Scottish Parliament Finance Committee
'Inquiry into Preventative Spend'
Evidence from Transform Scotland

Thursday 26th August 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 'Key Questions' – our views

1 ***How can public spending best be focused over the longer term in trying to prevent, rather than deal with, negative social outcomes?***

From a transport perspective, the key shift in government expenditure would be away from motorised transport – and new roads in particular – and towards encouragement of active travel. There also needs to be a greater focus on maintaining existing assets rather than constructing new ones.

2 ***What evidence can you provide from the UK and abroad to show that promoting preventative spending has been effective?***

There is considerable evidence that higher rates of walking and cycling could result in lower rates of obesity and mental and physical illness. Section 2.2.2 below cites that countries which have invested in walking and cycling infrastructure over a period of time have obesity rates which are less than half of Scotland's.

3 ***The Finance Committee has recommended that the Scottish Government continue to direct its spend towards preventative programmes. Which programmes should be prioritised?***

As stated under question 1 above, there priority must be given to encouragement of walking and cycling, and maintaining existing assets.

4 ***To what extent is preventative spending effective in addressing the financial impact of demographic change?***

Demographic change – an ageing population in particular – has serious consequences for spending. Encouraging healthy habits such as walking and cycling throughout the population will lead to people leading longer, healthier lives. Without this action, the government will be spending ever greater amounts on healthcare for the long-term sick.

5 ***What are the main barriers to trying to focus spending on preventing, rather than dealing with, negative social outcomes? Is a focus on preventative spending less likely in the current financial climate?***

Preventative spend tends to have long term effects which cannot be measured within the time of one parliamentary term. Committing to expenditure with no immediate measurable results may well appear unattractive during the current restrictions on public expenditure.

6 ***How do we ensure that we monitor the impact of preventative spending over the longer term and shape budgets accordingly?***

In any programme of preventative expenditure, there need to be clear objectives and these need to be monitored over a realistic timescale for the impact of the project. These objectives and timescales need to be based on objective research and evidence, not the political needs of the current parliament.

7 ***Is the effectiveness of a preventative spending programme influenced by whether the relevant services are provided by the public, private or voluntary sector?***

We have no detailed views on this topic.

3 Transport Interventions which prevent negative social outcomes

3.1 From a transport perspective, the key intervention that could be made by the Government would be the development of a national strategic programme of investment in the most sustainable forms of transport – walking and cycling – so that they can play a full part in steering transport on to a more sustainable course. However, preventative spend in maintaining the existing asset base and through the controls of the planning system also have an important part to play. Finally there is unnecessary and counter-productive expenditure – expenditure which could be avoided but which actively contributes to the negative outcomes the Government is seeking to prevent.

3.2 A National Programme of Investment in Walking and Cycling

3.2.1 These 'active travel' modes have the potential to make a major contribution to meeting targets for congestion alleviation, public health, social justice and the environment, as well as contributing to the Government's goal of 'sustainable economic growth' (see Appendix 1 for some of the key 'benefits' of active travel).

3.2.2 In particular, walking and cycling can make a major contribution towards tackling Scotland's obesity crisis. The Danes and the Dutch have cycle journey shares of 20-25%, which puts Scotland's 1% to shame[1] – and it is surely not accidental that these countries also have obesity levels which are less than half of Scotland's.[2] Matching conditions in the best countries in continental Europe would save the Scottish economy up to £2 billion a year in health care costs.[3] It would turn our towns and cities into pleasant, enjoyable spaces to spend time – and money – in, and enable rural populations to travel between communities more easily. It would benefit those in deprived areas the most, but would also boost tourism, cut congestion and improve quality of life for the whole country. Our natural environment would also benefit hugely, while a shift from individualised motorised transport towards more active travel would play a major role in reducing our climate change emissions and oil dependency.

3.2.3 We welcome the Scottish Government's aspirations for active travel[4] – but this is not as yet being backed up with the levels of financial support necessary to achieve the Government's ambitions.[5] The high rates of cycling observed in comparator countries such as the Netherlands and Denmark did not occur by aspiration alone: they came about because of sustained investment programmes over many years.[6] With around 99% of Scotland's transport budget devoted to motorised transport, it is not surprising that rates of walking and cycling remain so stubbornly low. The Scottish Parliament's Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee report on its inquiry into active travel (published 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". We believe it imperative that action be taken to correct this misallocation of scarce public resources.

3.3 Maintaining existing assets

3.3.1 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.

