

TRANSform Scotland

the campaign for sustainable transport

Executive Debate on Transport

Wednesday 27th June 2007, 2.30pm
Briefing from TRANSform Scotland

1. Introduction

TRANSform Scotland urges MSPs to **oppose** the Executive motion:

S3M-243 John Swinney: Transport—That the Parliament endorses the Government's transport priorities and notes that the Government party proposed during the election campaign not to proceed with the Edinburgh Trams and current EARL projects, but planned an additional crossing for the River Forth.

The Edinburgh Tram Project is a key component of Scottish sustainable transport policy. The Edinburgh Trams have overwhelming support from the business sector, the education sector, and the voluntary sector (see panel on right for details). The overwhelming majority of parties represented on The City of Edinburgh Council and in the Scottish Parliament have also indicated their support for the scheme. **A vote against the Edinburgh tram scheme would be a vote against the economy and sustainability of Scotland's Capital City.**

Last week, the Scottish Executive launched its Climate Change Bill. This is an important initiative, and one that we welcome. However, the Executive will have little or no chance of reducing climate change emissions while government policy continues to promote more road use and provide subsidies for air travel. **If the Executive chooses to carry out its threat to scrap key public transport projects such as the Edinburgh trams then its credibility on climate change policy will be badly damaged.**

2. Edinburgh Tram Scheme

Our Capital's competitor cities internationally have already made significant investments in high quality tram and metro systems, and it is imperative that Edinburgh takes steps to ensure that it too can pride itself with one of the best public transport systems in Europe.

England is ahead of Scotland in implementing light rail systems. Successful light rail schemes are already in operation in Nottingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Croydon, London Docklands, Tyne & Wear and the West Midlands. Some of these are now being extended, while most continental countries are making substantial investment in light rail networks for their towns and cities.

Across Europe over 250 towns and cities now have light rail systems. Dublin is investing in an expanded tram system. Tallinn in Estonia has a successful tram system. As Friends of the Earth Edinburgh have this week pointed out: "Even Kazakhstan Has Trams!"

Research that TRANSform Scotland published earlier this month – available at <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/info/docs/2007-06-18_trams_Waterfront.pdf> – indicated strong support for the Edinburgh tram scheme from major employers such as Scottish Gas

Who supports trams for Edinburgh?

The following organisations, or leading individuals from them, are among those who have expressed their support for the introduction of trams to Edinburgh:

Education sector

Edinburgh's Telford College
Heriot-Watt University
Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh
The University of Edinburgh

Retail sector

George Street Association
Harvey Nichols
John Lewis plc
Marks & Spencer, Edinburgh

Other businesses & business groups

Edinburgh Airport plc
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise
Edinburgh City Centre Management Company
Edinburgh International Conference Centre
Forth Ports plc
Institute of Directors, Scotland
Oracle
Scottish Council Development and Industry
Scottish Gas
Standard Life

Health and disability organisations

Asthma UK Scotland
Capability Scotland
Voluntary Health Scotland

Heritage organisations

The Cockburn Association
National Trust for Scotland

Environment and transport groups

Capital Rail Action Group
Friends of the Earth Edinburgh
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Light Rail Scotland
RSPB Scotland
Scottish Association for Public Transport
Scottish Environment LINK
Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign
Stop Climate Chaos Scotland
Sustrans Scotland
TRANSform Scotland
WWF Scotland

and Edinburgh's Telford College based at the Granton Waterfront regeneration area. It was further welcome that last week Audit Scotland gave a clean bill of health to the management of the Edinburgh trams project.

Trams are ideal for a city the size of Edinburgh, and our parliamentary evidence papers – see e.g. <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/info/docs/2006-03-22_TL2_debate.pdf> - set out some of the reasons for investment in trams. However, to summarise why Edinburgh needs trams, we can do no better than quote Kenny MacAskill MSP, writing for the 'trams4edinburgh' website in December 2000:

"[L]et us recognise that at the start of C21 the route ahead for the City of Edinburgh is a light rail network that adds to both existing and reopened lines and that compliments (sic) and dovetails with other current and future modes of travel. It will be costly and it will take time. However this is a network not just for a few years but for many generations to come. It will be the basis upon which Edinburgh can grow and flourish. It is after all the physical arteries that are the lifeblood of the community. Better therefore to take our time to get it right than progress at pace and repent at leisure. Moreover in transport like most other things in life you get what you pay for. Do it on the cheap and you'll get the quality it merits. The vision for Edinburgh has to be to aspire to be a truly Capital City."

In March 2003, Mr MacAskill, then SNP Shadow Minister for Transport, went on to "welcome the announcement of funding for trams in Edinburgh" – see <<http://www.snp.org/press-releases/2003/news.1011/>>.

It is deeply unfortunate that the Scottish Executive's "vision for Edinburgh" now appears to consist of starving it of investment in its public transport system.

3. Edinburgh Airport Rail Link

TRANSform Scotland has always supported the provision of rail access to Edinburgh Airport. However, we do not consider the current scheme to be well-specified - principally because it would result in slower journey times on the mainline Scottish railway.

We gave evidence against the current EARL proposal during its Parliamentary Bill stage (our evidence is available at <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/info/docs/2006-05-15_EARL_evidence.pdf>). The Edinburgh tram scheme would provide rail access into the Airport: if the Executive decides to proceed with the tram project, then we suggest an alternative version of the EARL project that would provide interchange with the mainline rail network at Gogar.

More fundamentally, TRANSform Scotland considers that the key focus for investment in the Scottish heavy rail network should be an upgrading of the inter-city network so that Scotland's cities are connected by fast and frequent train services. Journey times between Scotland's major cities have been allowed to become uncompetitive with the car, and it is this that the Scottish Executive must focus on if it is realistic about tackling climate change emissions from the transport sector.

4. Second Forth Road Bridge

TRANSform Scotland is a member of the ForthRight Alliance, which in the 1990s successfully campaigned against a Second Forth Road Bridge on the basis that it would worsen transport and environmental conditions in Edinburgh.

The reformed ForthRight Alliance takes the view that the Scottish Ministers should have all the facts at their disposal before taking a stance on the possibility of a replacement bridge: failing to do so would be both environmentally irresponsible and fiscally imprudent. The Alliance's most recent briefing is available online at <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/info/docs/2007-02-14_2FRB_briefing.pdf>.

5. About TRANSform Scotland

TRANSform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance, campaigning for a more sustainable and socially-just transport system. Our membership includes bus, rail and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation groups; consultancies; and local transport campaigns.

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