



FOR A HAPPIER,
HEALTHIER SCOTLAND

Consultation Response

Sustainable Transport CPG Call for evidence: Decarbonising public transport

15/8/23

If you have any questions about this response, please contact our policy team:
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Who We Are

Paths for All is Scotland's walking charity. Established in 1996, we work in partnership with 30 national organisations with a shared vision of a healthier, happier, greener Scotland, where everyone can be active every day. Walking is the easiest and most accessible way to be active, and our work to change the way people move, travel, and enjoy life in Scotland is focused on the following three themes:

- Walking is for everyone.
- Walking is for everywhere.
- Walking is for every day.

Our [strategy](#) sets out our vision for tackling physical inactivity, poor mental health, increased health and transport inequalities and the climate emergency.

Our Response

Section 1: Decarbonisation strategy and priorities

1.1 What are the primary benefits of pursuing a zero-carbon public transport system (e.g. in terms of transport operations, the environment, public health, society/communities, and the economy)? Do you see any drawbacks of decarbonisation? *As far as possible, please provide an evidence base to support your views.*

There is a pressing existential need to address the climate emergency. Addressing the climate emergency also has the potential to deliver on the other priorities of equality and health and wellbeing. Transport is now Scotland's biggest sectoral challenge in relation to climate. A zero-carbon public transport system is needed to address this.

Emissions from transport have increased each year since 2010, with a further 2% increase overall in 2016. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/reducing-emissions-in-scotland-2018-progress-report-to-parliament/> Scottish Transport Statistics show that in 2019 (the most recent year available) road transport made up 66% of transport greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 14 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

The Scottish Parliament has passed a climate law for Scotland, with stronger targets and commitment to increasing action in the next decade. There is an intent to cut emissions by 75% by 2030.

[https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Climate%20Change%20\(Emissions%20Reduction%20Targets\)%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill30BS052019.pdf](https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Bills/Climate%20Change%20(Emissions%20Reduction%20Targets)%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill30BS052019.pdf)

Given these pressures there is a need to make very significant progress on reducing emissions from transport.

We joined with other Active Travel NGOs to call for the National Transport Strategy to prioritise walking, cycling and public transport.

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/news/news-post/walking-and-cycling-charities-call-for-an-end-to-road-building>

Some policies are clearly more important than others – dictated by the existential climate crisis and human health priorities that we face.

For example:

- Provide a transport system which promotes and facilitates travel choices which help to improve people's health and wellbeing.
- Reduce the transport sector's emissions to support our national objectives on air quality and climate change.
- Facilitate a shift to more sustainable modes of transport for people and commercial transport.
- Plan our transport system to cope with the effects of climate change.

1.3 What should be the immediate priorities in decarbonising public transport (short-run; within the next 1-2 years), and which interventions might be better phased for the medium-run (say 3-5 years) and the long-run (say 5-15 years)? For example, you may want to comment on issues such as: energy supply, fuel & vehicle technologies, infrastructure requirements, or economy-wide issues such as the labour force and skills.

There needs to be stronger links with walking (and wheeling) and public transport.

There should be a presumption in favour of using and supporting transport modes as far up the sustainable transport hierarchy as possible.

Demand management tools should be used to reduce travel needs in the first place and/or redistribute travel demand in space and time.

A top priority must be to create a transport system where travellers choose walking, wheeling, cycling and/or public transport for everyday journeys over the private car (conventional, hybrid and electric).

The land use planning system and the National Transport Strategy must be more closely aligned than is currently the case. In the words of the renowned urban planner, Brent Toderian, 'The best transportation plan is a great land use plan'. The development of the NTS must be coordinated with the National Planning Framework (NPF4) – they should be mutually supportive.

Section 2: Decarbonisation and the economy

2.1 What economic opportunities would be afforded by pursuing decarbonisation of Scotland's public transport (e.g. manufacturing base, employment)?

Our response to the climate issue also relies on outcomes that fall under the other priority headings – e.g., affordable, reliable, easy to use sustainable travel, making healthy travel choices, making our communities great places to live.

We should focus on sustainable economic growth rather than sustained economic growth. Making the economy prosper in a sustainable way will improve indicators for the other priorities. National wellbeing indicators may be more appropriate than economic ones if we are to tackle climate change.

Traditional economic measures are failing us – they drive climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequalities. We need to shift to measures of health and wellbeing, social justice, and reduced inequality. The National Performance Framework is a start at this approach. The National Performance Framework also incorporates the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Investment decisions need to reflect these ambitions, which will mean moving away from hugely expensive road building projects which have been proven to increase car use and are contrary to the need to address climate change. At the same time, we should support public / sustainable transport investment projects. A shift to smaller scale, more local sustainable projects can also potentially spread the benefits more widely across communities.

