

BUS SERVICES

Scottish Green Party Debate 'Better Buses',
Wednesday 28 March 2018, 14:00

John Finnie MSP, S5M-11289

Transform Scotland parliamentary briefing

1. Key points.

We welcome the motion by John Finnie MSP, and the attention it brings to the need to take urgent action to reverse rapidly falling levels of bus use seen across Scotland in recent years. In particular, we would highlight that:

- Bus priority measures need to be introduced, enforced and maintained in order to provide reliable and convenient services.
- Glasgow City Council's Low Emission Zone (LEZ) proposals do not deliver strong enough action on air pollution and fail to take sufficient action on emissions from private vehicles.
- The Scottish Government should set out its aspirations for bus service standards as part of the forthcoming Transport Bill.

2. Bus priority measures must be introduced, enforced and maintained in order to provide reliable services.

A number of issues affect the reliability and convenience of bus services. However, we would highlight, firstly, the congestion inflicted on bus services by excessive private car use in congested urban areas, and, secondly, the failure to adequately enforce existing bus priority measures.

Congestion is a significant problem for passengers and operators, causing extended and unreliable journey times. Congestion also has a direct impact on costs for operators, and hence bus fares. Congestion reflects local authorities' general failure to progress or develop new bus priority measures, and a lack of enforcement of existing priority measures. It appears that over the last decade and a half, few or no new bus lanes have been installed in Scotland, notwithstanding the growth of general traffic. We also note a lack of commitment to maintaining bus lanes, which also sends out a message that they are not valued. Poor enforcement of bus lanes (and other infrastructure) means that infringement by a single ineligible vehicle can significantly affect journey times; indeed, few lanes are not infringed at some point.

We urge the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to introduce, enforce and maintain enhanced bus priority measures in order to provide reliable bus services (e.g. traffic management, bus priority measures, and enforcement of bus priority measures).

3. Glasgow City Council's LEZ proposals do not deliver strong enough action on air pollution and fail to take sufficient action on private vehicle emissions.

We are disappointed by the weakness of the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) proposals currently put forward by Glasgow City Council in tackling the illegal and dangerous levels of air pollution suffered by the city. However, we regard the most fundamental problem to be the general failure, Scotland-wide, to tackle unconstrained private car use in cities. Despite this, all consideration in Glasgow so far has placed the burden of action on public transport operators, with no action deemed necessary by users of private vehicles (i.e. cars, vans, HGVs) until a much later date. While bus companies certainly need to improve the emissions standards of their vehicles (and should be supported by the Scottish Government in doing so), Glasgow City Council needs to set stronger targets for private vehicle compliance much sooner than the current proposals set out. Other measures, such as the use of camera enforcement, must be included in order to ensure that the LEZ actually delivers clean air for the people of Glasgow.

4. The Scottish Government should set out its aspirations for bus service standards as part of the forthcoming Transport Bill.

We are generally supportive of the motion's proposal that the Scottish Government should set a target for bus patronage. However, we consider that it is also important for the Scottish Government to establish a set of standards which bus users should expect to be met. Unlike other sectors, such as the NHS or the railways, there is currently no comprehensive mechanism to define a reasonable service level, or whether these service levels are being met. We urge the Scottish Government to set out its aspirations for:

- Desirable network coverage, operating hours, frequencies, fares;
- Fleet environmental standards;
- Cleanliness;
- Personal security;
- Customer care.

Such standards would not need to be set out in detail in the Transport Bill, but could instead be set out in associated regulations or guidance, allowing flexibility to update them from time to time without fresh legislation.

Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

Transform Scotland
5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PR
t: 0131 243 2690
e: <info@transformscotland.org.uk>
w: <www.transform.scot>

transform
scotland

We campaign for walking, cycling and public transport to be the easiest and most affordable options for everyone. Our diverse membership brings together public, private and third sector organisations from across Scotland. We are a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).