

Scottish transport review

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SCOTLAND'S TRANSPORT THINK TANK

Scottish Government Cooperation Agreement Scotland's Post Pandemic Railway Research Update Improving Road Safety Statistics



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Is Scotland Setting an Example on Transport for COP 26?

STSG Chair John Yellowlees reflects on Scotland's approach to sustainable transport

As delegates prepare to assemble at COP-26 in Glasgow this November, it is to be hoped that at least a few of them find the time to investigate the transport priorities of the country that they are visiting. They may encounter a few interesting talking-points.

Of course, a lot of what they will see is good, with for example passenger security protected by extensive networks of online CCTV with Help Points. As tourists, they will be encouraged to enjoy interaction with locals by using public transport rather than being confined to bespoke operations that are for visitors alone. All across Scotland, they will find evidence of how our highway network has caught up with the quality of road infrastructure elsewhere, with provision of estuarial crossings from the Forth and Tay in the 1960s and many Highland crossings in the 1980s and 1990s. However they may be surprised to note that in Climate Emergency we are persisting with roadbuilding, including City

Deal projects such as the new Clyde bridge replacing the Yoker ferry, and dualling the A9 and A96 while the parallel railways remain largely single-track and with little freight because the loops are of insufficient length to accommodate modern-sized trains. And if they spot either of the canals that traverse our country, they will find a complete dearth of freight vessels.

They may observe gaps on some shop shelves and consider how sustainable an economy can be with major imbalances between the supply of HGV drivers and the unmet demands from transport sector which has relied on drivers from other European countries for many years.

Eyebrows may be raised when they find that many of the flights at Scotland's main airports are to and from London, a journey that should be within rail's grasp, yet the Government has talked of varying air passenger duty so as to encourage flying. Visiting ports, they may be

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surprised at the absence of direct links with the Continent including Scandinavia. If they pick up on the debate about a fixed link with Northern Ireland, they may be struck by the manner in which such a strategic choice has until now been regarded as a political shuttlecock.

When the delegates sample our urban transport, they may notice the limited use of smartcards, with several operators having their own card rather than a single inter-available one. However, they will see most customers prefer to pay contactless using their mobile phone or bankcard. Those from cities in say North America and Australia may be surprised to find that we still charge for city-centre transport at all, regarding free transport as the preserve of Marxists when at home they may have become used to it as the norm.

Except in Edinburgh, they will search in vain for the light rail networks that are the norm elsewhere, and in Glasgow they may be puzzled to learn that since becoming the world's third-oldest in 1896 the Subway has never grown. What will they make of the discoveries that we had tolls on estuarial crossings but abolished them, and that we flirted with congestion-charging, only to allow it to be thrown out in a flawed referendum?

They will see new developments, and may wonder what contributions from developers make towards the running costs of public transport. It may come as a surprise to learn that most of the funding that our planning system seeks from developers is towards upgrading road infrastructure.

Electric cars will be visible, but not in the numbers per-

Surprised to find that we still regard free public transport as the preserve of Marxists

haps found back home, and they may wonder that the Scottish Government prefers promoting a public network of charging-points rather than working with networks of filling stations and supermarkets to develop their networks. If they spot an electric van, they may be interested to know that operators sometimes have to wait years until the electricity provider builds a substation to power their depot.

Any who venture to our more rural parts may wonder why Road Equivalent Tariff was allowed to promote islanders taking their cars with them to the cities. And they may encounter the filth left behind by tourists in campervans for whom initiatives like the North Coast 500 have provided no mechanism on funding facilities for overnight stays.

Of course they may find roads busy but public transport still empty and wonder at the sanity of the prolonged messaging that said during a Climate Emergency that in a pandemic going by private car was safer.

It is to be hoped that when they head home after COP-26, delegates will take fond memories of Glasgow hospitality and of Scottish transport icons such as the Forth Bridge. They may also have a few points to ponder.



Draft SNP/Green Co-operation Agreement for Transport

Derek Halden reviews the implications of the agreement for Scottish transport

In January 2021 STSG published a list of proposals selected from the views of experienced professionals as the basis of a transport sector wish list for the political manifestos for the May 2021 Scottish parliament election (<https://stsg.org/towards-a-democratic-mandate-for-the-future-of-scottish-transport>)

The proposals were considered to be essential for government to achieve a democratic mandate for more efficient, fairer, cleaner transport in the years ahead. Some of these suggestions appeared in the political manifestos, but overall, there appeared to be a lot of essential content for effective transport democracy missing.

In August the transport results of this election became a little clearer in the draft co-operation agreement between the SNP and Green Party. The agreement draws from both the SNP and Green party manifestos and makes many ambitious promises. Are the commitments deliverable? Can the transport sector rise to the new agenda set by politicians to implement these commitments?