3.3.2 A first example we would cite is the condition of the Glasgow Subway. Recent news reports[7] 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 only 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.

3.3.3 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.

3.4 Planning

3.4.1 A key contribution that can be made by the private sector is by ensuring that developments are appropriately planned in order to minimise the need to travel and to facilitate whatever travel is necessary by sustainable means.

3.4.2 Travelling actively is made easier and relevant where paths, lanes and other facilities are well planned and connected; roads and crossings are safe and convenient for pedestrians and cyclists; street furniture such as benches, planters and shelters provide a pleasant and inviting environment for pedestrians; cycle parking is provided at origins and destinations, and all facilities are integrated into a seamless journey – to school, work, shops and recreation.

3.4.3 NPF2 and SPP17 are the two key policies in Scotland for transport and planning. While both have good things to say on active travel, new infrastructure is regularly planned in an 'active travel vacuum', with limited or poor provisions for walking and cycling, and with no regard for how people might travel actively to and from the development.

3.5 Un-necessary and counter-productive expenditure

3.5.1 Given that two-thirds of all transport trips are less than five km in length, and 40% are less than two km, journeys which could easily be walked or cycled, why does cycling's modal share remain around 1%? Why are 28% of the trips under 2km still being driven?[8] Most of the transport budget is allocated towards motorised transport on long linear journeys (a minority of trips) rather than short and local journeys (the majority of all transport trips).[9] Such spending encourages the perception that transport planning and infrastructure development should be focused principally on travelling far, fast and often.

3.5.2 The Scottish Government has committed itself to an extensive road-building programme which directly contradicts the stated desires to reduce climate change emissions, will increase dependence on private motor transport and exacerbate existing problems of obesity and ill-health. Transform Scotland feels that this expenditure should not be undertaken. 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.[10]

4 Conclusions

4.1 If Scotland is to deliver the policies to reduce carbon emissions, improve public health and change the quality of life of its citizens, it has to recognise that active travel has a vital contribution to make.

4.2 Resources should be concentrated on maintaining existing transport assets – roads, railways, pavements and paths – to the highest possible standards before embarking on ambitious expansion projects.

4.3 A planning system that only plans to transport people through resource-depleting modes will not address negative outcomes - the rising carbon emissions from the transport sector, community severance, increasing obesity and worsening health.

4.4 Dedicating 99% of the transport budget to resource-depleting, inactive modes compromises our ability to combat climate change, improve public health, and deliver sustainable economic growth.

4.5 Key recommendations:

- A national active travel plan;
- Focus on maintaining existing infrastructure;
- Plan developments that minimise travel and incorporate walking and cycling;
- Re-orientate the transport budget away from road-building.

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Appendix 1: Summary of the benefits of an increase in active travel

There is a vast literature on the benefits of active travel, so this overview will be necessarily brief.

i. Health

i.i. The Scottish population's physical activity levels are very low, with 67% of women, 59% of men, 26% of boys and 37% of girls not active enough to benefit their health.[11] It is recognised that an inactive lifestyle has serious health effects, both in terms of disease and disability, and for mental health. A recent report from the British Heart Foundation found that 72% of parents estimate that their children are taking the recommended 60 minutes of activity a day, whilst in reality only 13% of children do.[12] The easiest way to take exercise is as part of the daily routine, yet just half of Scotland's children walk to school and only 1% cycle. The Association of Directors of Public Health in its report Take Action on Active Travel clearly set out how more active lifestyles would bring huge benefits.[13]

i.ii. The Foresight report Tackling Obesities – Future Choices[14] estimates that if nothing is done to tackle obesity, it could cost the economy £5 billion by 2050. The Transform Scotland Trust report Towards a Healthier Economy[15] used a World Health Organisation methodology to analyse the impact of a shift to continental European levels of cycling in terms of health care costs avoided: it found that a 13% modal shift to cycling would result in an annual benefit of £1-2 billion to the Scottish economy.

i.iii. In 2008, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE), issued the first national, evidence-based recommendations on how to improve the physical environment to encourage physical activity. Among its seven key recommendations the guidance states:[16]
"Ensure pedestrians, cyclists and users of other modes of transport that involve physical activity are given the highest priority when developing or maintaining streets and roads. (This includes people whose mobility is impaired.) Use one or more of the following methods:

- Re-allocate road space to support physically active modes of transport (as an example, this could be achieved by widening pavements and introducing cycle lanes)
- Restrict motor vehicle access (for example, by closing or narrowing roads to reduce capacity)
- Introduce road-user charging schemes
- Introduce traffic-calming schemes to restrict vehicle speeds (using signage and changes to highway design)
- Create safe routes to schools (for example, by using traffic-calming measures near schools and by creating or improving walking and cycle routes to schools)."

