (2006). In fact it goes even further to advocate public buy-in into the planning process. This emphasis on public participation as part of identifying the needs of an area is something which is not seen as making the plan integrated in nature according to international literature, but in South Africa, “integrated” in many cases is also synonymous with

“inclusivity”. The South African Integrated transport planning process is thus quite unique as its guidelines explain quite well what is meant by integration, which seems to be lacking in many other parts of the world.

As already noted, planning authorities can be categorised according to their perceived need in terms of a transport plan. Type 1 Planning Authorities are those municipalities which have been identified by the Department of Transport to upgrade their public transport to a level that competes with the private car, as part of the Public Transport Action Plan of 2007. These authorities have to compile a Comprehensive Integrated Transport Plan, the focus of this paper, as it includes public transport planning, the most comprehensively of the ITP's. The minimum requirements of a Comprehensive Integrated Transport Plan are schematically shown in **Figure 1** below.

**Figure 1** shows not only the prescribed components of a CITP, but also the structure of the strategic plan. In essence integration is at the heart of the strategy, but all factors for consideration are addressed in separate chapters. This structure makes it possible to compile a CITP with chapters which address many elements with an influence on transport, without necessarily addressing the interrelationship between these elements. Each chapter will identify projects and a way forward for each specific element, which in the end could be bundled together in the Funding Strategy and Summary of Proposals. However, such a collection of projects from the various chapters is often neither interrelated nor integrated, despite being bundled together in the same document.

Public Transport planning is a component of the ITP and includes a detailed audit of public transport operations. The public transport audit takes the form of a Current Public Transport Record (CPTR) and is the basis upon which public transport operating licenses are awarded. In situations where the CPTR finds that a route is over utilised the public transport license board will issue additional licenses, where it is found that the services along routes are under utilised the licensing board will discontinue licenses or move licenses to other routes.

The CITP process, as guided by the NDOT, has the best of intentions in terms of integration, but the structure proposed for the strategy does not guarantee full integration. Many existing ITP's have brilliantly integrated the various elements of the transport system, while others have failed. It is an open question why this is the case.

