

STAGE 1 DEBATE: TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL

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1. Key Points

- We welcome the overall intention of the Bill, which includes many worthwhile provisions. We also welcome the scrutiny provided by the REC Committee in its Stage 1 Report.
- In particular, we welcome the Committee's finding that the Bill's proposals for bus services, while helpful in many ways, do not take the requisite action to reverse the decline in bus patronage. Further powers for enabling bus use should be considered at Stage 2 of the Bill.
- We further welcome the Committee's recommendation on parking that the 20 minute blanket exemption for loading be removed from the Bill.
- We welcome the amendment to the Bill to provide Local Authorities with enabling powers to introduce Workplace Parking Levies. There is no prospect of making significant progress towards sustainable transport without road traffic demand management measures aimed at tackling the overuse of private cars in congested, polluted urban centres — and Workplace Parking Levy powers should be an option for Local Authorities in order to take action here.

2. Bus Services

Overall, while the provisions in the Bill on buses are generally welcome, they should not be seen as a panacea for tackling the decline in bus patronage: further investment is also required. We would note that while the Scottish Budget for transport has increased by over 25% over the last seven years, investment in bus services has increased by only c. 5% (and it should be noted that the bulk of the bus spend is reimbursements to operators for concessionary fares, rather than direct investment in services).¹

The REC Committee's Stage 1 Report would suggest that it is not convinced that the Bill's proposals will significantly address declining bus patronage. The Committee recommends greater flexibility for Local Authorities to operate bus services than currently proposed, but is cautious about how readily this, Bus Service Improvement Partnerships, or franchising, will be taken up.

We welcome the Committee's highlighting of the need for improving and extending bus priorities. We further welcome the Committee's call for the Government to "consider whether an appropriate quality assurance framework could be developed"; we had highlighted a need for standards or benchmarks of some kind in our evidence to the Committee.²

Unfortunately, the Bill includes no measures to simplify and facilitate Traffic Regulation Orders or Redetermination Orders. As well as encouraging Local Authorities to establish bus priority measures, this would have cost-saving benefits, and make engagement in the process easier for the public.

The Bill should also facilitate the enforcement of traffic regulations. We have previously suggested a range of measures, such as streamlining the process for certifying bus model/camera combinations, and extending decriminalised regimes to allow traffic attendants to enforce a range of bus lane and cycle lane parking offences. In the pavement and double parking sections of the Bill, the Scottish Government recognises the need for more decriminalised parking regimes. Therefore it would not, in principle, be difficult to consider measures to widen traffic attendants' powers.

3. Pavement parking

We welcome the Committee's proposed changes to the parking section of the Bill. The stated objectives of the Bill includes addressing parking on pavements, and these were widely supported in the pre-Bill consultation. Hence the last-minute change to the Bill to allow a blanket exemption for loading for up to 20 minutes would be effectively unenforceable, and would entail the significant negative unintended consequence of legitimising pavement parking. In our evidence to the Committee, we described such as change as "either naïve or inept", and hence strongly welcome the Committee's recommendation that this provision be removed from the Bill.

We further welcome the Committee's recommendation that dropped kerbs at crossing points be protected. It points out that cycleways are not currently covered by the Bill, and recommends that they should be.

4. Enabling powers for Workplace Parking Levies

We welcome the forthcoming amendment to the Bill to provide Local Authorities with enabling powers to introduce Workplace Parking Levies (WPLs). WPLs will help enable a number of objectives which we know are shared across the political spectrum, including:

- Reducing congestion.
- Providing investment for sustainable transport options.
- Bringing Scotland into compliance with its legal obligations on air quality and the protection of public health.
- Reducing carbon emissions from the transport sector.
- Making Scotland's transport system work for everyone, whether rural or urban, and to improve our physical, mental and social health as a nation.

WPLs have a track record of delivering significant changes to travel habits, bringing much needed investment to transport infrastructure, and creating healthier places to live and work.

Nottingham's WPL is a notable success. A WWF Scotland report found that in its first three years, the levy raised £25.3 million of revenue, all of which has funded improvements in the city's transport infrastructure, whilst contributing to a 33% fall in carbon emissions, and a modal shift which has seen public transport use rise to over 40%.³

The revenue from the levy allowed Nottingham to deliver Europe's largest fleet of electric buses, create new tram routes, and invest £6.1 million in improved cycle routes. Emulating this in Scottish towns & cities would be an important step in both reducing the damage caused by the gross overuse of cars in polluted, congested urban centres and in increasing investment in sustainable transport.

¹ See Transform Scotland briefing to Labour's 20/02/19 debate on buses: <http://transformscotland.org.uk/blog/2019/03/20/investment-in-bus-services-critical-to-reversing-decline/>

² Transform Scotland evidence to REC Committee, October 2018: <http://transformscotland.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Evidence-to-REC-Committee-on-Transport-Bill-Transform-Scotland-2018-09-28.pdf>

³ WWF Scotland, "International Case Studies for Scotland's Climate Plan," <https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-12/nottingham%20case%20study%20-%20Workplace%20parking%20levy.pdf>

Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

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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).