

Reversing the unsustainable?

An analysis of the Local Transport Strategies



TRANSform Scotland
the campaign for sustainable transport

Written by
Colin Howden
and David Spaven

Published by
TRANSform Scotland

February 2001

TRANSform Scotland is the national sustainable transport campaign, bringing together 68 organisations - including transport operators, local authorities, environment and conservation groups, chambers of commerce and local transport campaigns.

1. Introduction

Most transport is still local. While politicians may love cutting red ribbons across new motorways or airport runways, long distance infrastructure projects are irrelevant to the day-to-day transport needs of most people in Scotland.

A main thrust of Government policy is to shift responsibility for solving local transport problems towards Local Authorities, for example through powers to apply road user charging and to introduce traffic-calming Home Zones in residential areas.

This analysis takes a sample of five Local Transport Strategies representative of the urban and urban hinterland environments in which the overwhelming majority of Scotland's population live and work. It assesses how far the strategies match up to Government guidelines and other key criteria reflecting the urgent need to curb fast-growing climate change emissions from road transport. The analysis also considers the extent to which the Scottish Executive lives up to its own guidelines!

2. Background to the Local Transport Strategies

Local Transport Strategies ("LTSs") were called for by the then Scottish Office in the 1998 Scottish Transport White Paper:

"We shall therefore be encouraging each local authority to develop a Local Transport Strategy. ... The Local Transport Strategy will set out the authority's plans and priorities for the development of an integrated transport policy within its area, designed to serve people in that authority in a way which is consistent with our overall sustainable development objectives."

Paragraph 4.2.3, Scottish Transport White Paper "Travel Choices for Scotland", Scottish Office, July 1998

Certain local authorities (for example, The City of Edinburgh Council) had for a number of years produced documents that were akin to LTSs; what was perhaps more surprising was the number of local authorities that had no plan within which to frame their work.

The LTSs were given a specific direction by the Scottish Executive in guidance notes, calling for a focus on reversing the unsustainability of current trends and on tackling long-term problems:

*"The focus of a Local Transport Strategy is on a local authority's plans for the next three years. But **reversing the unsustainable** transport policies of recent years is a long-term task. Strategies should therefore set out their vision for integrated transport looking 10 and 20 year ahead, and the key practical steps required to deliver that vision"*[our emphasis].

Paragraph 1.4, "Guidance on Local Transport Strategies and Road Traffic Reduction Reports", Scottish Executive Development Department, February 2000

However, the Scottish Executive decided to make LTSs voluntary for local authorities, unlike in England where Local Transport Plans (the equivalent to LTSs) are mandatory:

"The Executive is not planning to legislate to require local authorities to prepare Local Transport Strategies ... The Executive will, however, keep the process under review and retains the right to legislate to make strategies compulsory, if it judges this to be desirable."

Para 1.8, "Guidance on Local Transport Strategies and Road Traffic Reduction Reports", Scottish Executive Development Department, February 2000

The Scottish Executive declined the opportunity to legislate in the Transport (Scotland) Bill to make LTSs a mandatory requirement.

3. What is required of a Local Transport Strategy?

The "Guidance on Local Transport Strategies and Road Traffic Reduction Reports", published by the Scottish Executive Development Department in February 2000, gives the following "five key elements" of a Local Transport Strategy (para. 5.2):

- **clear and challenging objectives** consistent with the Executive's integrated transport policy and commanding widespread local support;
- an **analysis of problems and opportunities**;
- a long-term **strategic overview** setting out how identified problems will be tackled and objectives delivered. In developing this, all potential solutions will need to be tested to establish the best combination of measures [i.e. **appraisal**];
- a costed and realistic **implementation programme** of specific projects and policy measures, including identification of where the required resources will come from;
- a set of **performance indicators, targets and other outcomes** which can be used to assess whether the strategy is delivering the stated objectives.

Policy Linkages identified by the Scottish Executive

Land-Use Planning

- NPPG17 and PAN57
- Compatibility with Structure & Local Plans

The Environment

- Climate change: *"Strategies should have, as one of their objectives, the aim of contributing to the reduction of CO₂ emissions from transport."*
- Local air quality management & noise.

