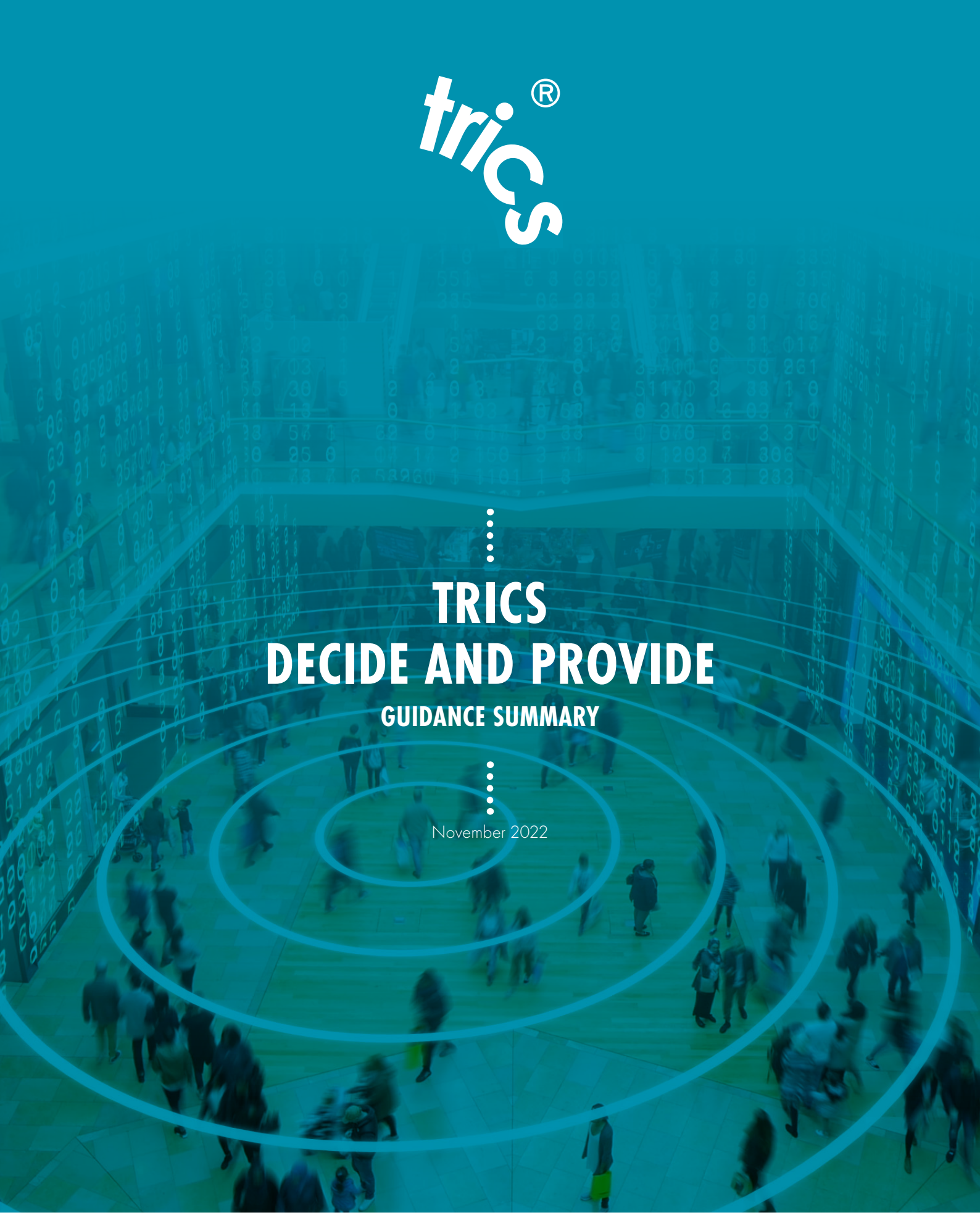

TRICS DECIDE AND PROVIDE

GUIDANCE SUMMARY

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basfordpowers

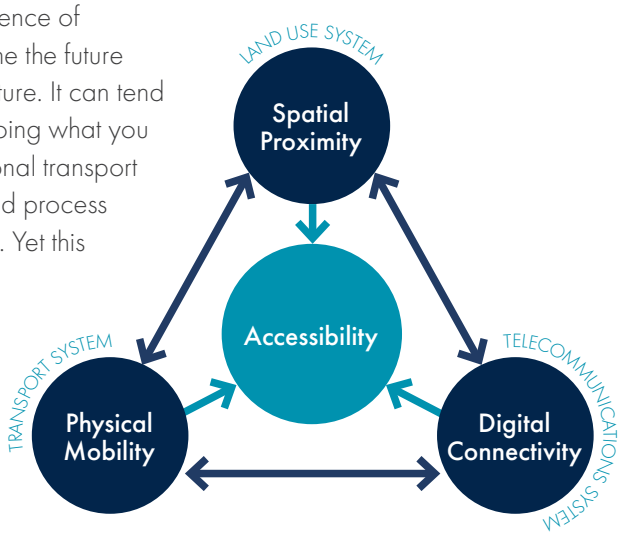
1 | TRICS DECIDE AND PROVIDE GUIDANCE SUMMARY

In February 2021 an important new TRICS Guidance Note[1] was published addressing ***The Practical Implementation of the Decide and Provide Approach*** to planning and transport assessments. The summary below has been prepared to help planners, developers and inspectors familiarise themselves with the Approach, why it is needed and how it is applied.

THE CASE FOR CHANGE FROM PREDICT AND PROVIDE TO DECIDE AND PROVIDE

Society and transport are in a state of flux in a world changing and needing to change as a result of multiple driving forces including the digital age, public attitudes and climate change as well as global shocks such as the Covid-19 pandemic. This brings into question the longstanding norms of development planning and transport assessment that have been centred upon the forecast-led paradigm of Predict and Provide (P&P). There are new imperatives to respond to. We face considerable uncertainty over the future. This leads to a need for stronger planning: **deciding** – with the support of the community at large – on a preferred future and then **providing** the means to help realise that future while accommodating the uncertainty of change ahead that is beyond our control.

The P&P paradigm, sometimes referred to as the 'rear view mirror' or 'business as usual' approach, relies upon past experience of development and associated traffic levels to determine the future need for infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure. It can tend towards replicating and reinforcing the status quo. Doing what you always did and getting what you always got. Traditional