

TRANSPORT POLICY AND A SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

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At the time of the last abortive attempt to secure a Scottish parliament, transport could hardly have been described as a contentious political issue. Seventeen years on, the landscape has changed dramatically. The combination of unprecedented road traffic growth, and much greater awareness of the health and environmental impacts of the car and lorry, has stimulated widespread public concern. In contrast, the transport outlook of Scottish business interests and politicians largely remains dominated by the conventional wisdom that new infrastructure (and in particular, road-building) is crucial to economic prosperity.

In 1994, for the first time in Scotland, protestors marched against new road construction, following Strathclyde Region's decision to go ahead with the controversial M77 road through some of the most deprived estates in Glasgow. Meanwhile in the east of Scotland, the Forthright Alliance mobilised public and political opinion against a second Forth Road Bridge, and succeeded in persuading Secretary of State Michael Forsyth to shelve the scheme and concentrate initially on making better use of existing road capacity and investing in new rail services.

As the century draws to a close, and arguments about devolution once again dominate newspaper headlines, it is important that transport policy should be

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thoroughly debated. A devolved Scottish parliament would not have control over all the policy measures which determine the impact of transport on our lives, but it could play a key role in developing environmentally-sensitive transport systems which offer good levels of accessibility to all sections of the population as well as meeting the needs of business.

TRANSPORT AND THE UK POLITICAL AGENDA

A growing crisis

Transport is now central to concern about damage to the local and global environment. Road traffic volumes have increased sixfold in the last 40 years, and motor vehicles are now responsible for more air pollution than any other single activity of society. For the car owning majority, the pattern of life has changed enormously - travelling further and further afield to undertake work, leisure and shopping activities previously done closer to home. Car culture dominates society, leaving those without cars perceived as second-class citizens, often with significantly poorer and relatively more expensive public transport than they enjoyed 30 years ago.

Crucially, successive governments have viewed rising car ownership and use as signals of economic wellbeing. Substantial public expenditure has been directed towards upgrading and expansion of the road network, in an attempt to anticipate and meet demand, but in the process even more traffic has been generated. Meanwhile, investment in rail and bus services has declined both relatively and absolutely, typically determined by much tougher yardsticks than the cost-benefit analysis of motorists' time savings which are the primary justification for new roads. The car has been heavily promoted by the advertising industry, and traffic growth has also been encouraged through motorists' not having to meet the external costs imposed on society in the form of environmental damage, health impacts, accidents costs and congestion.

Despite Scotland's lower population density than England and the absence of a conurbation of the scale of Greater London, heavy traffic congestion does occur in and around Glasgow and Edinburgh, and nitrogen dioxide emissions in the Scottish cities - contributing to respiratory illness - frequently breach European Union limits. Sensitive rural areas such as the Cairngorms and Glencoe are now just a few hours drive from Central Scotland, and, in the absence of traffic-restraint measures which National Parks like the Lake District have been able to implement, there is a growing danger that the

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pressure of numbers arriving by environmentally-unfriendly transport will destroy much of the beauty and peace which has traditionally drawn visitors to these areas.

Traditional policy responses

The response of the Scottish Office to transport problems has traditionally been limited to roads and ferries (and more recently Highlands and Islands airports), with priorities and projects set down by their officials. Through the 1980s and early 1990s, the Conservative government accepted the continuing growth of traffic and tried to build its way out of congestion. The 1985 deregulation of local bus services failed to stem the long-term decline in bus patronage, and fares increased beyond the rate of inflation. The combination of a highly liberalised road haulage sector, with very few barriers to entry, and pressure to reduce public spending on enforcement of regulations, has created an intensely competitive environment characterised by widespread abuse of road transport laws.

The policy responses of Scottish local government to growing road congestion have inevitably been constrained by central government policy, and by the increasing limitations on local authority powers and finance. The deregulation of local bus services, in particular, removed a large measure of the capacity to co-ordinate and improve public transport. The local rail network has, however, enjoyed a range of improvements through Regional Council capital funding in partnership with British Rail and latterly Railtrack. Fifty new stations opened throughout Scotland between 1984 and 1994, more than half in Strathclyde through investment by the Passenger Transport Executive on behalf of the Regional Council.