Social Inclusion

- *"the particular needs of the young, women, the elderly and those with other special needs."*
- *"ways of reducing community severance caused by busy roads and the prevalence of road accidents among people living in deprived estates..."*

Health

- LAs *"should therefore ensure that their health and transport policies are fully integrated and consistent"*

A Sustainable Economy

- LTSs *"should seek to reconcile the business need for speed, reliability, choice and links to markets, with the environmental and social impacts of business related transport."*
- *"SACTRA* concluded that in certain circumstances transport may assist in local economic regeneration efforts - but there is no simple, unambiguous positive link."*

Chapter 4, "Guidance on Local Transport Strategies and Road Traffic Reduction Reports", Scottish Executive Development Department, Feb. 2000

* Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment

Road-building plans should be reconsidered

The guidance, clearly aware of the naive attachment of some local authorities to outdated and counterproductive road schemes, called for a review of the rationale for such proposals (Paras 6.44 & 6.46):

"Strategies should review the rationale for major road schemes, whether actively under preparation or at an earlier stage of consideration."

"Before including major new schemes in their strategy, local authorities should be able to demonstrate that they have looked at alternative or complementary solutions, such as public transport improvements and traffic management measures, and that the road scheme is consistent with an integrated transport strategy."

4. Previous evaluations of the Local Transport Strategies

In February 2000, the Scottish Executive published "Audit of Preliminary Local Transport Strategies and Road Traffic Reduction Reports", written by consultant and former senior civil servant Patrick Hetherington. He looked at all of the preliminary LTSs, as submitted to the Scottish Executive in July 1999, and came up with some heavily critical views about the quality and consistency of the preliminary LTSs.

"All strategies submitted reflect an acceptance of the broad thrust of the government's integrated transport policy ... There is however less clear consistency among local authorities about the need to reduce, or curb the growth in, road traffic." [1.3]

"The weaker strategies also tend to show inconsistencies, for example allegedly seeking to limit the demand for car travel by action to promote public transport, cycling and walking, but failing to propose robust measures to constrain the demand for car use" [2.11]

It was clear that there was a long way to go in reviewing the road-building wishlists built up by local authorities, despite this being specifically called for in the guidance, and in planning for traffic reduction, despite this being a key legislative requirement for local authorities:

*"A few authorities however intend to continue to protect planned road lines without giving any clear indication that these schemes are still required. ... **All authorities should consider inherited road schemes in the light of the new policy framework.**"* [4.15, original emphasis]

"Most authorities have given only preliminary consideration to [road traffic reduction]." [6.1]

Clearly, the local authorities still had a lot of work to do before their LTSs could be seen to fulfill their purpose of moving local transport policy in a sustainable direction.

5. Our methodology for analysing the LTSs

1. Scottish Executive's "five key elements"

We have chosen to follow the Scottish Executive's key principles (see section 3, above) in carrying out the evaluation, judging them to be a sound basis for drawing up a LTS.

2. Additional criteria

Following on from the criticism levelled at the preliminary LTSs by Patrick Hetherington, and because of their importance in bringing about a truly sustainable transport system at the local level, we have added two extra, and quite specific, criteria:

- (a) a commitment to road traffic reduction targets; and
- (b) a shift away from traffic-generating road schemes.

3. Achievement against criteria

In addition to a short written analysis, we have given the LTSs analysed a score from one to five, with five being the best.

4. Sample analysed

We have looked at five LTSs here (Aberdeen City, City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Glasgow City and West Lothian). *If anyone would like to commission us to do so, we'd be more than happy to analyse the other twenty-seven!*

6.1 Clear and challenging objectives?

City of Edinburgh Council

★★★★★

"Edinburgh aspires to be a city with a transport system that is accessible to all and serves all. Edinburgh's transport system should contribute to better health, safety and quality of life, with particular consideration for vulnerable people such as children, and elderly and disabled people; it should be a true citizen's network. The transport system should support a strong, sustainable local economy."