We must also look very critically at how future infrastructure investment will contribute to achieving reductions in emissions and improving the quality of life of people in Scotland. There is a very real risk that calls for small scale, local intervention are drowned out by the lobbying power of the transport and construction sectors.

There should be a link to the Place Principle and 20-minute neighbourhoods. The Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed to adopt the Place Principle to help overcome organisational and sectoral boundaries, to encourage better collaboration and community involvement, and improve the impact of combined energy, resources, and investment. The 20-minute neighbourhood concept is embedded in the implementation of NPF4.

2.5 Given current financial circumstances, do you have views on how the decarbonisation of the Scottish transport system can and should be financed?

We believe that we need to look at finding better ways of making complex decisions - adopting a systems approach to decision making and so avoiding decisions in one policy area contradicting or having a negative impact in other policy areas. We consider that improving how decisions are made, rather than geography, may be the biggest priority for transport governance.

National, regional and local transport authorities' structures and budgets should be realigned to the transport hierarchy and move modal share as far up the transport hierarchy as possible. To use Brent Todarian's words again, 'The truth about a city's aspirations is not found in its vision. It's found in its budget'.

A 'one size fits all' approach will not work well. For example, urban and rural transportation needs and challenges can be very different. Pricing of public transport £ per mile will be variable across the country.

Section 3: Overcoming barriers to decarbonisation

3.1 What are the key barriers to public transport operators in moving to a decarbonised fleet (buses, trains, ferries)? How can these barriers be mitigated?

We must prioritise actions that reverse the decline in bus patronage. There has been significant investment in rail, which is welcome, but a woeful lack of investment in buses. We should think of the whole journey – the walk/ wheel / cycle to and from the bus and bus station/stops/infrastructure, as well as the bus journey itself. Bus travel has potentially a much greater reach than rail travel (20% of journeys are by rail, 70% by bus).

Section 4: Supporting materials

Promotion of walking is part of the response to the climate challenge, and is closely linked to public transport.

Benefits derived from measures primarily to increase use of public transport and reduce carbon emissions can also bring significant benefits to health and the environment. There is a good economic case for more walkable streets and places.

The majority of Scottish adults either 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' that they like to walk because of its benefits to their health, because it helps them to relax or because it is good for the environment (78%, 72% and 62% respectively). National survey of attitudes and barriers to walking in Scotland

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/mediaLibrary/other/english/paths-for-all-national-survey---attitudes-and-barriers-to-walking-in-scotland.pdf>

Even with the currently relatively low modal shares, there can be substantial health and economic benefits from active commuting. In 2011 the annual health economic value of walking commuting in Scotland was calculated to be EUR 700.2 million (annual) and EUR 5619.3 million over 10 years, for cycling these figures were EUR 79.8 million and EUR 640.2 million respectively ([Baker, G., et al., 2021](#)) It was also estimated that walking commuting prevented 173.3 premature deaths in 2011, where cycling commuting prevented 19.8.

It's the cleanest form of transport. The pandemic changed work, travel and recreation patterns and we have a chance to make these positive changes stick. We'll be supporting communities and local authorities to enable behaviour change within the population, create good environments for walking and wheeling with effective and affordable public transport connections and champion planning and policy which makes walking a natural choice for short daily journeys.

Step it up - Paths for All's Strategy

To achieve real change, our ambitious strategy is structured around the four key objectives in the WHO Global Action Plan for Physical Activity. Our strategy also contributes to and is informed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for Scotland and Scotland's National Performance Framework.

1. Creating a walking society

Changing social norms and increasing positive attitudes towards walking.

2. Creating walking environments

Making places and spaces safe and attractive for walking and wheeling.

3. Creating active people

Encourage behaviour change and participation in daily activity through the right programmes, infrastructure and community opportunities.

4. Creating walking systems

Strengthening leadership, partnerships and policy to make Scotland a walking nation.

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/about/strategy>

The National Walking Strategy

Let's Get Scotland Walking - the National Walking Strategy sets out a vision where everyone benefits from walking as part of their everyday journeys, and everyone has access to welcoming and safe environments to walk in. The strategy's action plan has the backing of a wide range of partners - from local authorities to third sector organisations and is being delivered by these partner organisations, facilitated by Paths for All. The Strategy is currently under review.

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/47993/national-walking-strategy.pdf>



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