

Transform Scotland

National Transport Strategy Review -- Consultation survey

31 March 2017

Transport prices should reflect the cost externalities that are inflicted by transport on the economy, society and the environment. Specifically, the prices paid for car use, road haulage, and aviation must reflect the impacts that they cause.

As long as this market failure is allowed to persist, there is little hope that we will see a comprehensive move to sustainable transport.

A case in point is that public transport must be less expensive, not more expensive, if we are to expect significant modal shift from private transport to public transport.

Despite frequent protests from the motoring lobby that car users are being priced off the road, it is in fact public transport users who have seen massive real term fare increases over the past fifteen years. While motoring costs have fallen in real terms in recent decades, rail users and bus users have seen large price increases in real terms. Given that those in the lowest income brackets rely disproportionately on public transport, these price trends are socially regressive, as well as being environmentally unsustainable.

One way of reducing public transport fares would be to see the Scottish Government invest at the levels seen across the Continent; the other is for roads users to pay the right prices. Most cars, lorries or air transport currently do not pay for their full external costs – environmental (e.g. climate change, air and noise pollution), social (e.g. community severance, road crashes), or economic (e.g. congestion, road damage). The London congestion charge is the outstanding example of how better price signals can improve conditions for everyone – and it is long overdue for the leadership shown there to be replicated in Scotland.

Scottish Ministers should instruct Transport Scotland to work in conjunction with the relevant local authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships to develop road traffic demand management options for Scotland's four major cities (e.g. Workplace Parking Levies, sharing lanes, road pricing) with funds raised to be reinvested in local transport improvements. This would not only reduce transport externalities, but would improve public health and quality of life in our cities, provide economic benefits, help contribute to national climate targets, and raise revenue for infrastructure improvements.

Here is but a sample of the challenges that are faced by Scottish transport:

- * Dire conditions for pedestrians almost everywhere: Lack of priority for pedestrians, and both real and perceived unsafe conditions due to high road traffic levels and driver behaviour
- * Dire conditions for cyclists almost everywhere; almost complete absence of high quality segregated cycle provision in urban areas
- * Rapidly declining bus patronage, caused by failure to provide congestion alleviation and other factors
- * Lack of competitiveness of inter-city rail network vis-a-vis road journey times on almost all corridors; Network beset by Victorian-era infrastructure
- * Rail freight providing small and declining share of overall freight traffic
- * Multi-billion pound road maintenance backlog which harms opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as motorised vehicle users
- * Ongoing problems with connectivity between ferries and other modes of public transport, which is an especially acute problem given that many ferry ports are in remote locations with limited onward services
- * A lack of demand management on road network, despite demand management by price being in operation on rail network
- * Longstanding failure to implement national smart ticketing scheme, despite London having had this in place for 14 years
- * Complete breakdown between transport and land use planning systems, leading to unsustainable sprawl
- * Incoherent local transport governance structures
- * Lack of police priority and resourcing for enforcing of road traffic offences
- * Decades-long failure to take action to reduce air pollution, resulting in over 2000 deaths in Scotland each year
- * Low funding priority for walking and buses, despite these being the modes of transport disproportionately used by low-income groups
- * Failure to drive improvement in Scottish public health (e.g. tackling the 'obesity crisis') through a prioritisation of investment in the health-improving modes of transport, walking and cycling
- * Transport Scotland's inflated, excessive and discredited road traffic growth forecasts
- * Failure to take action on carbon emissions from transport, which is soon to become the single largest source of emissions in Scotland
- * The current Scottish Government administration presiding over a large re-prioritisation of funding away from sustainable transport and into unsustainable, traffic-generating, multi-billion pound road building programmes
- * A complete failure to tackle carbon emissions and local impacts (e.g. noise pollution) from aviation expansion
- * The current Scottish Government administration's proposal to give a vast annual effective subsidy of up to £300 million to the aviation industry through the scrapping of APD; this amount being larger than the entire funding support given to buses, the mode of transport used disproportionately by the lowest income groups in Scottish society

Opportunities:

1. The Climate Change Bill should be used to implement measures that will reduce carbon emissions from the transport sector
2. The Transport Bill should be used to bring about measures that can improve conditions for bus users and allow the implementation of new road traffic demand management measures
3. STPR2 should bring about a fundamental transformation of transport spending priorities towards measures that will tackle the above challenges, rather than worsen them

No additional engagement is required. We are already represented on the Partnership Group, and intend to engage with the Review in other ways as well.