Accompanying this 'Vision' statement are 7 'Objectives', all clearly stated.

Glasgow City Council

★★★★★

"The vision is to provide a sustainable transport strategy for Glasgow that will enhance the economic, environmental and social success of the city ... Picture a city where the adults of tomorrow incorporate cycling and walking into their daily activities and aspirations to live in a clean, safe, pollution free environment far outreach the aspiration to own a car."

Accompanying this bold 'Vision' statement are 22 aims, most of which are clearly stated.

West Lothian Council

★★★★★

"To provide all citizens of West Lothian with a genuine choice of transport which fulfills their needs and provides opportunities for work and leisure on a sustainable basis."

Accompanying this 'Vision' statement are 7 'Objectives', all clearly stated.

Aberdeen City Council

★★★★★

"... Through an emphasis on reducing car dependence and facilitating more environmentally-friendly forms of transport, strategies for sustainable transport in Aberdeen will aim to reconcile the various demands of society, the economy and the environment ..."

Goes on to list 5 Objectives and 28 Sub-Objectives.

East Lothian Council

★★★

"The prime objective of the strategy is to reduce overall dependence on the private car and to promote the availability and use of alternative, more sustainable modes of transport where practical to do so."

6.2 Analysis of problems and opportunities?

West Lothian Council

★★★★★

Detailed analysis of traffic flows, trip destinations and modal shift (mainly public transport to car!). Also addresses road safety, air quality and car ownership issues in some detail.

Aberdeen City Council

★★★★★

Initial overview section is on "Reducing the need to travel", singling out very short trips, City Centre trips & long journeys as areas where modal shift should be promoted. Later topic-specific sections provide relatively clear discussion of issues.

Glasgow City Council

★★★★★

Fairly detailed exposition of constraints and opportunities, with sections on current transport status, targets achieved, education, health, safety, environment and sustainability, integration and funding. However, fails to highlight the special opportunities presented by a still dense urban pattern and a low level of car ownership.

City of Edinburgh Council

★★★

Sections look at (a) Travel Patterns and Levels of Service; (b) Road Safety; (c) Environment; (d) Social Exclusion; and (e) Local Economy. However, is mainly lacking in detail.

East Lothian Council

★★★

Fairly detailed discussion and tabulation of topics such as population growth and commuting, perceived deficits in transport infrastructure, car ownership and local air quality issues.

6.3 Performance indicators and targets?

Aberdeen City Council

★★★★

- 53 targets are listed. Many are quantified and have specific timescales.
- These include: journey-to-work modal shift targets, a city-wide road traffic reduction target, road crash fatality reductions, journey-to-work targets for walking, cycling, park-and-ride and rail.
- Also includes the doubling of transport expenditure and the construction of a western bypass as targets. Questionable whether these are meaningful targets.

City of Edinburgh Council

★★★★

- Traffic levels (whole city: 10% reduction by 2010 on 1996 levels, city centre: 30% reduction on same base).
- Modal split targets (draft only).
- Road safety (50% reduction in road deaths by 2010).
- Promises targets for Accessibility, Streets as Civic Spaces, Transport and Social Inclusion, Infrastructure Condition.

Glasgow City Council

★★★

- 80 targets are listed. Most of these are quantified and relate to specific timescales, but many are of a detailed technical nature rather than having a policy output dimension, e.g. *"replace secondary lining to both bores [of Clyde Tunnel] by March 2004."*
- There is just one modal share target and it is modest: *"reduce the share of journeys to work by car by 1% p.a. for the next 10 years."*

West Lothian Council

★★★

- Commuting to Edinburgh (reduce vehicle numbers by 2006, increase public transport use by 6% by 2006).
- Road safety (reductions in Killed and Serious Injury road crashes).
- Cycling (doubling journey-to-work, modal share rise for Safe Routes to School).

East Lothian Council

★★

- Road safety (40% reduction in road deaths by 2010).