The restricted scope of the detailed commitments means that only about 50% of the potential CO2 emission potential envisaged by the zero carbon route maps are being attempted

Climate change

The new agreement commits to “align transport policy with our climate targets and the goal of reducing car km by 20% by 2030”. Given that the Climate Change Commission envisage the largest proportion of carbon reduction from transport in Scotland will come from the electrification of transport, the lack of detail and specific commitments about complex electrification issues relating to road transport appears to be a little strange, but ‘electric highways’ for the A9 and A96 trunk road upgrading are mentioned. During this parliament several of the world’s largest car manufacturers will be end-

ing petrol and diesel production so the silence on improving access to electric vehicles, including more vehicle sharing, particularly for households without off street parking for charging vehicles, seems like a big omission.

There are specific commitments to help people travel less, by encouraging more working from home and improving local accessibility, and there are also quite detailed commitments to improve active travel and a £5 billion spending commitment for rail.

If all goes well with the implementation of these detailed proposals, the aim to align transport policy with climate targets could therefore be partly met. The restricted scope of the detailed commitments means that only about 50% of the potential CO2 emission potential envisaged by the zero carbon route maps are being attempted. The new commitment is therefore a bit of a half promise on climate change.

Active travel

It is not particularly clear what is meant by the active travel budget, since most walking and cycling is on roads and footpaths that are largely funded through the roads budget. Mainstream spending on road and footpath maintenance for example, is often the backbone of active travel spending but cannot easily be separated from what is referred to as an active travel budget. Nevertheless, the commitment to spend £320 million or 10% of total transport spending on this vaguely defined area,





should be a huge boost for programmes that can demonstrate benefits for active travel. Caution is needed when slicing the spending pie differently to avoid simply moving money around without changing the goal. Effective reform comes from change within existing programmes as much as bolting on new spending. An increase in the stated spend on active travel does not guarantee a change in travel choices, as the declining trend for active travel over the last decade shows, despite 10 years of budget increases.

Spending some of the £320 million on a safe routes to school programme would be a good start so the new commitment that “local authorities will be encouraged to deliver more Safe to School initiatives” should be helpful if the ‘encouragement’ includes practical help and incentives. Also, the “establishment of an active freeway network for Scotland comprising local networks within towns and cities and connecting settlements and major destinations with high quality, safe routes” is long overdue so hopefully the growing active travel budget will be well spent on this network. There will be a need to be clear that the new freeway network is high quality

and largely off road, quite different from some of the poorly designed on road cycle lanes that have been implemented in recent years.

Local neighbourhood access

The commitment to “embed the concept of twenty minute neighbourhoods” would be clearer if the concept itself were clear. The devil is always in the detail with neighbourhood planning, and the mechanisms for investing in local service delivery to encourage more local travel are complex. Whether the new 20 minute ‘branding’ makes it any easier to overcome the long standing challenges in delivering walkable neighbourhoods with more local facilities remains to be seen, but the stronger focus on this vitally important area of work will be welcomed by everyone engaged in these programmes. In practice, for many neighbourhoods 10 minute thresholds are at least as important for behaviour change as 20 minutes for access to some local services. It is not yet clear which places in Scotland will find a 20 minute threshold either locally appropriate or useful.

Fair Fares

The commitment to a “Fair Fares Review to ensure a sustainable and integrated approach to public transport fares” should arguably not be new but rather business as usual as part of the implementation of established appraisal requirements for fairness in all transport spending as described in Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) since 2003. In practice this has been a weak area of transport delivery, so action is certainly needed to make fares fairer. For example, the recent national changes to rail fares in Scotland do not even mention the results of a STAG ‘fairness’ appraisal, so if an appraisal was undertaken it was not published.

There have been many previous national reviews of fares that have been able to make useful general recommendations for transport planning practice, showing

The commitment to a fair fares review is recognition that established appraisal requirements for fairness in all transport spending have not been implemented as described in Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance

that being genuinely fair to everyone involves taking fairness more seriously in day to day practice. If the new review comes to similar conclusions as the previous ones, that would not be a surprise. Perhaps bypassing the review and adding incentives to help make fairer approaches normal practice would be more widely welcomed by a public weary with inequitable transport spending.