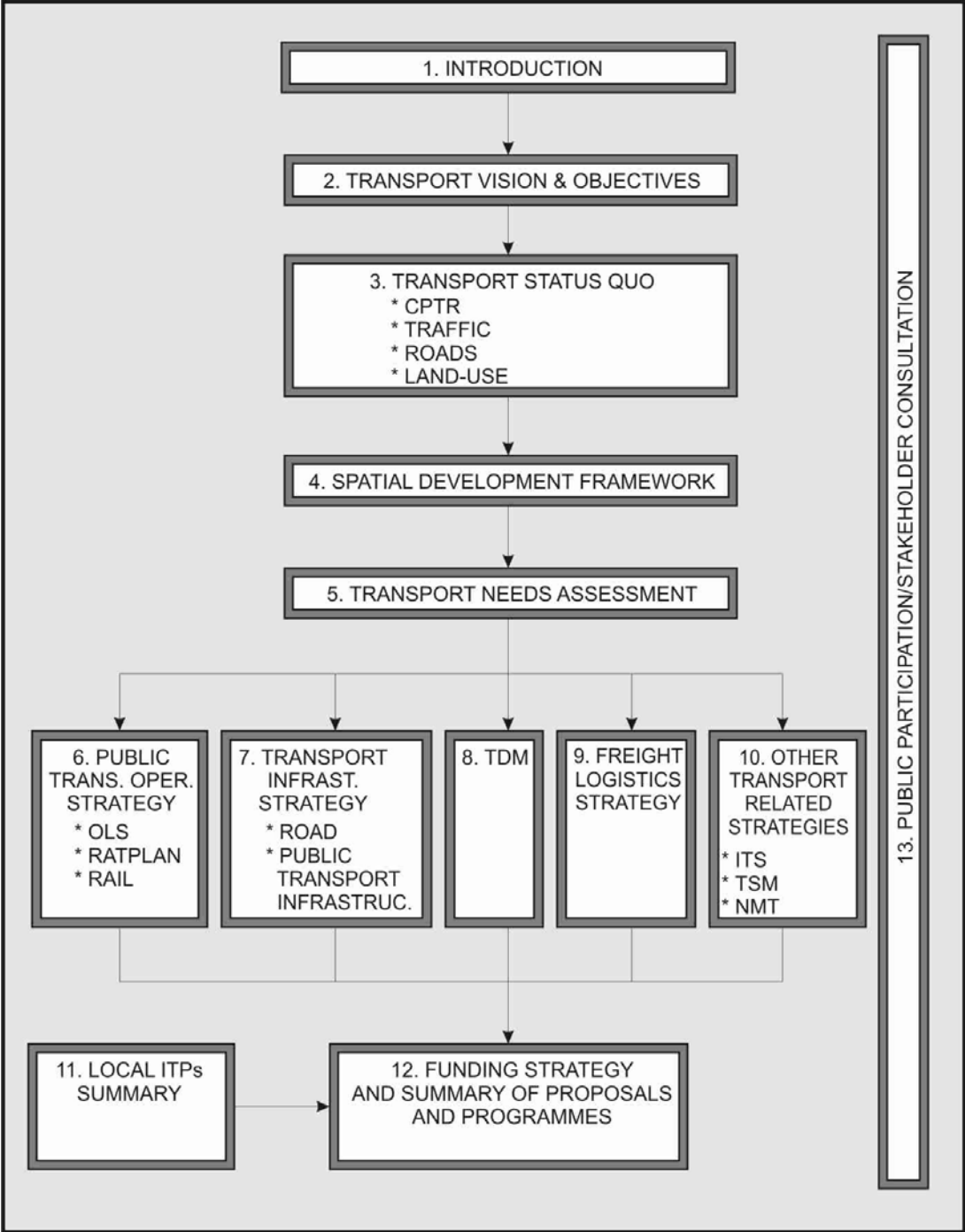


Figure 1: CITEP Outline (NDOT, 2008)

This paper endeavours to shed new light on this critical and controversial question, by suggesting that the combination of available data (especially in terms of public transport) and the expectations that the planning authority has for the ITP, either makes or breaks the ITP process. This does not in any way mean that the planning authority should have lower expectations of their planning consultants. It rather contends that if there is little or no data (or no accurate data) available for the public transport system in the area, the expectation of an all encompassing CPTR database will likely force the consultant to spend the majority or even all of the project time and resources (especially budget) on compiling such a CPTR, whether that is possible or not.

### **3. THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

Planning Authorities in South Africa typically expect the ITP to provide information, which in many cases has never been available and if it has been available, is not accurate. Consultants quite often endeavour to meet these expectations, resulting in the other non-public transport elements of the ITP and their integration being compromised. Consequently they tend to provide a seemingly comprehensive CPTR database along with some infrastructure projects, which might ease congestion at a couple of points within the area of interest, without providing a real integrated transport plan.

This approach does not consider the needs of scholars, or people with disabilities, it does not provide guidance for future land use planning and it does not investigate the interrelationship between transport and health, security or social well being. This way of applying the ITP process in an area is not integrated, and not surprisingly, it leads to a continued tradition of non-integrative planning.

### **4. THE CASE OF THE GEORGE CITP OF 2009**

In the case of the George CITP of 2009 this phenomenon which, causes poorly integrated plans, was avoided by the availability of a detailed public transport plan for the CITP in the form of the George Mobility Strategy (GMS). The GMS is aimed at transforming the face of public transport in George in order to provide a formal public transport service to the people who are being failed by the mini-bus taxi services (PGWC Dept of Transport and Public Works: 2008).

The officials of the George Municipality emphasised the importance of the GMS from day one of the CITP appointment. It was clear that very little work needed to be done for George in terms of public transport planning. The focus could therefore rather be on integrating this new public transport system with all the other elements of transport in George, in support of the GMS.