6.4 Road traffic reduction targets?

Aberdeen City Council

★★★★★

- *"By 2011, to reduce the total number of vehicle trips within the Aberdeen Area, consisting of the City and its main catchment area of 20 miles around, by 20% of 1997 levels (a reduction of 29% on projected "do nothing" figures)."*
- *"By 2011, to reduce the total vehicle mileage travelled within the built-up area of Aberdeen by 20% of 1997 levels (a reduction of 30% on projected "do nothing" figures)."*

City of Edinburgh Council

★★★★★

- Whole city: stabilise at 1996 levels by 2005 and 10% reduction by 2010.
- City Centre: reduce by 10% by 2005 and 30% by 2010.

Glasgow City Council

★★★

- 10% reduction in the rate of growth of private car traffic by 2005.
- 30% reduction in the rate of growth of private car traffic by 2015 (both based on 1998 levels).
- City Centre core traffic to be reduced by 20% by 2003.
- 50% reduction in traffic around Central Station area by 2002.

West Lothian Council

★★★

- *"The historical traffic growth shows no signs of abating. The consequences of measures adopted by adjacent local authorities and strategic road authorities will have a significant impact on overall traffic flows."*
- Aims to reduce the number of vehicles entering Edinburgh from West Lothian over the morning peak period by 200 vehicles in 2006.

East Lothian Council

★

- *"Fixed targets have not yet been established."* Committed to further monitoring of traffic flows, with future objectives to stabilise traffic levels.
- Acknowledges that the A1 dualling will further increase traffic levels.

6.5 A shift away from traffic-generating road schemes?

West Lothian Council

★★★

- Promotes M9 extension to Forth Road Bridge (to replace A8000) as Scottish Executive trunk road.

City of Edinburgh Council

★★

- *"Will in general not support the construction of new road capacity in, around, or leading to the City"*
- Promotes M9 extension to Forth Road Bridge (to replace A8000) as Scottish Executive trunk road.
- *"Could support" A68 Dalkeith Northern Bypass "subject to a review of its proposed scale."*

East Lothian Council

★★

- *"Improvements will be carried where there is or may be a road safety problem in the future but these are likely to be relatively small-scale schemes."*
- Supports Scottish Executive plan to dual A1 between Haddington and Dunbar. Accepts that *"the recent dualling schemes have led to an increase in traffic volumes."*

Aberdeen City Council

-

- *"By 2010, to have in place a Western Peripheral Route around the City as a key element of the Transportation Strategy."*
- Local Transport Strategy doesn't provide justification for road-building of this magnitude (cost of road project estimated at over £80 million).
- The Sustainable Transport Study for Aberdeen (1998) indicated that the road would have minimal impact in reducing traffic levels; furthermore, this study did not address traffic generation impacts that would be expected from road construction on the edge of an already congested urban area.

Glasgow City Council

-

- Supports the 'East End Regeneration Route.'
- Promotes the M74 Northern Extension, the largest urban motorway project in Britain, but fails to provide any justification for the scheme, and does not demonstrate that alternative solutions have been examined in line with Scottish Executive guidance.

6.6 Implementation programme?

West Lothian Council

★★★★★

- Clear tabulation of current council spend on transport.
- Clear tabulation (and mapping) of potential schemes with project costs, timeframe for implementation and potential funding sources.
- Much of investment based on Edinburgh road user charging.
- Posits scenario based on central government investing in modal shift towards sustainable transport.

City of Edinburgh Council

★★★★★

- Sets out detailed "Base Strategy" (current levels of capital allocation) with variants of "Preferred Strategy" (dependent on road user charging revenues and central government support).
- Costs rather aggregated. Projected cost of specific interventions not clearly identified.

Aberdeen City Council

★★

- Sets out potential funding sources, although rejects consideration of road user charging.
- Calls for major increase (doubling) in funding without indicating priorities if this level of funding is not available.
- Doesn't tabulate current or future spend by mode of transport.
- Doesn't tabulate costs, timescale or funding sources for future projects.