Unfortunately, the process of rail privatisation which began in 1993 has combined with local government re-organisation to bring service and infrastructure improvements in Scotland to a virtual halt, after more than a decade not just of station re-openings, but also of modest extensions of the network and replacement of most of the life-expired rolling stock fleet (albeit with basic Sprinter units of lower capacity and generally inferior comfort).

Changing Government agendas

The first hint that the policy bias towards road-building was likely to change came in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, published in 1994 as the Government's response to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. The Strategy

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outlined a new framework for transport policy, ensuring that users pay the full social and environmental costs of their transport decisions.

In April 1996, in response to the report of the 1994 Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution - which called for a major change in transport policy - the Department of Transport published a Green Paper for England, **Transport: the Way Forward**, emphasising priority for more effective management of existing roads and minor improvements such as bypasses. Yet, while the DoT had unveiled a 34% cut in the English roads programme in late 1995, the Scottish Office was promising an increased programme - £228m in 1995/96 - concentrated mainly on the core network of inter-urban trunk routes.

In May 1996, the Scottish Office unveiled its long-awaited **Draft National Planning Policy Guideline on Transport and Planning**. This placed emphasis on development locations capable of being served by alternatives to the car, but lacked definition of the means by which sustainable transport policies can be funded and implemented in practical local authority programmes, an omission which may be addressed in the Scottish Office transport policy paper due for release in late 1996 or early 1997.

The local authority response

Until the early 1990s, only English local authorities had demonstrated any serious willingness to take on board the radical rethink long advocated by transport and environment pressure groups. In 1992, however, Labour-controlled Central Regional Council unveiled a dramatic new policy called **All Change!** under which road schemes would be cut from over 80% of the transport capital budget to just 32%, with spending on public transport, walking and cycling rising to 60% - including re-opened rail routes to Alloa and Grangemouth plus six other new stations.

The admirable principles of **All Change!** and the support of lobby groups were not enough to carry through the package of policies without consistent leadership among council officers and members. By the time that Central Region disappeared, the rail commitment looked sadly tarnished. Faced with additional infrastructure costs after the Government's creation of Railtrack, the Council had shelved both route re-openings and opened just one new station.

Edinburgh District Council ignored sustainability by promoting the edge-of-city Gyle development, which by 1996 had become the major cause of traffic

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pollution in the west of the city, with 84% of trips to the shopping centre made by car. In Strathclyde the prescription was very much 'more of everything' with extensions to the suburban rail network largely neutralised by a strong continuing commitment to motorway building. In mid-1996, Glasgow City councillors cut across local Labour Party policy by reconfirming support for the controversial M74 extension through the south side of the city.

The new transport debate in Scotland

Long-established pressure for change from transport and environment lobby groups has now been joined by grassroots opposition to major road-building by affected communities along proposed motorway routes. Meanwhile Lothian Regional Council, then the City of Edinburgh unitary authority, took over the mantle of radical transport with its ambitious target of reducing car traffic in the city by 30% by 2010.

Growing evidence of changing priorities amongst policy-makers, business interests and planners was confirmed by the December 1995 Round Table on Scottish Transport, organised by the Scottish Transport Studies Group, which revealed strong support for higher transport taxation and road pricing in Scotland, provided that the proceeds could be used within Scotland both by regional partnerships and by a Scottish Office with integrated road and rail responsibilities. A similar consensus emerged from the five Focus Groups (comprising transport operators, academics and pressure groups) organised by the Scottish Office in an unprecedented round of consultation in early 1996, including support for corridor or area-based analysis for all major transport schemes, ensuring that alternatives to road-building are properly explored.

These consultations, and a major 1995 conference on transport organised by the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, also highlighted a growing questioning of the received wisdom that a high level of road investment is essential to avoid the marginalisation of Scotland's 'peripheral' economy. As the policy document following the Scottish Chambers conference noted,

various studies undertaken over the past 20 years have found little correlation between road investment and employment change and suggested that transport improvements can be a mixed blessing. On the one hand they make it easier for local firms to extend their markets and entice in new business. On the other hand, they can promote the

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centralisation of production and distribution operations, draining employment from more peripheral areas.

IS THERE A DISTINCTIVE SCOTTISH TRANSPORT AGENDA ?

