

TRANSform Scotland

the campaign for sustainable transport

Scottish Executive National Transport Strategy

Advance briefing from TRANSform Scotland

4th December 2006

The Scottish Executive will launch its National Transport Strategy on Tuesday 5th December 2006. This long-awaited strategy was first flagged up in the June 2004 transport white paper *Scotland's transport future*.

The Scottish Executive is well aware of the challenges it faces if the NTS is to promote sustainability. This briefing sets out ten areas where we need to see action if the National Transport Strategy to be seen as a Sustainable Transport Strategy.

1. Road traffic reduction

1.1 Background

Road traffic reduction is *the* most vital component of a sustainable transport policy. *A transport strategy that is not founded on reducing road traffic levels is not, nor should claim to be, a sustainable transport strategy.*

However, the Executive has threatened to ditch its road traffic stabilisation target only four years after setting the target (returning traffic levels to 2001 levels by 2021).

1.2 What needs to happen:

The Scottish Executive needs to give a clear lead that it wants transport policy to reduce road traffic levels.

A strengthening of the existing road traffic stabilisation target with interim targets and an action plan. This approach gained the support of the Scottish Parliament's 2005 climate change inquiry.¹

1.2 What we expect to see:

All indications from the Scottish Executive have been that it wants to drop the road traffic stabilisation target.

A replacement carbon target (see below) is not in itself sufficient as it doesn't pick up wider impacts of transport such as air and noise pollution, congestion costs, community severance, and impact on the natural environment.

2. Climate change emissions

2.1 Background

The transport sector is one of the main contributors to climate change. Yet despite a now high level of awareness of this issue, there is however little evidence that the Scottish transport sector is taking measures to reduce emissions: car use and road freight levels continue to increase, air travel growth is uncontrolled, while vehicle efficiency is failing to make significant improvement.

Last month's Stern Report set out the wider economic impacts of climate change should action not be taken.

2.2 What needs to happen:

A moratorium on the Executive's current expenditure programme – including the M74 Northern Extension, the Aberdeen western bypass and the Air Route Development Fund. Transport expenditure decisions need to take full accounts of whether they help in the battle against climate change, or whether they just make things worse.

2.3 What we expect to see:

No change on infrastructure projects: i.e. the continuation of a major road-building programme and direct subsidies to the air transport industry.

Perhaps some sort of carbon emissions target for the transport sector. But will it be as meaningless as the Climate Change Programme carbon targets (i.e. measures only reductions in emissions, and not new emissions generated by the Executive's own actions)?

Further warm words about technofix interventions such as biofuels and carbon offsets.

3. 'Smarter Choices'

3.1 Background

The 'Smarter Choices' agenda promotes a range of interventions aimed at reductions in travel, and modal shift to more sustainable travel modes. The range of interventions covered includes:

- Workplace travel plans
- School travel plans
- Personalised travel plans
- Public transport information
- Travel awareness campaigns
- Car clubs
- Car sharing schemes
- Teleworking
- Teleconferencing
- Home shopping

The available research into these types of measures has suggested that they may represent greater value for money than prestige projects (such as spending money on bullet trains and/or a Second Forth Road Bridge).ⁱⁱ

3.2 What needs to happen:

A major programme of investment in Smarter Choices measures.

3.3 What we expect to see:

Some level of support for Smarter Choices to feature in the Strategy.

4. Public education campaigns

4.1 Background

Government has a major role to play in making people aware of the consequences of their travel habits and the need for change.

The Executive has in recent years run three major travel awareness campaigns: 'Learn to Let Go', 'Choose Another Way', and 'Step Change'. All of them have now been dropped. Scotland suffers from not having had a consistent background message given to motorists about the need to

change their travel behaviour. A Smarter Choices Programme (see above) has to be accompanied by a public education campaign.

4.2 What needs to happen:

Learn from successful campaigns of the recent past, such as drink driving, seat belts and smoking ban, that a major change in society’s attitude is possible. The Executive should **put in place public information campaigns explaining the cost of transport**, both to the individual (e.g. explaining the vast time the time and money that people expend on purchasing and maintaining cars) and to society (in terms of external social, environmental and economic impacts).