transport planning has, by default, used the P&P philosophy and process under an assumption of serving society's future needs. Yet this fails to acknowledge that, in taking this demand-led supply approach it remains the case that the nature and extent of supply **affects** demand. Beyond serving society, transport planning shapes society. The changing makeup of opportunities for economic and social activity in a post-Covid, digitally connected, society[2] invites a need for stronger planning – planning that is supply-led rather, or more so, than demand-led.



The possible consequences, unintended or otherwise, of a P&P planning approach that perpetuates car-led development include:

- the potential over-provision of highway capacity which, in turn, can induce motorised traffic (exacerbating efforts to reduce direct CO_2 emissions from the transport sector);
- the potential under-provision of walking and cycling infrastructure or public transport services; and
- the risk of planning and developing underutilised or even stranded assets.

1 https://www.trics.org/decideandprovideguidance.html
2 Lyons, G. and Davidson, C. (2016). Guidance for transport planning and policymaking in the face of an uncertain future. Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice, 88, 104-116. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2016.03.012

In its 2019 publication **Better planning, better transport, better places**[3], the Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation (CIHT) identifies the "scourge" of P&P and associated "outdated assessment methodologies" as a barrier to better planning (3.1, p.13).

If we continue to reproduce past transport solutions based on previous travel behaviours, transport planning neglects its purpose of meeting, and indeed shaping, the transport needs of the **future**.