The commitment to fairness looks fragile

Perhaps a national review will highlight the deep unfairness of current national programmes such as free concessionary travel, so the scope of the review suggested looks helpful to “look at the range of discounts and concessionary schemes which are available on all modes including bus, rail and ferry” and “consider options against a background where the costs of car travel are declining and public transport costs are increasing, exacerbating the impact on those living in poverty”. Given that the practical changes needed to make systems fairer will require reform to governance, it would have been good to have seen fairness being central to the detailed commitments to “progress the on-going review of transport governance in Scotland to ensure it is fully aligned with the climate and traffic reduction targets”. Public unease about traffic reduction targets and travel demand reduction programmes are justifiably dominated by concerns that such programmes will be implemented unfairly.

Overall, the commitment to fairness looks fragile, as revealed by commitments like “we will support the delivery of publicly funded lifeline ferry services in cases where essential connectivity cannot be met by the nor-



Public unease about traffic reduction targets and travel demand reduction programmes are justifiably dominated by concerns that such programmes will be implemented unfairly

mal operation of the market”. Across all of transport, including ferry service delivery, fairness will only be delivered when the ‘normal operation of the market’ is designed to be fair. Fair fares and costs for transport in Scotland depend on the success of the partnerships government forges with operators to secure social interests. That includes the data sharing partnerships with transport operators such as Amazon, Uber and Google to ensure that the huge growth in the transport economy in Scotland is being fairly distributed across the population.

Partnership

A new speed limit review is long overview so the commitment that “all appropriate roads in built up areas will have a safer speed limit of 20 mph” will be cautiously welcomed as a partial approach to a complex challenge. At its worst, the design of ‘appropriate’ could be the lazy approach of applying 20mph far more widely than is efficient or beneficial. Enforcement of even the current 20mph limits has been so poor that arguably the greatest impact has been normalising disregard of speed limits more than road safety benefits.

However, the proposal to “work with Police Scotland to develop a one year pilot project to develop an online reporting system enabling anyone to upload camera footage of dangerous driving” suggests a far more collaborative approach to enforcement than there has been in the past so this new area of work could help to achieve very important new more social ways of working.

The proposed collaborative approach to enforcement could help to achieve very important new more social ways of working

There is a slightly bizarre commitment that “our support for the purchase of new buses will be, where appropriate, conditional on space being available for bike transport in addition to wheelchair and buggy space”. It is hard to see how such a detailed national commitment could deliver intended consequences more than unintended adverse effects. Some bus routes have no demand for on board bikes whilst others need to be able to cope with substantial demand.

The welcome reintroduction of “a Community Bus Fund” could ensure that local authorities can call on national resources where needed to develop a bus system fit for the future in partnership with public, private and community operators. However, the reference to “the full range of options set out in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, including municipal bus services” appears unnecessarily limiting on the scope of the new fund. For more than a decade, local authorities have struggled to improve their bus services, partly due to limited resources. Unlike the £325 million for active travel and the £5 billion being proposed for investment in rail no formal allocation of funds is identified in the Community Bus Fund, perhaps because the huge scale of the investment needed is still unclear. To deliver the core commitments on climate change and fairness, bus investment needs to be taken much more seriously as the dominant mode of public transport for most people.

No formal allocation of funds is identified in the Community Bus Fund, perhaps because the huge scale of the investment needed is still unclear

Managing car travel demand

There are clear tensions evident between the SNP and Greens on road building “The Scottish National Party and Scottish Green Party have and will maintain distinct positions”. However, the success or failure of roads policy and travel demand management relate to the use of the existing network where there is far more agreement than on whether, or not, new roads are built. Perhaps the detail on the road plans could have been more usefully expanded in terms of equitable spending commitments to ensure a fair distribution of public funding for

Hopefully the scope of deliberative democracy on local tax reform can be broad enough to cover taxes and charges for parking, road use, tolls, and public transport fares

transport across the country. Given that much of the political pressure for the A9 and A96 upgrades comes from concern about a perceived urban bias to transport spending, greater transparency on the geographical distribution of transport spending including the contribution of the A9 and A96, might help to support more balanced debates and less conflict between political parties.

A much more useful commitment on roads is to “publish an analysis of options to assess and identify demand management options at the local and national level to encourage the use of active travel and public transport as an alternative to cars”. Again, the demand management commitment is not new, but it recognises the weak delivery of demand management by transport authorities across Scotland. It is well established that there are many obstacles faced by those designing fair demand management measures, so hopefully the new ‘option appraisal’ will remind everyone of these and focus minds on way to overcome them.

Overall, perhaps the commitment in the draft agreement that will make the greatest change to transport in Scotland will be to deliver “inclusive, deliberative engagement”. Unfortunately this commitment is specifically designed to “help develop a fairer, more inclusive and fiscally sustainable form of local taxation”. Hopefully the scope of local taxes can be broad enough to cover the root and branch reform needed of local tax and charge income for transport authorities, particularly for parking, road use charges, tolls, and public transport fares. There remain many perverse financial incentives to use cars where citizens assemblies or juries could help to expose myths and map pathways to better approaches. A well informed Scottish public may then demand better transport manifestos than they were offered in 2021, offering improved prospects of a programme for government that can be successfully implemented.