This further clearly demonstrates the need to properly evaluate transport's impact on the public's health. Scotland's equivalent of NICE, SIGN, has adopted the NICE guidance recommendations.

ii. Economy

ii.i. The Eddington Transport Study, a major UK Government-funded study into links between transport and the economy, concluded that "Some of the best projects are small scale, such as walking and cycling[17] schemes".

ii.ii. More specifically, analyses by Sustrans, carried out in conjunction with The University of Leeds, found that Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCRs) for walking and cycling schemes can be very high (results were found in the range 15:1 to 33:1).[18] Active travel also plays a significant role in 'Smarter Choices' interventions (in particular school travel plans, workplace travel plans and personalised travel planning).[19] Programmes of Smarter Choices have been found to be effective in reducing congestion, with BCRs of 10:1 or higher.[20]

ii.iii. Improving local walking and cycling facilities will also benefit tourism. According to the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, mountain biking alone contributed £65m in 2007, and walking is a key activity undertaken by 49% of

visitors to Scotland.[21] Scottish Natural Heritage estimates that visits to the outdoors by Scottish residents in 2007 contributed £3.1 billion to the economy.[22]

iii. Social justice

iii.i. There are also social justice concerns with regard to the allocation of funding. Active travel investment would be of specific benefit to those who do not have access to a car.

iii.ii. The Scottish Household Survey 2007 shows the inequalities relating to car ownership across Scotland, [23] despite the fact that our settlements and services seem increasingly to be designed around the car. For example, 30% of Scottish households do not have access to a car and this rises to 57% of the most deprived households. Only 28% of journeys among low income households are made by car versus 65% of journeys in high income households. People living on low incomes spend a disproportionate amount of their income funding their car use. 33[24] And while just 24% of men do not have a driver's licence, 40% of women do not.

iii.iii.Lower income households tend also to suffer more from the impacts of traffic. For example, children in the lowest socio-economic groups are four times more likely to be killed as pedestrians than children in the highest socio-economic groups. Therefore, investment in active travel will tend to help the most disadvantaged groups as well as those suffering the highest health inequalities.

iv. Environment

iv.i. The transport sector is the fastest growing contributor to climate change emissions; it currently accounts for at least 24.4% of all CO2 emissions in Scotland, and most of this comes from road users. The emission reduction targets in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 are laudable, but they will not be met unless emissions from transport are tackled. A cost-effective way to do this would be to focus on those shorter journeys where walking or cycling provide a real alternative to the car. For example, according to the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland, in 2004/05, cars were used for 23% of all journeys under a mile and 57% of all journeys between 1-2 miles.

iv.ii. The recent Scottish Government Social Research paper Mitigating Transport's Climate Change Impact in Scotland demonstrated that active travel investment (including that within Smarter Choices measures) provided some of the best value in terms of carbon abatement.[25]

iv.iii. However, the Government's road-building programme seriously undermines its environmental credentials in as much as these projects generate large new volumes of climate change emissions.35[26] It is a sobering thought that the cost of the proposed Second Forth Road Bridge alone (£2,300 million) would pay for over a hundred years of active travel investment at current levels (£20 million per annum).

v. Quality of life

v.i. Better walking and cycling provision also makes a huge contribution to the quality of life of everyone in Scotland, in terms of improved public space, safer communities and reduced levels of air and noise pollution.

v.ii. Countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany have the kind of active travel behaviour which the Scottish Government should hope to emulate. With cycling as the main mode of transport for a large proportion of their populations, significant health benefits have ensued. But this situation did not come about by chance. Instead, sustained investment in walking and cycling over many years has established safe off-road and on-road cycling routes and pedestrianised areas which provide a real choice for people to use active travel modes.

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Appendix 2: References

1 Scottish Government (2009): Scottish Household Survey: Travel Diary 2007/2008 – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/ 933/0087945.pdf> reports cycling modal share as 1.0% in 2008 (see p.16, Table 1). However, walking remains the second most common mode of transport, with a 22% modal share.