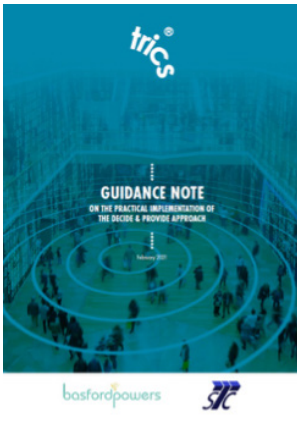
INTRODUCING THE DECIDE AND PROVIDE (D&P) APPROACH

The D&P approach is vision-led rather than forecast-led, recognising the importance of shaping the future. It also accounts for a need to weigh up future uncertainty. The D&P approach offers the opportunity for more positive and integrated transport and land use planning with more meaningful application of the modal hierarchy, making sustainable modes central to achieving the vision for the site/development rather than a cursory or residual consideration (as has sometimes, historically, been the case).

PREDICT AND PROVIDE	DECIDE AND PROVIDE
Forecast a most likely mobility future	Decide on a preferred accessibility future
Demand-led supply	Supply-led demand
Conceals uncertainty	Accommodates uncertainty
Reactive	Proactive

As with the P&P approach, the D&P approach is evidence-led. In both approaches, evidence is not synonymous with truth when it comes to the future. Evidence instead supports an informed assessment of future possibility. In both cases, TRICS has a valuable part to play in terms of its valuable bank of data from the past to inform decisions affecting the future. How that data is used and applied differs significantly between the two approaches. Its application in the D&P approach in conjunction with consideration of wider insights into changing behaviours, can provide practitioners with a fresh perspective on trip generation. Such a perspective helps us to rethink design, and representation of evidence in Transport Assessments and Transport Statements.

In February 2021 TRICS released its "**Guidance Note on the Practical Implementation of the Decide and Provide Approach**"[4]. The guidance is thorough in providing a background to the approach, its key components and worked examples of its application - using the TRICS database in a significantly different way to that seen in established practice applied over many years.



The D&P guidance is suitable for development sites at difference scales (though proportionate application of scenario planning should be considered in TA/TS preparation). The guidance has been a stimulus for Oxfordshire County Council to formally adopt the D&P approach over the P&P approach and prepare its own bespoke guidance drawing upon the TRICS Guidance Note[5].

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE DECIDE AND PROVIDE APPROACH

The D&P approach is about being vision-led, evidencing the future using scenarios, providing for the best rather than worst case in terms of transport infrastructure, and adaptively responding to the unfolding future through monitoring and evaluation.

3 https://www.ciht.org.uk/knowledge-resource-centre/resources/better-planning-better-transport-better-places/
4 http://www.trics.org/decideandprovideguidance.html
5 https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/new-transport-planning-approach-approved/

VISIONING

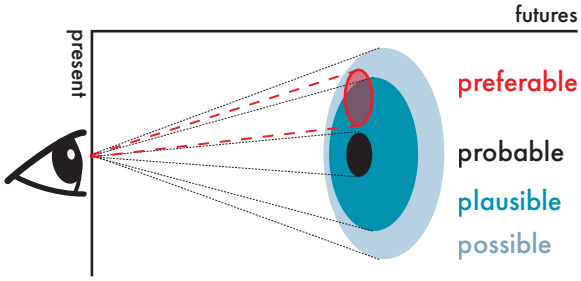
This should be carried out with all parties involved in the development process, including the community. Visioning is central to high quality place-making, creating better places to live, work and play.
As such, there are three key questions that a plan or project needs to ask and meaningfully answer:

- What sort of place are we creating?
- What kind of activities need or desire access to?
- How will we provide for access to those activities (in terms of spatial proximity (and active travel), digital connectivity and physical (motorised) mobility?

Understanding what the vision is, the degree to which a place can meet local needs and support short-distance access to retail, employment, education and community services by sustainable and active travel (contributing to achieving net zero carbon targets) is therefore essential. This will influence 'internalisation' rate (the extent to which trips begin and end within, or in the vicinity of, the development), 'localised' rate (the extent to which external trips are attracted to the site), trip rate (accounting for internalisation and localised rates) and mode split.