Scotland's Railway Post Pandemic

Iain Docherty, University of Stirling has been considering what Scotland's railway might look like in the future

At the onset of the pandemic, Scotland's Railway was on a well-established trajectory of investment and growth. In January 2020, ScotRail operated c2,400 train services per day across its 2,800km network serving 360 stations. Passenger journeys were on target to reach 100m in 2019/20, a 30% increase over ten years. 75% of these journeys were made on the 25% of the network that is electrified.

Public transport patronage declined sharply as a result of the pandemic, with rail being the most impacted mode. One perhaps underappreciated aspect of public transport use during the pandemic is that despite the very significant headline falls in patronage, those passengers that did use the service were likely to say that it was essential to them. This did not vary significantly between mode: around 60 percent of bus and train users reported having no alternative available for the journeys they made during the pandemic.

ScotRail estimates off peak journeys will recover to pre pandemic levels and peak journeys to 85% of pre pandemic levels by end 2023. However, these forecasts do not take account of other critical determinants of rail demand, specifically the travel behaviour changes stimulated by the conditions of the pandemic, and the potential spatial- and sectoral restructuring of the economy.

A critical question for rail demand in the medium term is how much working from home will 'stick' in the post-pandemic period. There are various ways in which adjustment could play out by sector and location, especial-



Around 20% less demand for rail commuting in a post-pandemic 'new normal' is therefore a reasonable starting point for future planning assumptions

ly as the outcome is essentially a negotiation between employer and employee preferences rather than it simply being a matter of individual- or sector norms preferences or sector alone.

If all of those workers who have switched from work-place to at-home working adopted a 'blend' of two days per week at home post-pandemic, then the number of days that all workers are at home rather than in their main place of work increases from 0.3 to 1.1. This would correspond to a reduction in all commuting trips of around 15% but would be higher for rail given the geographical and sectoral characteristics of the rail commuting market. A scenario of around 20% less demand for rail commuting in a post-pandemic 'new normal' is therefore a reasonable starting point for future planning assumptions

Key choices to help build back better

It is now clear that COVID-19 represents the most significant shock to the transport sector in the modern era. Even under the most optimistic recovery scenarios, rail patronage will take around 5 years from the onset of the pandemic to recover; under more pessimistic scenarios, patronage does not recover to its previous levels for the foreseeable future due to a change in travel behaviours driven by deep economic restructuring and altered traveller preferences.

There are therefore three interlinking variables that set the strategic context for development of Scotland's Railway over the next 5-10 years:

Demand

- To what extent will total demand for rail travel recov-



er, and over what time period?

- What will the trip purposes for rail be in future, and in particular, how important will commuting and the peak be in the overall profile of rail trips?
- To what extent will government policy shifts such as the 20% car use reduction commitment and £500m investment in bus travel impact on demand for rail?

Financial sustainability

- In the short-medium term, how robust is the government commitment to provide emergency funding support for the industry to maintain a level and type of operations that remain similar to that in place before the pandemic?
- Following on from the demand questions above, once the recovery profile becomes clearer, what cost savings will government demand of the industry? In particular, to what extent will investment in peak capacity be curtailed, and what is the scale of the potential cost savings from this?
- To what extent does emerging from the pandemic present the opportunity – or obligation – to address longstanding issues regarding the cost base of the industry in Scotland ranging from the labour productivity

There may be a continued steep reduction in the number of business trips (especially to/from London), but it is also reasonable to assume higher leisure demand

of railway operations to staffing levels and procurement?

Net Zero

- The Scottish Government remains committed to an ambitious programme of railway decarbonisation as part of its wider strategy to achieve Net Zero. But how does the dramatic fall in rail use and the uncertainty over future demand affect the basis of investment decisions in e.g. which routes might be considered for fixed electrification?
- To what extent do other non-rail sector considerations highlighted in strategic government policy statements such as the decarbonisation of the road vehicle fleet and the potential for development of hydrogen production on the west coast affect the strategic case for investment in rail?

In short, the challenges facing the rail sector in Scotland if it is to 'build back better' are extremely demanding. Any effective recovery strategy will have to address the three intersecting demands outlined above, against the background of the emergency imperative to stabilise the finances of industry.

