

LABOUR PARTY 'RAIL AND URBAN TRANSPORT REVIEW'

Submission from Transform Scotland

25 January 2024

About Transform Scotland

We are the national alliance for sustainable transport in Scotland having now been in existence for over 25 years. Our broad membership includes all major Scottish public transport operators, local authorities, public health and active travel charities, transport consultants and rail campaigning groups.

We regularly meet with Government and other political parties in Scotland, commissioning research and publishing reports to support the case for investment in sustainable transport modes. We have a particular focus on the need for changes to the current transport priorities. This is to enable society to tackle social exclusion, deteriorating public health resulting from inactive lifestyles and poor local air quality plus the need to reduce climate emissions from transport and help create more sustainable towns and cities.

We are based in Edinburgh and our main interest lies in the Scottish transport system and Anglo-Scottish journeys. We believe that we have significantly influenced decision-making through our work and would point to the many rail re-openings in Scotland, the decision to proceed with the Edinburgh Tram network, large increases in funding for active travel, promoting bus travel and the decision not to reduce Air Passenger Duty in Scotland.

Our views

Our submission to the review focuses on Anglo-Scottish journeys. Here rail competes with air and the car. We have been members of Transport Scotland's High Speed Rail Partnership Group since its inception. The stated objective was to reduce rail journey times between Central Scotland and London to 3 hours and until recently this enjoyed the support of the Scottish and UK Governments. There are numerous examples in Europe and around the world where passengers have transferred from air to rail following the introduction of improved rail journey times. In a UK context this is where the strongest business case for HS2 rests. There are over 100 daily flights from Central Scotland to the London airports and it will be essential to transfer the majority of these to rail to hit our climate change targets. These are key UK inter-city connections and transfer to rail will additionally boost city centres and economic activity therein.

The abrupt cancellation of all HS2 lines north of Birmingham leaves us in the worst of all scenarios. Aside from the need for air to rail transfer we desperately need more capacity on the UK rail network for freight and more local passenger services. This again relates to our need to reduce climate emissions from transport as well as improving inter-city connectivity.

Transport planning and accounting must consider all beneficial elements that a more sustainable transport system will deliver for society. Long term plans are needed to create continuous work streams which will allow unit costs to reduce as expertise is gained, whilst this is critical for rail investment it applies equally to other public transport modes and active travel infrastructure.

In the path to net zero transport stands out as the most challenging sector. It is however equally important to understand the public health, social inclusion, congestion reduction and general quality of life benefits that will flow from shifting investment priorities away from road-building and expanding air travel to more sustainable modes.



Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

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We campaign for walking, cycling and public transport to be the easiest and most affordable options for everyone. Our diverse membership brings together public, private and third sector organisations from across Scotland. We are a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).