2 ScotPHO (2007) Obesity in Scotland: An epidemiology briefing <http://www.scotpho.org.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?lID=4048&sID=3489> reports Scottish adult obesity as 25.5%. Bassett et al. (2008) Walking, Cycling, and Obesity Rates in Europe, North America, and Australia <http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/JPAH08.pdf> reports obesity levels in Denmark and The Netherlands as 12.2% and 8.1% respectively.

3 "Towards a Healthier Economy" published by Transform Scotland Trust, 8th December 2008, <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/towards-a-healthier-economy.aspx>

4 We note in particular the introduction to the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland consultation, the transport minister Stewart Stevenson MSP sets out the aspiration that "[b]y 2020, 10% of all journeys taken in Scotland will be by bike." – Scottish Government (2009): Cycling Action Plan for Scotland consultation – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/273788/0081826.pdf>.

5 We note the November 2008 report of the TICC Committee to the Finance Committee on the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2009-10. The TICC Committee recommended that there was a "strong case" for additional funding for walking and cycling measures. See <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/finance/reports-08/fir08-07-vol1.htm>.

6 "Civilising the Streets" published by Sustrans Scotland and Transform Scotland Trust, June 2010, looks at a number of comparator cities around Europe to examine why they have higher rates of active travel than are found in Scotland. The report concludes that there are a number of factors, but that expenditure as well as political commitment is necessary.

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

8 Scottish Government (2009): Scottish Household Survey: Travel Diary 2007/2008 – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/ 933/0087945.pdf>.

9 Scottish Government (2009): Scottish Household Survey: Travel Diary 2007/2008 – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/933/0087945.pdf> reports that "[t]he majority of journeys were less than 5 km. In 2007/2008, the average (mean) journey distance was 10 km, compared to a median of only 3 km. This showed that half of all journeys were 3km or less; in fact 40% were less than 2 km. Over half (53%) of all driver journeys were less than 5 km, with 28% less than 2km."

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

11 Scottish Government National Physical Activity Strategy website - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/health/Introduction>. Accessed on 23/11/09.

12 British Heart Foundation Scotland (2009): Couch Kids – <http://www.bhf.org.uk/publications/view_publication.aspx?ps=1001087>.

13 Association of Directors of Public Health (2008): Take Action on Active Travel – <http://www.adph.org.uk/news.php>.

14 Foresight Programme (2007): Tackling Obesities: Future Choices – <http://www.foresight.gov.uk/OurWork/ActiveProjects/Obesity/Obesity.asp>.

15 Transform Scotland Trust (2008): Towards a Healthier Economy – <http://www.transformscotland.org.uk/GetFile.aspx?ItemId=108>.

16 National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2008): Physical activity and the environment – <http://guidance.nice.org.uk/PH8/Guidance/pdf/English>.

17 HMSO (2006): The Eddington Transport Study – <http://www.dft.gov.uk/adobepdf/187604/206711/executivesummary.pdf>.

18 Sustrans website – <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/resources/research-and-monitoring/economic-appraisal-of-cycling-and-walking schemes>. Accessed on 23/11/09.

19 The Smarter Choices measures have been defined by the DfT as: (i) workplace travel plans, (ii) school travel plans, (iii) personalised travel plans, (iv) public transport information, (v) travel awareness campaigns, (vi) car clubs, (vii) car sharing schemes, (viii) teleworking, (ix) teleconferencing, and (x) home shopping. See Transform Scotland Trust (2009) Smarter Ways Forward – < http:// www.transformscotland.org.uk/smarter-ways-forward.aspx>.

20 Cairns, Sloman, Newson, Anable, Kirkbride & Goodwin (2004) Smarter Choices – Changing the Way We Travel: the final report of the research project 'The influence of soft factor interventions on travel demand' – <http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/smarterchoices/ctwwt/>.

21 Visit Scotland (2008): Tourism in Scotland 2007 – <http://www.visitscotland.org/tourism_in_scotland_2007-2.pdf>.

22 Scottish Natural Heritage (2009): Scottish Recreation Survey 2007 – <http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/321.pdf>.

23 Scottish Government (2009): Scottish Household Survey 2007-8 – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/ 283301/0085783.pdf>.

24 Sustrans Cymru (2008): Transport and social justice – <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/assets/files/Info%20sheets/FF46_info %20sheet.pdf>.

25 Atkins & The University of Aberdeen (2009): Mitigating Transport's Climate Change Impact in Scotland: Assessment of Policy Options – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/282791/0085548.pdf>.

26 Scottish Government (2009): Carbon Account for Transport – <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/08/27143705/0>.

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. Transform Scotland Limited is a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).

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