There is a strong potential upside for rail arising from climate commitments. If half of the reduction in car travel being sought was met by a shift to online communication and half of the shift from car to public transport were met by rail, then this would suggest roughly doubling rail passenger demand. Achieving a doubling of rail use will require rail to be much more competitive for more complex journeys across the city regions.

the mix of journey purposes that make up the overall

demand for travel will not revert to pre-pandemic conditions. At this stage, a central scenario would see a smaller share for commuting in terms of overall journeys, and more a more diverse range of cross-city trips especially on the larger Strathclyde network as city trip demand becomes less dominated by radial trips.

The fewer days per week people commute to a fixed workplace such as an office, the longer they are prepared to travel for those trips that remain. This means that we might reasonably expect more remote working to increase the demand for the kinds of middle distance commuting trips into main centres that the rail network is well placed to such as Ayrshire/Clyde Coast to Edinburgh and Fife to Glasgow. Rail already has the longest average trip length in Scotland at 20km, or roughly three times as far as car: given the location of much of the housebuilding in central Scotland and the North East at this kind of distance from Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow city centres, there is another highly significant target trip pool in making rail more competitive for these trips. Given that much of this housing is low density and designed for car use, making good on longstanding objectives to achieve true multimodality and a high quality 'final mile' solution for trips based on a rail journey will be imperative.

The uncertainty over future demand for Anglo-Scottish rail travel reflects the tensions between post-pandemic economic shifts and the decarbonisation agenda outlined above. There may be a continued steep reduction in the number of business trips (especially to/from London), but it is also reasonable to assume higher leisure demand. Pre-pandemic, rail accounted for roughly one third of the combined rail/air demand for travel between Edinburgh/Glasgow and London so concerted efforts to achieve air to rail modal shift, such as a measures to restrict the use of central belt – London air travel, could create substantial capacity pressures on the long distance rail services, even with reduced overall levels of demand.

How long will government continue to support the vastly increased subsidy requirements put in place during the Emergency Management Agreements?

Who will pay for future rail growth?

There are many challenging questions:

- With more leisure and off peak travel compared to peak commuting and business travellers will the fare yield per passenger fall?
- What will enhanced government support for the bus sector mean for rail? Although precise data are sketchy, it seems reasonable to assume that the divergence in bus and train fares in recent years (and in some cases the reduction in bus service coverage and/or quality) has driven bus to rail modal shift, especially across the Strathclyde network. Given the scale of investment planned for bus in Scotland, which encompasses new greener vehicles, significant roadspace priority (including on the motorway network and other key commuter corridors) and potentially fares reform, what will the relative competitive positioning of rail be in the public transport fares mix?
- If more of the urban 'rail' network moves to continental style zonal or fixed fares – potentially along the lines of the '365 Euro city'25 model of low annual multi-modal season tickets – what does this mean for the relative pricing of continuing heavy rail fares?
- How long will government continue to support the vastly increased subsidy requirements put in place during the Emergency Management Agreements? Given the challenges facing the sector to achieve recovery outlined throughout this report, it seems extremely difficult to see how rail can recover its income levels to pre-pandemic levels in the medium term. There will therefore almost certainly be a renewed debate about the split of funding between taxpayer and farebox, and the cost base of the industry as a result.

It seems unlikely to be feasible for the rail sector to continue operations without radical efforts to reduce the cost base. This will at the very least require revisiting of difficult and long avoided questions of the size and role of the workforce, and whether legacy business activities such as the provision of ticket offices is viable in future. 25% of workforce is projected to retire or leave the sector for other reasons in the next 5 years. These three factors provide a unique platform to modernise and reduce staff costs quickly. There is also a clear opportunity to explore how digital technologies and automation of certain functions could reduce revenue spend,

but this will require addressing 'difficult' cultural and political questions.

Given the scale of investment in decarbonisation, it will be essential to deliver a strategy that makes the lifetime operating costs of newly electrified (or hydrogen powered) assets as low as possible. 75% of the ScotRail train fleet is due to be replaced in the next decade. New fleets will have greater carrying capacity with fewer vehicles, are more energy efficient and track friendly and need approximately 50% less maintenance than existing fleets.

Conclusions

The decarbonisation imperative means that planning for rail post-pandemic should be framed in terms of how it can meet the requirement to play a larger role, not forecasts about how it might do so. The over-arching objective for rail in Scotland post-pandemic is therefore to maximise the use of existing infrastructure and ensure that investment is targeted to help deliver substantial modal shift away from the car, whilst reducing the ongoing revenue support requirement of the network to sustainable levels.

