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PRESS RELEASE

GLASGOW CONNECTIVITY COMMISSION EARLY FINDINGS

A SIGNIFICANT rewiring of Glasgow's transport system is required if the city is to keep pace with other leading European destinations and compete for skills and investment, a new commission has found.

The Glasgow Connectivity Commission, chaired by leading transport academic Professor David Begg, has been looking at measures to support inclusive economic growth by enabling more people to live, work and visit the city region.

It was established by Council Leader Susan Aitken at last year's State of the City Economy conference and is due to present its policy recommendations this November.

The commission has heard evidence that comparable cities which had created people-friendly environments, reduced pollution and congestion and developed high quality public transport networks were best placed to attract inward investment and highly skilled workers.

Speaking after the commission held its first round of evidence gathering, Professor Begg said encouraging work was underway to implement the same transformation in Glasgow and revitalise the city centre.

This included work to make areas more pedestrian-friendly with the ongoing Avenues project, building a network of high quality cycle lanes, establishing Scotland's first Low Emission Zone and growing the urban population.

But the Commission heard evidence that the city's current transport system presented structural barriers which could place limits on growth if not addressed. These include:

- A dramatic decline in bus use in the west of Scotland over the last decade, with a loss of First Bus passengers of 40% over the last decade. In the four years to 2015/16 First has lost 27m passengers, equivalent to closing four of Glasgow's five biggest stations. This decline was markedly worse than any other city in the UK.
- Glasgow has a relatively low proportion (3%) of its population living in the city centre, placing a greater demand on commuting transport networks and lowering the quality of life in the city centre**
- Glasgow devotes a far higher percentage of its land space to roads than other cities in the UK despite it having one of the lowest car ownership levels
- Glasgow's grid system allows far less space for pedestrians than successful comparator cities: 25% of land in the city centre is taken up by roads, with pavements taking up only 8% and other land accounting for 36%. The comparative figures for Edinburgh are 12% roads/10% pavements/49% land. (Graphics available)***
- Glasgow lacks a fixed transport network linking some of the key transport generators in the city, including the Glasgow Airport and Queen Elizabeth Hospital

- While evidence on congestion is mixed – some evidence showed a recent fall in city centre traffic volumes – there is clear evidence that journey times on certain key road routes had suffered, having a particularly damaging impact on bus travel****
- Active modes of travel, whilst increasing, are still relatively low*****
- Evidence suggested there is a surplus of car parking spaces available, with several city centre car parks being under-used at peak times

Professor Begg argued that the size and importance of Glasgow relative to the rest of Scotland’s economy meant that the country’s goal of creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth would not be achieved until the city’s potential is realised. He said: “A generation ago Glasgow led the way across the UK towards what was seen as a modernised transport system, built for the car. Now, with rapidly changing demands and a trend towards low carbon infrastructure, the priorities of people have changed, quite dramatically. The dominance of the road is being questioned not only in social terms, with its negative impact on air quality and road safety, but also economically as its rival European cities transform their own environments in favour of pedestrians, cyclists and integrated public transport systems. This is what we are proposing, that the city lives up to its slogan by recognising that ‘People do indeed Make Glasgow’.”

Ends

* First Bus is the major operator in the Glasgow region and lost 27m bus journeys between 2011/12 and 2015/16. Comparison with rail journeys taken from Estimates of Station usage, by the Office of Rail and Road (<http://orr.gov.uk/statistics/published-stats/station-usage-estimates>):

Station	Passengers in 2015/16
Glasgow Central	30,000,582
Glasgow Queen Street	16,424,064
Partick	2,857,994
Charing Cross (Glasgow)	2,038,954
Exhibition Centre Glasgow	1,742,528

** Evidence presented by Glasgow City Council showed that 3% of Glasgow’s population lived in the city centre.

Evidence from Austin-Smith:Lord LLP showed that the number of residents in Glasgow City Centre was lower than comparable European cities:

City	Residents per km2
Oslo	750
Zurich	3,100

Glasgow	4,700
Copenhagen	5,650
Rotterdam	6,500
Munich	6,700
Stockholm	8,000
Dublin	9,200
Amsterdam	13,750
London (Hackney)	14,000
Paris	21,500

Research by the Centre for Cities has found a correlation between increasing urban population and jobs growth (<http://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/18-03-22-City-Space-Race-Balancing-the-need-for-homes-and-offices-in-cities-final.pdf>).

“Manchester and Leeds, for example, saw 84 and 34 per cent increases in city centre employment between 1998 and 2015. In the same period, their populations increased by 149 and 151 per cent, with new residents – many of whom were young professionals – likely to have been attracted in by the job opportunities and amenities on offer. The fact that they are not the most expensive city centres suggests there has been enough space to accommodate this growth. In Manchester, for example, the city centre has made room for an additional 20,000 residents (since 2002) and 70,000 jobs (since 1998).” p.15

*** Evidence from Austin-Smith:Lord LLP:

Percentage of land taken up by road:

Glasgow:	25%
Manchester:	18%
Birmingham:	17%
Leeds:	16%
Newcastle:	14%
Bristol:	13%
Edinburgh:	12%

**** Evidence presented to the Commission did not offer a clear insight into the growth of congestion in the city centre. While there has been a significant increase in traffic on the motorway network, the number of vehicles entering and leaving the city centre area had fallen slightly in recent years. However, while overall traffic volumes in the city centre may be static, there is some evidence that changing the changing nature of traffic, with a significant increase in goods vehicles and private-hire taxis, could worsen congestion levels.

In addition, there is clear evidence of deteriorating bus speeds in the city centre, some of which is likely to relate to problems with congestion. Evidence by Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) suggested that:

- Average speed of buses through the city centre is 4.5 miles per hour
- Some key bus journeys connecting the city centre to peripheral towns and suburbs had lengthened by 40% to 60% in the last 25 years
- Traffic data suggests that some journeys in Glasgow take more than half an hour longer on average at peak times

***** Evidence from SPT showed that the percentage of journeys taken by bicycle had doubled from 2% to 5% in the decade to 2016. However, over the same period, the proportion of journeys made by foot had fallen from 15% to 11%

Notes to editors

The Glasgow Connectivity Commission was established by Glasgow City Council leader Susan Aitken in November 2017. It is chaired by Professor David Begg, Chief Executive of Transport Times, and is operating independently. Other commissioners are: Stuart Patrick, Chief Executive at Glasgow Chamber of Commerce; Anne Ledgerwood, Operations Manager at St Enochs shopping centre; Iain Docherty, Professor of Public Policy and Governance at University of Glasgow University; Bill Reeve, Head of Rail at Transport Scotland; Damien Henderson, Board Member at Transform Scotland; Ross Martin, Economic Advisor at the Scottish Government; Gareth Williams, Head of Policy at Scottish Council for Development and Industry. It will publish its final report this November.