The Scottish Constitutional Convention's final proposals set out in the report **Scotland's Parliament Scotland's Right** comment only briefly on transport and related issues, but do imply that there is a distinctive agenda:

Scotland has a relatively large export trade, for example, but one heavily dependent on a very narrow product base: chiefly computers and whisky ... It has to contend with the communications challenges inherent in a population distributed unevenly across a large land mass.

In particular, one can point to the costly extremes of congested routes in Central Scotland and long light-trafficked routes in difficult terrain to the North and parts of the South, which make solely commercial criteria inappropriate for planning and operating transport systems in Scotland.

Car ownership

The Scottish Office **Draft National Planning Policy Guideline on Transport and Planning** notes that over 40% of households in Scotland do not have a car. Because car ownership is well behind other parts of the UK, ownership has been growing faster in Scotland, by almost 45% between 1981 and 1993. Predominantly affluent commuter districts such as Gordon, Bearsden and Milngavie, and Eastwood had fewer than 20% of households without a car in 1991, whereas Monklands, Dundee and Clydebank all had over 50%, with Glasgow showing the highest Scottish figure of 65% without a car.

As the Scottish Office draft points out, a higher proportion of the Scottish population lives in small or medium-sized towns compared with England, which potentially helps to minimise the need for car ownership and use. The document also highlights the distinctive tradition and continuing attractiveness of tenemental style dwellings in the Scottish cities and larger towns 'which is neither dependent on nor fully compatible with high levels of car ownership'.

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Demography and economic geography

The Office for National Statistics classification shows that Scotland does have a higher proportion of its population in rural areas (excluding mixed urban and rural areas), with 20% compared to the British average of 11%. However, both Wales and South West England have a much higher rural proportion than Scotland. The special circumstance of the Highlands are often invoked as a justification for less car restraint than in more urbanised areas, but most people in the Highlands do not dwell in the countryside, but in busy growing towns and larger villages, on or near main roads, which should be able to support a reasonable level of public transport. At the 1991 Census, 71% of the Highland Region's population lived in localities of urban density with populations over 500.

A significantly higher proportion of the Scottish rail network is long-distance single-track rural route compared to England, and we are near the bottom of the European league for rail electrification, with just 23% of the network electrified, compared to a UK figure of 29% and a European average of 41%. Scotland is unusual within the UK in having a large proportion of its trunk roads of only single carriageway standard. This reduces average speeds and can encourage dangerous driving, but 'Route Action Plans' introduced by the Scottish Office in recent years along roads such as the A9 and A1 - involving crawler lanes, speed cameras and unmarked police patrols - have done much to ease traffic flow and improve safety without the high cost of dualling for relatively light traffic volumes.

In terms of sustainable transport policy, Scotland's location on the edge of north west Europe offers considerable scope for a switch of freight from road to rail, whose economics and service qualities are particularly suited to long hauls. The Central Belt is 400 miles from London, while the northernmost freight railhead at Georgemas Junction in Caithness - where a major rail-linked development is being planned by the freezer manufacturer Norfrost - is some 600 miles from the UK's main concentration of freight distribution centres in the English Midlands, and 800 miles from the mouth of the Channel Tunnel in France.

Public and political attitudes

There is of course more to the Scottish transport agenda than physical and economic geography - public and political attitudes lie at the heart of the potential for change. Traditionally, people in Scotland have been seen as less sensitive than, say, south east England, to environmental problems caused by

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traffic, and a Market Research Scotland opinion poll for **Scotland on Sunday** in April 1996 found that 51% of respondents thought that investment in road building was the most appropriate way to handle increasing traffic on roads, while 41% favoured investment in public transport. However, 58% of the sample also agreed that some form of restriction on the use of cars will eventually be desirable or essential.

A more participative and informing type of public consultation was undertaken by Central Regional Council as part of their 1993 introduction of the **All Change!** policy. At meetings with Community Councils, residents groups and other bodies, the public were asked to rank 17 different transport policy actions in order of priority. The top three public priorities proved to be improved road safety, maintaining the standard of existing roads, and better bus services, with improved roads and bridges 16th and 17th respectively. This reinforces research findings across Europe that policies giving priority to public transport, walking and cycling are far more popular with the public than politicians imagine.