There are critical changes needed in the short term to achieve this:

Rail post-pandemic should be framed in terms of how it can meet the requirement to play a larger role, not forecasts about how it might do so

- Focus on policies to deliver car to public transport modal shift
- Given the location of housing in recent decades, there needs to be particular focus on facilitating 'final mile' portions of rail journeys, with station car parking, active travel integration, pricing and planning interventions to influence trip choices.
- The rail sector needs to consider how cross-city trips can be accommodated and what additional infrastructure might be required. A reappraisal of the role of rail in the overall mobility mix to make more intensive use of existing infrastructure in and around the major cities including links to Glasgow Metro – and tram/train in Edinburgh and potentially Aberdeen.
- A strategy to harness new technology to reduce its operational cost base, improve its resilience and achieve financial sustainability.

Improving Public Transport for Winchburgh

With thousands of new homes being built in Winchburgh a new motorway junction is being built for the car users and a lovely new marina on the Union Canal.

However there seems to be no progress on a railway station that depends on major network upgrades that could take years to reopen the Almond Chord line.

Perhaps now would be a good time for major investment in express bus services before car dependence becomes embedded in the new town.

A new road to the M9 motorway over the new canal basin in Winchburgh are major investments in transport



ScotRail Timetable Consultation

In the face of many parallel changes facing the ScotRail network, a consultation was launched on 20th August on the timetable to be adopted from May 2022. This is a pivotal moment when the operator is having to navigate the challenges of emerging from lockdown, facing serious industrial unrest and preparing the transition from the Abellio ScotRail franchise to the Operator of Last Resort.

There is much to commend in the proposals. The new hourly Glasgow-Dundee service will be especially welcome since it gives Gleneagles and Invergowrie an all-day service and enables Alloa to go half hourly. It is great to see most of the lifeline rural routes safeguarded since in the new normal these may have a more important role relative to commuter lines (and even Stranraer only reverts to its pre2015 frequency). Inter7City trains to Fort William have been promised before, and it is to be hoped that this time they do come to pass. The recast in Fife prepares for the Levenmouth reopening, and a detail that is most welcome is Stow calls in the half hourly daytime timetable that will now serve the Borders Railway on Saturdays. Diversion of Inverness-Edinburgh trains to run via Stirling will give same-platform interchange and reduced reliance on single-track sections.

Scotland has suffered the longest lockdown of the four nations, and sadly seems to be experiencing the worst railway industrial relations, with both ScotRail and the Caledonian Sleeper afflicted by strikes now stretching over nearly six months.

Of concern are the extended journey-times that will result from limited reinstatement of fast trains to Inverclyde and Ayrshire and from local trains through Fife becoming all-stations - an incentive surely for travellers between the larger towns to hop into their cars

Thinning out of daytime frequencies between Glasgow and Edinburgh was to be expected in view of the decline in commuting and business travel

It was therefore inevitable that something would have to give, and the thinning out of daytime frequencies between Glasgow and Edinburgh was to be expected in view of the decline in commuting and business travel. Introduction of a through route via Cumbernauld was probably overambitious, and removal of unnecessary trains will boost performance.

Of concern are the extended journey-times that will result from limited reinstatement of fast trains to Inverclyde and Ayrshire and from local trains through Fife becoming all-stations - an incentive surely for travellers between the larger towns to hop into their cars. Perhaps even more disappointing is the thinning of evening frequencies in the west of Scotland, where some Glasgow routes will now endure their poorest timetables since the 1950s just at a moment when the night time economy is struggling back to life - will some revellers prefer instead to indulge in drinking and driving?

These downsides suggest that the purpose of rail is being relegated at the very point on time when it should be leading the way on the decarbonisation agenda. It is to be hoped that none of these changes is irreversible, and that everything will be kept under review so that rail may its full part in building back better as society recovers from the pandemic. It would also be a good legacy of these changes if the extended Perth-Edinburgh journey times that they cause was to prompt inclusion of Glenfarg reopening in the next round of strategic transport projects.



Challenging Orthodox Thinking and Being Stubborn

Bill Jamieson reflects on his experiences of campaigning

Stow station opened in 2015 and attracts over 70,000 passengers per year and following the example of Stow, Reston station is currently under construction.

I would say though that I can be rather stubborn and my in-built bullshit meter is very sensitive, so that when I saw the minimal patronage forecast made for Stow in the Scott Wilson report, I suspected straight away that no serious work had been done and that the main aim had almost certainly been to eliminate Stow because a station here didn't fit with orthodox railway thinking.

Something had to be done and through the community council an offer was made to Scottish Borders Council to assist with some sort of survey to try and gain a better understanding of the potential demand locally. This offer was turned down and that might have been the end of the matter except for the fact that I was a regular attendee at ACoRP seminars and conferences.