East Lothian Council

★★

- Basic table of programmed council capital programme.
- Doesn't identify specific interventions: *"Individual schemes will be programmed when the financial plan is approved by the Council and will be subject to review during the year."*

Glasgow City Council

★★

- Sets out detailed implementation plans, but:
- Doesn't tabulate current or future spend by mode of transport.
- Doesn't tabulate costs, timescale or funding sources for future projects.
- Rejects road user charging which is *"considered to be impractical in the wider Glasgow area, and superfluous in the city centre core."*
- Favours further analysis of scope for Workplace Parking Levy (subsequently dropped from Transport Bill by the Scottish Executive).

6.7 “Coherence of strategy” and Appraisal?

City of Edinburgh Council

★★★★★

- Recommended interventions follow Visions and Objectives closely.
- Sustainable transport interventions should help towards traffic reduction aims.
- Has section on South East Scotland Transport Partnership (SESTRAN) and regional linkages.
- Conducts (subjective) appraisal of identified interventions.

West Lothian Council

★★★★★

- Recommended interventions follow Vision and Objectives closely.
- Sustainable transport interventions should help towards traffic reduction aims.
- Discusses SESTRAN linkages.
- Conducts (subjective) appraisal of identified interventions.

East Lothian Council

★★★

- Recommended interventions generally follow overall Objective.
- Advocacy of A1 road-building runs counter to desire to minimise car use.
- Has section on SESTRAN and regional linkages.
- No appraisal attempted.

Aberdeen City Council

★★

- Recommended interventions generally follow Vision and Objectives closely, but with one major exception – the commitment to a road-building programme.
- Sustainable transport interventions should help towards traffic reduction & modal shift targets.
- Some mention of regional context.
- No appraisal of respective merits of different projects.
- No prioritisation based on different levels of funding.

Glasgow City Council

★★

- Recommended interventions generally follow Vision and Aims closely, but with major exceptions e.g. the modest modal share target and the commitment to a massive road-building programme.
- Makes no linkage with the SACTRA findings on transport and local economic regeneration highlighted in the Scottish Executive guidance.
- Sustainable transport interventions should help towards traffic reduction targets.
- Has (very short) section on West of Scotland Transport Partnership (WESTRANS) and does discuss the importance of regional linkages.
- No appraisal of respective merits of different projects.
- No prioritisation based on different levels of funding.

6.8 Final Score

1.	West Lothian Council	29	(out of 35)
2.	City of Edinburgh Council	28	
3.	Aberdeen City Council	21	
4.	Glasgow City Council	19	
5.	East Lothian Council	16	

7. Funding sustainable transport

Does any of the above really matter if finance is not forthcoming?

It is true that finance is available from a number of sources - for example:

- Scottish Executive funds: Public Transport Fund, Integrated Transport Fund, Rural Transport Fund, Freight Facilities Grants, Track Access Grants.
- Local authorities: legislation in Transport (Scotland) Act gives opportunity for local authorities to raise road user charging revenues.
- Strategic Rail Authority funds: Rail Passenger Partnership, Infrastructure Investment Fund.

However, it is a flaw in the Local Transport Strategy set-up that there is no strong link between LTS preparation and the likelihood of securing funding. As such, there is little incentive for local authorities to do more than draw up the minimum required, however vague and incompatible with national guidance.

8. Delivering sustainable transport

It must be questioned whether Local Transport Strategies are in any way meaningful when investment priorities - at both local government and Scottish Executive level - often follow the demands of powerful vested interest groups rather than matching policy commitments with action.

The Labour Party, in its manifesto for the 1999 elections, set out its "*biggest challenge*" as the creation of "*a high quality, accessible and affordable public transport system.*" Yet the principle new investments in transport since the election have been in new trunk road building.

Key principles

Firstly, it is essential that we see investment follow **policy objectives**.

Secondly, it is essential that investment provides **value for money**.

The aspirations of those wanting better transport **will not be realised while the Scottish Executive continues to throw money at new trunk roads rather than investing in sustainable transport**. This policy runs counter to its claims to promote sustainable transport; it certainly means that its claims to "integrated transport" have been devalued to the point of meaninglessness.