Without the budgetary pressure usually applied by the CPTTR process, the emphasis was shifted to auditing non-motorised transport infrastructure, scholar transport services and freight operations, which all were found to require attention in order to optimise these services and provide a safe, comfortable and convenient transport system for the residents of the George Municipality. The surveys identified projects which would not only benefit the people of George in isolation, but would also complement the public transport services of the GMS, as well as the spatial vision for the city (as it is contained in the city's Spatial Development Framework). Additionally an existing transport demand model was updated in order to provide the most accurate projection of future network capacity requirements. Transport demand modelling tends to be a costly exercise which is not required for a CITP, but it is generally acknowledged to be the best way of predicting future network requirements. As there was no typical CPTTR burden, transport demand modelling became an option for the consulting team, which formed the basis upon which road infrastructure upgrades were identified and prioritised.

The non-motorised transport strategy aimed at upgrading the condition of the non-motorised transport network to not only acceptable, but also to universally accessible, it aimed at filling the gaps of the current network and most importantly at linking the network with the GMS public transport system to maximise the catchment of said services.

The scholar transport strategy identified the GMS routes which could also be used for scholar transport and advised on how services could be implemented to bridge the gap between provincial scholar services and the GMS, where such gaps were found to exist. This essentially ensured that the CITP provided direction on an issue that was of concern to the GMS, but has not yet been given adequate attention in that programme.

The freight strategy aimed at identifying projects which would create a safe environment for all users of the George road and non-motorised transport networks, in the face of heavy vehicles. It provides possible solutions for current problems in the way of bypassing heavy vehicles away from residential areas, and trying as far as possible to not align heavy vehicle and hazardous materials routes with the public transport routes of the GMS, thus trying to alleviate congestion and safety factors which accompany heavy vehicles and hazardous goods vehicles on the routes of the GMS.

It is believed by the authors that all types of integration, according to May et al (2006), were achieved by the George CPTTR and this can, at least in part, be attributed to the presence of the GMS and the understanding shown by the George officials for what their CPTTR could realistically deliver. It does not mean that integration cannot be achieved if public transport planning is not isolated from the ITP process, nor does it mean that it would guarantee

integration. It is merely an example of a case where the separation of public transport from the ITP enabled a more effective ITP process, in which the resultant ITP was fully integrated in nature.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The budgeting tendencies and expectations of some planning authorities have been problematic for the full integration and success of ITP's. Based on international literature of what an integrated transport planning process entails, as well as the case presented of the George CITP and what it achieved, a different approach is advocated. It should be considered that in the South African context the detailed elements of the public transport process should be separated from the other elements of the ITP process, and preferably that public transport planning should precede it, due specifically to the lack of accurate public transport data available for the ITP process. This will enable the ITP process to refer to the public transport plan as a sector plan, which may require some tweaking in the context of the full ITP, and fully integrate the other elements with public transport.

Public Transport is undoubtedly extremely important, but the other elements should receive equal importance if the transport planning process is to be comprehensive and achieve success with regard to the future mobility of the nation. Public transport is there to provide for a need. The essence of understanding transport integration is this, without NMT, freight and general private vehicle movement, there would be no access to public transport, no employment, in general no economy and therefore no need for public transport. All the pieces are needed for there to be a transport system at all.

This paper poses the following critical question: Should the other elements not enjoy protection from neglect through separation from public transport planning? It sounds counterintuitive and even ironic that better integration can be achieved by separating certain plans and documents instead of integrating them, but that is exactly the lesson of the George experience. There are at least four sound reasons why this is the case and why the Public Transport Plan (PTP) should precede the ITP:

- To have the relevant (and accurate) public transport data available for the ITP
- To allow sufficient focus and resources for the integrated transport planning
- To prevent the ITP from largely becoming a dressed up PTP with superficial integration efforts
- To provide greater clarity in terms of the definition of, approach to, and expected outcome of, a true ITP.



It is therefore suggested by the authors that in the case of especially type 1 planning authorities, public transport planning (which includes the development of a Current Public Transport Record (CPTR) database), should take place separately from the ITP or CITP and that it should preferably precede it. Doing so will not provide any guarantees as to the level of quality or integration, but at the very least it should simplify the process, enable easier integration and significantly increase the chances of a comprehensive document adhering to legislation, which in turn should greatly increase the probability of a successful transportation system in future.

## 6. REFERENCES

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