Set out clear guidance on the appropriate – and inappropriate - use of cars. There are many journeys for which cars are the most appropriate mode of transport, and indeed may even be reasonably benign on environmental grounds, but there are also an awful lot of journeys for which car journeys should be specifically discouraged. Making a complex trip to areas ill-served by public transport, perhaps along with others and/or possessions, may be best made by car; driving 100 metres to the shops or the school, or commuting trips to centres along high-quality public transport corridors, are not.

4.3 What we expect to see:

Nothing much.

5. Public transport investment

5.1 Background

Since 1999, the Executive has increased expenditure on public transport: this wouldn’t have been difficult from the miserly amounts spent by the Tories in the 1990s!

5.2 What needs to happen:

Continue investment in all forms of public transport – buses, trams, trains and ferries. The Edinburgh tram scheme, in particular, will provide the sort of public transport quality that will get us close to the best public transport systems across Europe – low emissions, accessible, and sustainable.

New investment in the existing rail network to **speed up journey times on the Scottish inter-city rail network** (including electrification, where appropriate). Journey times on key inter-urban corridors such as Edinburgh/Glasgow-Aberdeen and Edinburgh/Glasgow-Inverness are often uncompetitive because of the limited investment in rail infrastructure in recent years. *For example, in 1895, the fastest journey time between Edinburgh & Dundee took 59 minutes – when it now takes 71 minutes! In 1913, the fastest Edinburgh-Perth train trip took 65 minutes, while it now takes 71 minutes.*

More focus on smaller-scale improvements (e.g. information systems, smartcards, waiting environment). A Scottish ‘Oystercard’, as in London, would be very welcome.

5.3 What we expect to see:

Continued support for public transport investment.

We are not convinced of the need for ‘bullet trains’ (or maglev) between Edinburgh and Glasgow. The best railways in Europe – e.g. the Germans and the Swiss – are run successfully without ‘bullet trains’. We need to see greater improvement to current infrastructure before the spending of large amounts of money on needless new projects.

6. Walking & cycling investment

6.1 Background

A quarter of car trips are less than two miles, and 56% of car trips are less than five miles. Walking remains the second most common mode of transport (after car use) yet receives almost no consideration in most transport policy discussions. However, transport policy usually loses sight of the fact that most travel remains local in nature.

Walking and cycling play an important role in delivering public health targets for physical exercise. There has been a welcome increase in cycling infrastructure in recent years. This has not been matched, however, in the area of walking, where we still lack a national walking strategy.

6.2 What needs to happen:

Recognise walking and cycling as modes of transport in their own right, and substantially increase their priority for funding. The Strategy should ensure that substantially greater amounts of resources are ringfenced for these most sustainable of modes.ⁱⁱⁱ

6.3 What we expect to see:

Perhaps some increased funding support for cycling. Little for walking.

7. Road pricing

7.1 Background

The Executive has for some time said that it supports local authority action in implementing road user charging, yet Scottish Ministers went into hiding when the City of Edinburgh Council brought forward its plans for referendum in early 2005, and earlier this year threw out the proposal of the Forth Estuary Transportation Authority (FETA) for road charges on the Forth Road Bridge. The Executive's failure to take a lead has killed off action on this front for the time being - despite the ongoing success of similar schemes in London and Stockholm.

However, last week's Eddington Review gave the strongest support yet for the implementation of road pricing across the UK.

7.2 What needs to happen:

Introduce road user charging across Scotland's busiest roads to reduce congestion at peak traffic times and help establish the principle of 'polluter pays'.

In the absence of action from the Westminster government, the Scottish Executive should set out its own plans, and timescale, for implementation of **a Scottish road user charging scheme**, drawing upon the trials already underway across in England. We recommend that the Executive should focus on the trunk road network, which is entirely within its own control.

7.3 What we expect to see:

More warm words about road pricing – but no action. Certainly, the dropping of road tolls on the Forth and Tay Bridges would give entirely the wrong message.

More claims about the technology not being in place for the next ten years (despite Norwich Union already operating a pay-as-you-drive car insurance scheme!)

8. Short-haul aviation

8.1 Background

Aviation is the most polluting, and most energy-intensive mode of transport.