SCENARIO PLANNING

The future is not predetermined or knowable, in spite of apparent assertions to the contrary sometimes in the presentation of predictive evidence. A range of futures is possible – based upon changes in society beyond the immediate influence of how a new development is designed, and based upon efforts to shape the future through planning and design in line with having a vision.



In preparing evidence of the future for the TA/TS, attention should not focus on what **will** happen but upon what **could** happen and what it is intended **should** happen. This is the essence of scenario planning that forms part of the D&P approach. It involves developing a set of future scenarios – drawing upon insights about:

- **past changes in trip rates** (from use of the TRICS Historic Trends Analysis Tool (see further below) as well as consideration of wider observed changes over time, such as those apparent from the National Travel Survey);
- **critical uncertainties for society that could influence future trip rates**, as explored by and reflected in the Department for Transport's 2018 Road Traffic Forecasts and latterly in its seven so-called Common Analytical Scenarios set out in its Uncertainty Toolkit (and in turn accounted for in the National Trip End Model); and
- **development design features with the capacity to shape change** (and affect the number of person trips and the share of those undertaken by motor vehicles).

This unavoidably involves evidence-based judgement – something just as true for a P&P approach to a TA/TS as for the D&P approach. In the case of the latter, a 'fan' of scenarios should depict how trip rates could change for the site – including an extrapolation of historic **trend** for the development type in question according to the TRICS data, and also including other 'exogenous' scenarios such as those from the DfT. It should also then include a scenario for how the trip rate could **be** changed (further) through design.

APPLYING THE DECIDE AND PROVIDE APPROACH TO TRANSPORT ASSESSMENTS AND TRANSPORT STATEMENTS

National government guidance provides advice on when Transport Assessments (TA) and Transport Statements (TS) are required and what they should include in terms of evidence – evidence that can help establish whether the residual transport impacts of a proposed development are likely to be 'severe', which may be grounds for refusal – in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (in England). The following table reminds us what should be included in a TA or TS.

FACTS AND EVIDENCE KNOWN IN THE PRESENT

- information about neighbouring uses, amenity and character, and existing functional classification of the nearby road network
- data about existing public transport provision, including provision/ frequency of services and proposed public transport changes
- an assessment of trips from all directly relevant committed development in the area (i.e. development that there is a reasonable degree of certainty will proceed within the next 3 years)
- data about current traffic flows on links and at junctions (including by different modes of transport and the volume and type of vehicles) within the study area and identification of critical links and junctions on the highways network
- an analysis of the injury accident records on the public highway in the vicinity of the site access for the most recent 3-year period, or 5-year period if the proposed site has been identified as within a high accident area

EVIDENCE ABOUT THE FUTURE (IN WHICH P&P OR D&P JUDGEMENT IS APPLIED)

- information about the proposed development and site layout (particularly proposed transport access and layout across all modes of transport)
- a qualitative and quantitative description of the travel characteristics of the proposed development, including movements across all modes of transport that could result from the development and in the vicinity of the site
- an assessment of the likely associated environmental impacts of transport related to the development, particularly in relation to proximity to environmentally sensitive areas (such as air quality management areas or noise sensitive areas)
- measures to improve the accessibility of the location (such as provision/enhancement of nearby footpath and cycle path linkages) where these are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
- a description of parking facilities in the area and the parking strategy of the development
- ways of encouraging environmental sustainability by reducing the need to travel
- measures to mitigate the residual impacts of development (such as improvements to the public transport network, introducing walking and cycling facilities, physical improvements to existing roads)

In any TA/TS – whether for the P&P or D&P approach, the practitioner will need to provide facts and evidence as understood in the **present** (as set out in the table above). However, the D&P approach can be used to provide **different** evidence of the **future**, capturing uncertainty and building in measures that support transport decarbonisation (such as 15/20 minute neighbourhoods and comprehensive walking and cycling facilities as well as high quality provision of public transport). Parking provision should be managed in such a way as to promote walking and cycling in the supply-led demand D&P approach.