As of July 1996, 23 of Scotland's 72 MPs - including all but one of the Liberal Democrats, and no Conservatives - had signed an Early Day Motion supporting the Road Traffic Reduction Bill jointly promoted by Friends of the Earth, the Green Party and Plaid Cymru Parliamentary Party - a somewhat higher proportion than for MPs from England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

PARTY POLITICAL TRANSPORT POLICIES FOR SCOTLAND

Policy in all political parties is moving towards more decentralisation of transport decision-making, and greater integration of public transport. However, given the likely constraints on public spending and the evidence that 'more of everything' transport policies inevitably favour the underpriced road mode, the most fundamental question relates to choice of financial priorities both within transport and between transport and other areas of public expenditure.

Labour Party

At the time of writing it is understood that the Scottish Labour Party is preparing its own transport policy document. Labour's 1996 document, **New Labour, New Life for Scotland**, has virtually nothing to say about transport, and the only specifically Scottish commitments are to 'appropriate ferry

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services for Scotland's island communities' and the maintenance of Caledonian MacBrayne as a public service.

At a British level, in 1994 the Labour Party adopted a new environmental policy which incorporated a moratorium on new road schemes while a full economic and environmental review of the roads programme is undertaken. In April 1996, transport spokesman Brian Wilson MP committed Labour to the relatively radical aim of doubling the volume of rail freight within one (UK) parliament. The national transport strategy **Consensus for Change**, published in June 1996, accepts the need for assessment and funding of road and public transport infrastructure to be put on a common footing, 'empowering local communities to find solutions to transport problems integrated across all modes of transport'.

What Labour does not spell out are any commitments to setting targets for road traffic levels or changing the balance of taxation to ensure that users pay their true costs, thereby encouraging a shift to environmentally-friendly modes. There is no indication that Labour's plans for Railtrack would ensure that both road and rail infrastructure strategy north of the border would rest with a Scottish Parliament.

Liberal Democrat Party

The Liberal Democrats have produced the most comprehensive and coherent transport policy by a mainstream political party north of the Border. Their 1994 document **A Transport Policy for Scotland** calls for planning measures which reduce the need for transport, and for a charging system that puts all modes on a level playing field. The scope for hypothecation of locally-raised transport taxes for use on local projects is also mooted.

The Liberal Democrats specifically criticise the Government's imbalance of transport investment towards roads, and float the idea of subsidies to be paid by the Scottish parliament to Railtrack for each passenger-mile and tonne-mile, on the basis of calculated net benefit on each route from keeping traffic off the roads. The need for enforcement of road haulage safety legislation is emphasised, as part of an overall policy to switch freight from road to rail.

A sensible distinction is made between rural communities and remote communities, arguing for the rural transport problem to be seen as part of a wider development strategy which helps to 'reduce the need for transport by supporting local shops and services and by promoting local employment'. To

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balance a shift in taxation towards the polluter, special dispensation would be made for rural road users, particularly in remote areas.

The document is weakest where it discusses 'integrating Europe's transport'. Having attacked the Government's bias towards roads, the Liberal Democrat policy then uncritically accepts all the road upgradings recommended by the Scottish Affairs Committee, in particular Scotland's links with Europe, citing 'full dual carriageway to motorway standards on the east to complete the A1'. The issue of value-for-money comparisons with lower cost alternatives which could produce better environmental and safety outcomes, while also easing traffic bottlenecks, is not explored.

While the Liberal Democrats appear to have absorbed many of the principles of sustainable transport policy, practical reactions to decisions in their own backyards too often paint a different picture - recent examples include active support for the M77 through Pollok by a LibDem Eastwood councillor, and the vigorous backing of the Newbury bypass in England by the town's LibDem MP.

Scottish National Party

The SNP's transport policy document is a confusing mix of contradictory priorities, which betrays a lack of understanding of transport. It argues for complete dualling of the A9, A96, A1 and A77, then states that it is important that 'we do all we can to get freight and passenger traffic off our roads'. The concept of road pricing is rejected until an efficient integrated public transport system is in place, but the possibility that road pricing might fund this improved system is not explored.