Recent research by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research has found that, if the current expansion in aviation is allowed to continue, the UK government will find it “virtually impossible” to hit its targets for reducing climate change emissions. Since the RDF is contributing to the aviation expansion in Scotland, it would appear to be incompatible with delivering the ‘Scottish Share’ of reductions in climate change emissions.

8.2 What needs to happen:

Press the UK Government to **introduce aviation fuel tax and/or emissions charge**. The UK aviation industry receives an effective subsidy of £9 billion per annum because it pays no duty on the fuel it consumes or VAT on ticket sales or aircraft purchase.

Put in place a programme to switch all but the most essential air trips from the Scottish Central Belt to London from air travel to rail. Should this require the construction of an Anglo-Scottish high-speed rail line then this should be considered. However, as set out in the report *Are High-Speed Railways Good for the Environment?*,^{iv} there are other viable ways to improve railways between Scotland and England.

8.3 What we expect to see:

Nothing on aviation fuel tax / emissions charge.

Continued subsidy to the aviation industry through the Air Route Development Fund.

Support for an Anglo-Scottish high-speed rail line.

9. Project appraisal

9.1 Background

The Scottish Executive’s transport expenditure is heavily skewed towards large capital projects, while a pathetically small amount is devoted to the health-promoting modes of transport. It remains commonplace for sustainable transport projects to be left with funding gaps, while damaging roads projects such as the urban M74 and the Aberdeen western bypass have access to seemingly bottomless pots of money.

Despite the independent public inquiry on the M74 Northern Extension deciding that the project was a bad idea – environmentally, socially and economically – the Executive decided to press ahead.

This will not change unless we have a sea-change in how transport expenditure is appraised. It is imperative that the forthcoming Strategic Transport Projects Review takes as its focus the review of interventions that can deliver on nationally-important objectives such as improving public health, improving social inclusion and reducing climate change emissions – rather than just analysing the pet projects of vested interest groups.

9.2 What needs to happen:

Firstly, the **Strategic Transport Projects Review must be conducted using the same objective set as that decided upon for the finalised National Transport Strategy** – and not just whether projects that will be analysed are “effective in growing the economy”.

Secondly, there needs to be a **thorough review of the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidelines (STAG)** such that time savings calculations do not overwhelm other factors (environment, public health and so on), and so that the supposedly headline governmental

objective of reducing climate emissions gets treated with more seriousness in transport appraisal. We suggest that the Executive should consider energy-based appraisal as an alternative to the discredited time savings approach.

Thirdly, the Scottish Executive should **link the availability of funding for local authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships to how realistic their plans are in contributing towards national objectives and targets**. While we accept that there are important regional variations between areas of Scotland, we do not believe that it is good use of public resources to fund branches of local government whose actions specifically oppose national policy objectives.

9.3 What we expect to see:

Not much. Go on: surprise us!

10. Transport funding

10.1 Background

The majority of new Scottish Executive transport expenditure goes on large capital projects – road and rail schemes. An obvious exception has been the Executive’s national concessionary fare scheme, whilst the Executive’s bus route development fund has also delivered some useful public transport service improvements.

10.2 What needs to happen:

Whilst some of the Executive’s capital projects are welcome, the Strategy should express a willingness to divert funding from capital projects to revenue support. This is necessary in order to see an uplift in quality of local bus services, or in delivering ‘Smarter Choices’ interventions e.g. workplace and school travel plans.

10.3 What we expect to see:

We don’t know, but we don’t have high expectations.

On the positive side, this issue could also be addressed as part of the forthcoming Strategic Transport Projects Review.

ⁱ The report of the Scottish Parliament’s 2005 climate change inquiry concluded that not only should the Executive keep the target but also that it should set out interim targets as milestones along the road to the 2021 target.

ⁱⁱ See for example Sally Cairns et al. (2004) *Making Smarter Choices Work* – available at http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_susttravel/documents/divisionhomepage/038507.hcsp

ⁱⁱⁱ Our *Healthy Transport* briefing sets out why these measures should be high priority in government transport planning at all levels – this is available at

<http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/info/docs/HealthyTransport.pdf>
^{iv} See http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/info/docs/2006-10-16_HSR.pdf

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