Past practice has tended to focus upon addressing the 'worst case' scenario (in terms of motorised trips generated by the development) in the belief that this represents the most robust approach to stewardship of the future, expected by politicians, whereby sufficient transport infrastructure provision is then put in place to accommodate this. In transport assessment, the focus on the worst case is essentially a mathematical exercise to test the highway network's capacity. However, it is important to question the prospect of a worst case scenario occurring, especially if it is misaligned with policy, notably the need to decarbonise transport by 2050. Such practice could amount to a self-fulfilling prophecy – plan for the worst and induce the worst to come about. **Judgement** of evidence raises its head again. Through the 'fan' of evidence about the future, as set out in the TRICS D&P guidance, it is instead possible to identify a plausible scenario (influenced by design) of future trip rate, aligned to the vision. In other words, moving from the worst case to a credible and deliverable 'preferred', or even 'best' case.

DEVELOPING THE EVIDENCE - TRICS RE-USED

TRICS provides its users with a large, independent set of data for use in TAs and TSs and the system has been used as a basis for deriving trip rate estimates for proposed developments for over 30 years.

The system allows its users to establish potential levels of trip generation for a wide range of development and location types (there are 121 separate land use categories in the database). It is used in the planning application process by both developer consultants and local authorities. There are currently over 500 office locations in the UK and Ireland that are registered as TRICS users.

The 2022 TRICS Good Practice Guide provides guidance on the selection criteria and data ranges that are important to assist in focusing on data best able to inform person trip rates and vehicle trip rates for proposed developments.

The latest version of the TRICS Good Practice Guide clearly states that users must avoid using the TRICS dataset in a biased, selective manner to achieve pre-determined trip rates. However, despite this advice, this practice has been observed which has, in turn, contributed to the P&P approach being sustained.

A common misunderstanding is that TRICS only provides as basis for vehicle trip generation calculations. In fact, it provides multi-modal data (walking, cycling and public transport trips). Use of vehicle trips only, insufficiently informs the assessment process, tending to reinforce unsustainable development.

Traditionally, TRICS data has been used to find 'developments like mine' and identify a representative (car) trip rate for such a development that then feeds through into the TA/TS. However, the real power of TRICS as a dataset becomes apparent when one realises that it offers insights into how trip rates for given development types (may) have been changing over time. Change may be because the wider nature of society has been changing; it may also be because of changes in development design.

TRICS now provides tools – developed to support the D&P approach - that help examine **changes in trip rates over time**, including for residential and commercial sites. The new TRICS Historic Trends Analysis Tool is now available. This bespoke Excel spreadsheet has been produced to assist TRICS users in generating a graphical representation of historic trip trends using data output from the TRICS database. This tool is about engaging with change, and informs the vision-led change of the D&P approach.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Since there are no guarantees that the trip rate in any TA/TS will come about in future, having a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan becomes all the more important. The traditional approach to TAs and TSs does not prescribe Monitoring &Evaluation (M&E). Yet M&E is key in being able to respond to uncertainty in a changing world. Strong planning should include design provision that allows for adaptation over time – in response to changing circumstances. Rather than designing for the 'worst', design instead is focused upon intending to achieve the 'best' while being prepared to respond, through the build-out period and ongoing changing behaviours, to what may further be required.

Should the M&E plan report demonstrate that the trip rate has exceeded or even fallen short of that anticipated then a revised schedule of transport interventions should be prepared and agreed with the planning and highway authority. In this regard the application of the monitoring regime and commitment in an obligation to follow the findings of the monitoring will be crucial to ensuring that the "decide" element is followed by "provide".

Recognising that planning and the development of a TA/TS inescapably involves informed judgement and judgement-based evidence frees us up from a slavish adherence to a P&P mindset and P&P approach to planning. Nevertheless, with judgement at the heart, the onus remains with D&P on practitioners to prepare their case well, with credible navigation of uncertainty guided by pursuit of a preferred outcome.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