More electrification of the rail network is advocated, with public investment in the system being judged on environmental benefits. The SNP support more freight on rail, citing the past closure of rail freight terminals (while in public sector ownership) as 'one of the many reasons privatisation must be opposed' - a contradiction in itself, but also very much at odds with the industry perception that freight privatisation will actually lead to a major growth in rail traffic.

To be fair to the SNP, it has activists with a much stronger grasp of transport policy and its relationship to sustainable development than this document suggests. However, the party as a whole appears to be as split as Scottish Labour in its attitude to road building, with some activists and councillors being strong advocates of the M77, for example.

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The wider political dimension

A Scottish parliament elected by proportional representation would open up the prospect of smaller parties securing election. The Scottish Green Party is currently very marginalised, but could nevertheless play a significant role in a Scottish parliament in circumstances where the balance of power rested with smaller parties. The Greens support a reduction in travel - rather than a reduction in the rate of growth of travel - with an emphasis on decentralisation to improve the population's access by public transport, foot or bike, to key facilities. All major road-building is opposed - with the exception of bypasses of modest capacity - and Green activists have been playing an important part in opposition to new Central Scotland motorways and in promotion of the Road Traffic Reduction Bill.

Scottish Militant Labour councillors and members have also been very active in opposition to the M77 and M74 extension roads in Glasgow - highlighting the health and environmental consequences for some of the most deprived sections of society - and the left generally now has a more radical stance on transport than a decade ago. However, much activism in transport campaigning now lies beyond the reach of traditional party politics, the failure of which has stimulated the creation of the Real World coalition of over 30 UK-wide and Scottish voluntary and campaigning organisations, committed to raising the importance in political debate of environmental sustainability, social justice, the eradication of poverty and democratic renewal. The central transport objective of its **Action Programme for Government** is an integrated transport programme with the target of reducing road traffic by 10% from 1990 levels by the year 2010, as the first step towards deeper reductions.

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The Constitutional Convention's **Scotland's Parliament Scotland's Right** document states that 'the Parliament will be able to develop the sort of infrastructure the Scottish economy needs, by developing relevant and closely focused policy in areas like transport provision'. Specific transport and related powers listed in the document are

- transportation, including public passenger and freight services, and payment of subsidies to operators of services;
- roads, including provision, improvement and maintenance of streets, roads and bridges;

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harbours and boatslips;
inland waterways;
town and country planning and land use.

- in other words, areas of policy currently within the remit of the Scottish Office, but with no specific mention of railways, which largely rest with the Department of Transport in London.

The powers which are unlikely to come to a Scottish parliament naturally include those vested with the European Union, such as the harmonisation of vehicle emission standards and speed limits. The whole question of vehicle taxation (including company cars, the potential shift of emphasis from Vehicle Excise Duty to Fuel Duty, and the ultimate internalisation of transport's external costs in the tax system) is a crucial component of UK macro-economic policy, with an increasingly European dimension.

A consensus for change in Scotland?

A clear consensus on some core aspects of transport policy is emerging among transport interests in Scotland. It is widely accepted that the present rate of road traffic growth is unsustainable and that there has been inadequate policy co-ordination, both between transport modes and between transport and land use planning decisions. Other common strands of thinking include support for higher transport taxation and road pricing in Scotland, provided that decisions on the use of proceeds are also taken within Scotland (enabling the crucial combination of 'carrot' and 'stick' measures to ensure a more rational pattern of transport use), and the need for the Scottish Office to have full responsibility for rail as well as road infrastructure issues.

There is a recognition of the need for a more integrated approach to transport and land use, including a corridor or area based system of appraisal, where the various modal options are assessed on a consistent basis. However, a few vested interests still subscribe to a belief that we can road-build our way out of congestion, and there remain substantial differences of opinion on just how many road bottlenecks justify new build, and of what scale these should be.

A Scottish parliament seeking to continue the present Government shift towards sustainable transport principles, but taking this further with a stronger role for public intervention in the market and a range of key targets to stimulate and monitor progress towards sustainability, could endorse the following fundamental goals of transport policy:

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- to reduce the overall need for passenger movement, while increasing the share on foot, by cycle and by public transport;
- to reduce the overall need for freight movement, while increasing the share of rail and water modes;
- to reduce the environmental impact and damage to health caused by transport;
- to re-focus public spending to provide greater value-for-money in strengthening medium and long term economic prospects, as part of a sustainable development framework.