It must be remembered that the Scottish Executive's flagship transport investment is a M74 Northern Extension to be driven into the heart of Glasgow - not the step-change in the quality of public transport promised in Labour's various policy commitments. At £250 million for just five miles of motorway, and with no credible assessment of alternatives having been done, **there is little indication that the Scottish Executive treats value for money considerations with any seriousness**.

If this is the behaviour of the Scottish Executive, why should local authorities be any more responsible? *They are being set a very bad example by the Scottish Executive.*

9. Conclusions

- 1. The policy framework set for the local authorities is good.**
- 2. Some local authorities have taken the new policy framework seriously** - while others continue to pursue the outdated and discredited approach of "predict and provide" for demand for use of road space.
- 3. Sustained investment programmes are needed** to support those local authorities responsible enough to aim at long-term sustainable transport objectives.
- 4. It is essential that available funds are directed to investments which can meet policy aims** and which are **value for money** - and not thrown away on prestige projects which can be counterproductive.
- 5. Leadership - not just talk - is required from the Scottish Executive.** We now have a gross mismatch between an Executive which talks about "sustainable" and "integrated" transport yet delivers road-building above all else.

TRANSform Scotland was launched in November 1997. Our sixty-eight member organisations - including transport operators, local authorities, national environment campaigns and local transport groups - support the development of sustainable transport policies and structures for Scotland.

TRANSform Scotland seeks to reduce the need for intrusive movement by transforming the way:

- ♦ **people travel**
- ♦ **goods are moved**
- ♦ **we plan, develop and use our cities, towns and countryside**
- ♦ **our economy operates, by improving access while reducing the need for transport.**

TRANSform Scotland
72 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh, EH6 5QG
tel: 0131 467 7714; fax: 0131 554 8656
e-mail: campaigns@transformscotland.org.uk
web: <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk>

Our membership currently comprises the following sixty-eight organisations:

Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeen Friends of the Earth
Caledonian MacBrayne
Campaign for Borders Rail
Capital Rail Action Group
CARE80
City of Edinburgh Council
Clydesdale Rail Action Group
The Cockburn Association
Colin Buchanan & Partners
ctc Scotland
Dumfries and Galloway Council
Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce & Enterprise
English, Welsh & Scottish Railway
Fife Friends of the Earth
FirstGroup plc
Forward Scotland
Friends of the Earth (Edinburgh)
Friends of the Earth Scotland
Glasgow for People
Glasgow Healthy City Partnership
Go Bike! Strathclyde Cycle Campaign
Great North Eastern Railway
Highland Cycle Campaign
Joint Action Against M74
Light Rail Transit Association (Edinburgh)
Light Rail Transit Association (Glasgow)
Lothian Community Transport Services
Lothian Buses plc
Lothian Safe Routes
Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce
Motorcycle Action Group (Scotland)
Motor Cycle Industry Association Ltd.
No Alignment Action Group
Pedal Power, the Scottish Borders Cycle Campaign
Pedestrians Association Edinburgh Branch
Perth and Kinross Cycle Campaign
Public Health Association Scotland
Rail Action Group, East of Scotland
Rail Users' Consultative Committee for Scotland
Railtrack Scotland
Railway Development Society (Scotland)
Railway Engineering Associates Ltd.
Road Traffic Reduction Campaign (Scotland)
RSPB Scotland
ScotRail Railways Ltd.
Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance
Scottish Association for Public Transport
Scottish Borders Environment Partnership
Scottish Citylink Coaches Ltd.
Scottish Environmental Education Council
Scottish Green Party
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Scott Wilson Railways (Scotland) Ltd.
SERA Glasgow & West of Scotland Branch
SERA Scotland
The Spaven McCrossan Partnership
Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign
Stagecoach Holdings plc
Sustrans Scotland
Tayside Foundation for the Conservation of Resources
Transport 2000
Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
Transportation Management Solutions
The University of Edinburgh
Virgin Trains
West Lothian Council
WWF Scotland