In discussion with community rail champion Paul Salveson it was decided that his TR&IN consultancy business would be able to undertake the analysis of survey forms (which TR&IN would prepare). The estimated cost of the work - assuming that local volunteers distributed and collected survey forms - sounded fundable. Most of the money came from Awards for All (twenty years ago it was probably much easier to access such a grant than now), with the application being made through the Campaign for Borders Rail of which I was then treasurer.

I suspected straight away that no serious work had been done and that the main aim had almost certainly been to eliminate Stow because a station here didn't fit with orthodox railway thinking

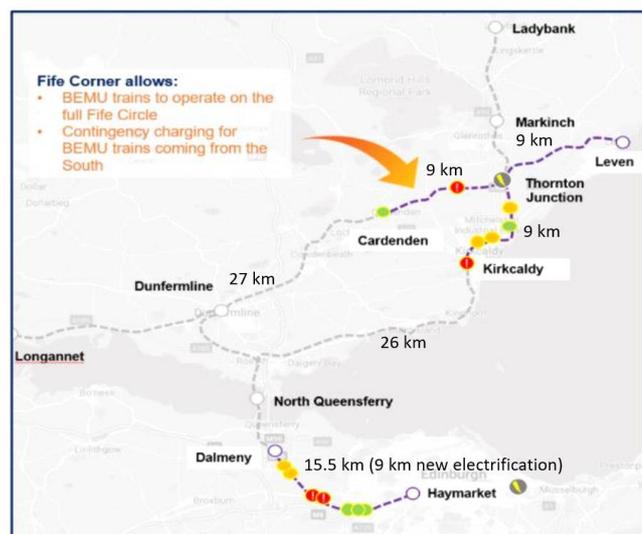
The survey and analysis done by TR&IN were crucial in persuading the Waverley Railway Bill Committee that a station at Stow should be part of the Borders Railway, and I was in the right place at the right time to make things happen.

I would also comment that Stow being given the go-ahead may well have acted as a precedent (which is possibly why there was such opposition to it down at Victoria Quay!) with other stations serving smaller communities also having been opened or authorised in recent years. East Linton and Reston are probably the most obvious examples.

For Reston station Tom Thorburn had tenacity of Olympian proportions! With only a handful of trains due to stop at Reston the £20 million cost of the station looks like a high price to pay per passenger.

Interim Fife Circle Electrification Proposals

David Shirres suggests that using battery electric trains (BEMU) the Fife circle could be electrified much sooner



Highland Explorers by Bike and Train

Cyclists often complain of being treated as second-class citizens on trains, and the beauties of the Oban line are too easily overshadowed by those of its longer neighbour to Fort William and Mallaig. So there was double cause for celebration when ScotRail, an organisation that currently does not have its troubles to seek, pulled off what may one of the year's best public transport achievements with the introduction from 19 July of the Highland Explorer, hailed as the UK's first active travel carriage, on two trains in each direction daily between Glasgow and Oban.

Gone are the days when cyclists had to make do with a half-dozen spaces on a tourist-indifferent train. The five carriages converted out of Class 153 trains by Brodie

Hailed as the UK's first active travel carriage, on two trains in each direction daily between Glasgow and Oban

Engineering of Kilmarnock can accommodate up to 20 full-sized bikes including tandems, with room for folding ones. The storage design requires a cyclist to be able to lift the front of their cycle a small amount off the ground and into the wheel restraint. In winter skis might take the place of bikes. For a £10 reservation fee passengers can sit in sight of their bike and receive complimentary refreshments.

The 24 seats are grouped round tables which bear a map of the West Highland Lines. Externally the carriages bear striking images of the territory through which they pass. ScotRail hope to extend the service to Fort William and Mallaig in time, and eventually to look at bringing the concept to all corners of Scotland.

The Oban line gives access to the interior of Argyll and its enchanting west coast as well as to the islands of Mull, Lismore, Coll, Tiree, Barra and Uist reached from what is rightly known as the Charing Cross of the Highlands. In a staycation summer when people may be yearning for fresh air, the arrival of the Highland Explorers could not have been better timed.



Temporary or Permanent Spaces for People?

The Covid pandemic has led to many temporary changes to make more space for people in busy urban areas. These allow more space for people waiting for buses, walking and cycling but could they also become permanent changes in how road space is allocated to the different groups of road users? Time will tell how many of the temporary changes become popular.



National Steps Towards Bold Commitments

STSG Chair John Yellowlees put five questions to new transport minister Graeme Day. The minister responded as follows:

Q1. Given current low patronage levels and potentially long-lasting (unfounded) worries about public transport use, how does the Minister view the transition from Covid Support back to commercial operation for the bus sector?