Organisation of Scottish transport

To achieve the kind of objectives outlined above, it is clear that the currently excessive fragmentation and division of transport and land use planning powers will have to be replaced by a more integrated approach to Scotland's needs, taking account of the many economic, social and environmental impacts of transport not recognised by the crude yardsticks of the market place.

A Scottish parliament should have effective power to develop a Scottish strategy for trunk road and rail development, and this would necessitate a transfer of rail responsibilities from the Department of Transport. The reality is that most, if not all, of the investment programme desirable to achieve a substantial shift from road to rail in Scotland will require the wider justifications produced by cost-benefit analysis - as routinely deployed for road investment - and consequent public sector financial assistance to Railtrack for specific development projects.

The role of the rail Franchising Director should be replaced by Scottish-based decisions, as is already the pattern for shipping and road services. Bus services should be reregulated, with competitive tendering for public transport remodelled along the lines of the Swedish system, enabling operators to compete fairly to provide the interlocking components of an integrated and stable network for set franchise periods, with quality thresholds modifying crude cost-cutting competition for contracts. A Scottish parliament could take control of the award of strategic rail and ferry contracts, with lower levels of government inviting tenders for local bus service networks and local enhancements to strategic rail, ferry and air infrastructure and services.

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The Scottish Office already has powers to award Freight Facilities Grants to encourage companies to invest in rail and inland waterways, but as of mid-1996, no grant had been awarded in Scotland since 1987. The scheme needs to be streamlined, enhanced, and extended to coastal shipping facilities, and for the sake of consistency the complementary Track Access Grant scheme for rail freight, which is currently administered throughout Britain by the Department of Transport, should be shifted to Scottish control north of the Border.

As enforcement of road transport safety and environmental regulations would be a key strand, together with fiscal policy and land use planning, in the development of an integrated transport strategy, there would also be a case for transferring other Department of Transport powers to Scotland, notably those of the Vehicle Inspectorate and the Traffic Commissioner for Public Service Vehicles and Heavy Goods Vehicles.

There should be a strong regional dimension in transport and land use decisions. Rather than simply replicating the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority arrangement - which involves control of rail services and non-commercial bus services, but no responsibility for road building, land use planning or economic development - new Transport and Planning Boards should be created throughout Scotland. Ideally these would encompass the majority of daily travel-to-work-and-shop journeys within a manageable territory. In Highland, Borders, and Dumfries and Galloway, the new unitary authority boundaries could suffice, but in the Central Belt, Tayside and Grampian, joint boards of grouped authorities would be required if a truly strategic approach is to be developed.

Transport taxation and targets

The current system of block grants from the Treasury to the Scottish Office and present local authority funding arrangements could not provide the strength of leverage on driver behaviour and modal shift which would be available through Scottish control of vehicle and fuel taxation and direct road pricing. However, given the extreme sensitivity of taxation policy within the Labour Party, it may be assumed that powers to vary vehicle and fuel duty in Scotland will not be forthcoming in the foreseeable future, unless a hung UK Parliament were to press such a policy on a Labour Government. More encouragingly, the scope for local authorities to introduce local road pricing schemes is attracting increasing interest, in particular from the City of Edinburgh Council, whose **Moving Forward** strategy is now in the vanguard of radical local responses to the transport crisis.

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As noted by David Begg (Chair of the City of Edinburgh Council's Transportation Committee, but writing in his capacity as a lecturer at Napier University):

What is so appealing about road pricing is that it has the potential to raise substantial sums of revenue which can, and should, be channelled into improving public transport ... The extra charge on motorists will make public transport more price competitive and the revenue ploughed into public transport can make it a cheaper, faster and a more reliable alternative.

(Begg 1993)

A Scottish parliament should ensure that local authorities (or joint Transport and Planning Boards) have the right - which may yet be conceded by the present Government - to retain road pricing revenues for locally-determined transport investment and subsidy.

