



The Independent Budget Review: Initial Call for Contributions

Response from Transform Scotland

Monday 12th April 2010

1 About Transform Scotland

- 1.1 Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance. We campaign for a more sensible transport system, one less dependent on unsustainable modes such as the car, the plane and road freight, and more reliant on sustainable modes like walking, cycling, public transport, and freight by rail or sea. We are a membership organisation bringing together rail, bus and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation organisations; local environment and transport campaign groups; and individual supporters.

2 The need to prioritise investment in areas that reduce greenhouse gas emissions

- 2.1 We welcome the recognition in the Remit for the Review that responding to climate change should be a consideration. With the Scottish Government committed to delivering a 42% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, there will need to be a major realignment of public expenditure in favour of measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and away from those that create additional emissions.
- 2.2 In order to meet this challenge, the most effective interventions in financial terms will be those which require least in the way of expensive infrastructure – for example, the widespread introduction of travel planning, the introduction or increase in parking charges, reductions in road speeds, and introduction of measures to improve the quality of bus services (such as quality contracts or statutory partnerships). The report ‘Mitigating Transport’s Climate Change Impacts’, published by the Scottish Government in August 2009, supports measures such as these in a series of Marginal Abatement Cost Curves, which analyse a variety of interventions for effectiveness in terms of abatement of climate change emissions. Clearly, in order to reduce emissions from transport during a period of budget restrictions, these are the measures which should be focused on and spending in these areas should be protected, and indeed increased.

3 The need to prioritise investment in areas that enhance public health

- 3.1 Secondly, in order to deliver against public health and obesity targets, Transform Scotland calls for the Scottish Government to move to levels of spending on walking and cycling measures closer to those found in other European countries. The Scottish Parliament’s Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee report on its inquiry into active travel (published on 26/03/10) supports this call for additional spending on active travel. In particular, the report says that “the Scottish Government’s cycling targets would be rendered meaningless if its aims were not backed up by adequate levels of finance”.
- 3.2 Spending on these measures must be protected during the forthcoming budgetary tightening. There has been some anecdotal evidence that levels of investment in walking and cycling have fallen since the implementation of the Concordat between the Scottish Government and local authorities – and, as such, we believe that this is an area that merits further attention.

4 Where public expenditure should be cut in order to assist meeting spending limits – and deliver on climate change and public health imperatives

- 4.1 Clearly, there are other areas in which spending will have to be sacrificed in order to protect expenditure on areas which support the reduction of climate change emissions from transport. The Scottish Government has committed itself to an extensive road-building programme which directly contradicts the stated desires to reduce climate change emissions, and Transform Scotland feels that this is where the axe should fall. Specifically we would refer you to the objection submitted by the ForthRight Alliance to the Forth Crossing Bill Committee which, *inter alia*, presents how the Scottish Budget would save £2,000 million by fixing the existing Forth Road Bridge rather than wasting money on an unpopular, unsustainable and unnecessary Second Forth Road Bridge.¹

5 Maintaining our existing asset base in transport

- 5.1 A final set of comments that we would like to make concerns the maintenance of the existing asset base in transport.
- 5.2 As we have been led to believe that it is good business practice to maintain one's existing asset base as the utmost priority before expanding that asset base, we have for some time been puzzled by the apparent insistence that funds be available for major new transport infrastructure projects when it is very often the case that funds are not available for maintaining the *existing* asset base.
- 5.3 A first example we would cite is the condition of the Glasgow Subway. Recent news reports² have suggested that closure of the Subway is a genuine option being considered – and principally because there has not been sufficient investment in the infrastructure of the system. We find the proposition that Scotland's own metro system be closed an astonishing one: it would indeed be a national embarrassment should we find ourselves in the position of closing such an important asset in our largest city.
- 5.4 The second example we would like to cite is that of road maintenance. While this issue is normally framed in terms of the needs of car users, good road surfaces are probably of higher importance for cyclists, while, if the term is taken to include pavement maintenance, then it is also a high priority for people travelling on foot. It is often reported that there is a multi-billion road maintenance backlog in Scotland, while it is understood that the recent severe winter will have substantially added to that backlog. In that context, we find it surprising that there is no more concerted effort to bring the condition of our roads and pavements up to the conditions seen in countries such as Germany *before* consideration is given to expanding the existing road network.

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¹ See <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/forthXbill/inquiries/fcb-objections.htm> no 89.

² See e.g. <<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/transport-environment/closure-an-option-for-glasgow-s-outdated-underground-1.1015598?localLinksEnabled=false>>.

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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