The discredited 'predict and provide' system of road traffic forecasts should be replaced by a series of targets for passenger and freight movement, aiming initially to reduce the rate of growth of road traffic, then to stabilise traffic levels, and ultimately to secure reductions in line with sustainable development needs. While arbitrary targets can be a wasteful diversion, there is a good case for challenging but achievable national, regional and local targets on overall traffic levels, modal shift, air quality, road safety, public accessibility to facilities, and other crucial measures of progress towards sustainable transport objectives.

Urban passenger movement

The very large majority of journeys in Scotland take place in and around the towns and cities where 80% of the population live. With direct road pricing revenues, local authorities or joint boards would have the funds to pursue a wide range of transport improvements and service strategies. However, more substantial capital investment projects - which may also have an inter-regional or national role - will need financial assistance from a Scottish parliament's transport budget. These could include development of light rail systems in Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Glasgow CrossRail line, and a rail link to Glasgow Airport - some of which may already have their financing assured in advance of the presumed creation of a parliament by 1998 or 1999.

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With the limited exception of city centre pedestrianisation schemes, the rights of the pedestrian and cyclist have become an afterthought in most urban transport and development schemes over the last 40 years. In its guidance to local authorities on transport and land use planning, a Scottish parliament should insist on a presumption in favour of provision for walking, cycling and public transport ahead of the car, and of traffic calming and accident prevention schemes ahead of road-building. Minimum standards of quality for buses should also be introduced, with financial aid for provision of easily-accessible and fume-reducing bus designs.

Inter-urban passenger movement

Transport between Scotland's cities and larger towns - the strategic network crossing the boundaries of both local authority and any future joint board areas - would be the main focus of the transport policies of a Scottish parliament.

Labour is already committed to a fundamental review of the entire UK roads programme, and it may be thought unlikely that a Labour Government would not enshrine at an early stage the principle - now effectively endorsed by Scottish Office ministers in the format of consultations on the extended M80 and widened M8 route corridor proposals - of assessing all road schemes in comparison with alternative investment packages incorporating sustainable strategies such as rail electrification, bus priority measures and improvement to existing roads.

Strategic investment in rail infrastructure would be facilitated by common criteria for investment appraisal, so that road and rail are competing on a level playing field. The practical outcome of such an approach should be - if wider economic, social and environmental costs and benefits are fully recognised - to bring about a major shift from road to rail spending.

Energy source flexibility, air pollution, operating cost and service quality arguments point towards a rolling programme of rail electrification for long-awaited schemes such as the routes from Glasgow to Edinburgh (via both Falkirk and North Lanarkshire), and from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Aberdeen, and possibly also Inverness. To allow rail to fulfil a wider role it will also be important to plug the main gaps in the Scottish rail network, including the provision of a more direct route from Stranraer to Dumfries and the Dornoch Bridge link to Caithness, plus the re-opening of key inter-regional lines such as Stirling to Alloa and Dunfermline and Edinburgh to Galashiels. Certain lines in Scotland are suffering from lack of track capacity,

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and this should be addressed by upgrading of some predominantly single-track routes, notably between Aberdeen and Inverness. A number of these schemes could of course already be under construction or have their funding in place by the time a Scottish parliament is deciding its first transport investment priorities.

Within the remaining roads budget, the balance of expenditure at both local and national level should be redirected to the improved maintenance and repair of the existing road network, bringing safety and environmental benefits as well as locally-rooted work opportunities.

Rural transport

As local employment, education, health, shopping and leisure facilities in rural Scotland have been undermined by centralising tendencies based in part on artificially cheap car transport, so forced car ownership has become a common response to limited or non-existent public transport. Tourist and leisure travel have also played a significant part in the substantial growth of rural motoring. Rural roads in the Highlands, the Borders and Galloway are suffering under the impact of increasingly heavy timber traffic - a sector where both rail and coastal shipping could have an enhanced role.

The priority for a Scottish parliament should be to assist local authorities to protect the rural economy and society "y a mix of regional planning, development and transport measures which seek to enhance rural service provision in general. Increased revenues from any major increases in fuel taxation applied by a UK government could be earmarked for investment and subsidy for rural public transport, and fuel tax exemptions provided for the remoter rural areas, partly as a recognition that the rural motoring contribution to some environmental problems is less than that of urban motoring.

Ferry services provide vital passenger and freight links to Scottish islands - with a relatively gentle impact on the environment - and ongoing subsidies will clearly be necessary. Rather than pressing the case for a 'road equivalent tariff' - which would extend the distorted economics of the currently under-priced road system to ferries - a Scottish parliament should give a lead to long-term European Union aspirations to internalise the external costs of transport in the pricing system by considering the case for an 'environmentally audited tariff' for internal Scottish ferry services, reflecting their far superior performance to road transport.

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Freight transport

For the foreseeable future, most of Scotland's overland freight requirements will be met by road haulage, but growing economic and environmental pressures suggest that society should no longer pay such a big price - in accidents, air pollution, and loss of amenity - for the lorry's hitherto high quality of service to industry. Better enforcement of safety legislation could be controlled by a Scottish parliament, but the longer-term strategy of internalising the external costs of freight transport in the tax system is already seen by the EU as requiring common action at a European level.

The lorry has outgrown its vital local and regional role, and for some years has overshadowed rail even for long-distance national and international transport. Growing road congestion is likely to encourage an increasing number of hauliers to use rail for selective long-distance trunking, but some major obstacles to strategic rail freight movement are still likely to be in place by the time a parliament is created. Unless route action plans remove bridge and tunnel height restrictions north of Central Scotland, it will not be possible to extend the present Channel Tunnel international freight trains to regional railheads in key locations such as Aberdeen. Major investment would enable standard European swapbody containers and the new generation of 'piggyback' road trailers on rail wagons to serve all Scotland by rail, instead of being concentrated on a single railhead at Mossend fed by 44 tonne lorries.

Such rail developments could also be linked with the creation of freight trans-shipment centres in strategic or environmentally sensitive towns and cities, where generally part-loads of goods for individual urban destinations would be transferred from the biggest lorries or rail wagons and consolidated into full loads in smaller delivery lorries more suited to the urban environment. A number of commercial trans-shipment schemes have been successfully implemented - with public sector assistance - on the continent, and a Scottish parliament could build on the lessons of a pilot English project being considered for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as mooted in the recent Department of Transport Green Paper.

Awareness and education

A move towards sustainable transport policies will need consensus support, a recognition by society that the absolute right to mobility has to be modified, and therefore the role of education will be crucial. Unfortunately education has to compete against a massive road lobby of companies which profit directly from short-termist transport policies and have no interest in the

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substitution of non-marketable walking for the packaged and purchased car lifestyle. In the same way that smoking has been treated in the interests of public health, a Scottish parliament - using broadcasting powers noted in the Constitutional Convention scheme - should consider introducing a ban on car advertising on TV and radio. Changing our car culture is a crucial aspect of developing sustainable transport policies which command widespread public support.

Members of a Scottish parliament should also make a clean break from the discredited Westminster expenses system which encourages excessive use of the private car - and in the process set a good example to the people of Scotland - by introducing a private car allowance on a sliding scale set in inverse proportion to the availability of public transport between their residences and the parliament. Personal action by politicians to support public transport could be an important step in the overdue process of rebuilding public confidence in the role of politics in all our lives.

CONCLUSION

The combination of Scotland's manageable scale, an emerging consensus on the need for radical action to tackle the crisis in transport, and the country's still low level of car ownership, provides a unique window of opportunity to build a sustainable transport system north of the Border, based on prioritising public transport, walking and cycling, reducing the overall need for travel, maximising public access to facilities, and increasing the role of rail and water in freight transport.

As road congestion worsens, and a growing number of Scottish politicians question the unfounded assumption that road-building gives a significant boost to our 'peripheral' economy, a Scottish parliament could use a wide range of fiscal, regulatory and land use planning powers to develop a more efficient and integrated transport system, meeting industry's needs without damaging the interests of future generations.

However, if the major flaws in the congestion-easing and job-creating arguments of the roads lobby (not to mention the more fundamental sustainability case) are not more widely accepted within the Scottish body politic than at present, there remains a real danger that ignorance, short-termism and special pleading north of the Border could lead to a Scottish parliament backing the continuation of a much larger road programme per

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capita in Scotland than in England. That would indeed be ironic in a country with one of the lowest rates of car ownership in Europe.

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August 1996