We continue to work closely with the bus sector, local transport authorities and other transport stakeholders to understand the longer term impacts of the pandemic on demand for bus and what support is appropriate to maintain bus service provision while patronage recovers as we emerge from the pandemic.

Q2. Suppose that continuance of Working from Home results in an ongoing loss of commuters from rail; how long will you give the industry to adjust to a new sustainability?

We will continue to work with the rail industry and key stakeholders to assess the impact the pandemic is having on patronage, what future patronage uplift may look like in terms of travel patterns. We can then consider how the industry can continue to safely deliver rail passenger services, matching capacity with demand, whilst providing appropriate levels of support to maintain ser-

vices.

Q3. The SNP manifesto references decarbonising half of the Scottish bus fleet by 2023. This is 2,000 buses. How does the Minister envisage delivering this target?

We have set a bold commitment, and delivery of this commitment requires swift action from a diverse range of stakeholders. We are engaging with these stakeholders through the Bus Decarbonisation Taskforce. The Taskforce brings together bus operators, financiers, utilities, and the supply chain to develop industry-led pathways for accelerating the decarbonisation of buses, with government facilitating and enabling these pathways. The work of the Taskforce is publicly available at <https://www.cpt-uk.org/news/bus-decarbonisation-taskforce/>

Q4. Are you satisfied that the pace of rail electrification can deliver timely decarbonisation?

Rail accounts for only 1.2% of all emissions from transport in Scotland – so the key decarbonisation opportunity is to move passengers and freight from other modes to rail.

Electrification reduces the net cost of operation of the railway, so it is financially as well as environmentally sustainable. Currently, 75% of Scottish rail passenger jour-

National Steps Towards Bold Commitments (contd.)

neys are made on electric trains, and the challenge now is to convert the remaining journeys to zero emission – especially the longer journeys on trunk routes to Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness.

Electrification for freight is always part of Scottish Government planning and delivery, but only 45% of rail freight in Scotland is electric. This is chiefly because the key ports and terminals have not been electrified by the UK Government at other end of cross-border freight journeys.

While battery and fuel cell technology will have a valuable role in transition for passenger trains to an electric network, and in future on lightly used routes, they are more expensive, and less energy efficient than full electrification – which is also especially needed to meet the power requirements for freight trains.

In line with our Decarbonisation Action Plan (Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan (transport.gov.scot)) progress is already underway to electrify the East Kilbride and Barrhead routes, as part of the first phase of delivery against the Action Plan.

Additionally, I recently announced our decision to rebuild the Leven railway as a double track line throughout, and that the line will be electrified during the reconstruction works to allow zero carbon trains to operate in future.

Q5. How can planning policies assist with the development of rail freight ?

Our vision for rail freight is for a competitive, sustainable rail freight sector playing an increasing role in Scotland's economic growth by providing a safer, greener and more efficient way of transporting products and materials.

We are supporting this vision with innovative regulatory targets to encourage growth and significant investment, including a £25 million ring fenced fund for the period 2019 to 2024, which is helping to unlock opportunities for rail freight across the country. Freight Facilities Grants (FFG) have also been retained in Scotland in addition to Mode Shift Revenue Support (MSRS) which help with the capital and revenue costs of moving freight by rail, resulting in millions of lorry miles being removed from our roads.

Current Scottish Planning Policy is clear that the planning system should support patterns of development which facilitate freight movement by rail or water..This Policy will be replaced by Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4), which will have the response to the global climate emergency at its heart. NPF4 will guide spatial development, set out our national planning policies, designate national developments and highlight regional spatial priorities through to 2045. Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework Position Statement published in November last year recognises the importance of supporting the transition to low carbon freight.

Officials are working closely as NPF4 is drafted to ensure that this ambition is reflected in NPF4 policies and plans as appropriate. NPF4 will also be aligned to key Government policies and strategies including the Climate Change Plan, Infrastructure Investment Plan, Housing 2040, the National Transport Strategy 2 and the second Strategic Transport Projects Review.

Yours sincerely



GRAEME DEY



How Covid Divides Public Transport Users

Travel behaviour segmentation has been critical to understanding how transport policy can be rolled out across the population. Successful approaches to change are targeted effectively so to help plan the way forward from Covid the national watchdog Transport Focus has identified five population segments that define how travellers are reacting to Covid.

Cautious Car Choosers are more likely to be women and to be older (65+), retired, white, have a long-term physical/mental condition or a disability, and live in rural areas. They are more likely than others to think that public transport is not for someone like them. They are anxious about using all modes of public transport. Covid has made them rethink how they will use public transport in the future. They also say that they will never again feel completely comfortable travelling on public transport. They are less likely than others to want to return to places such as non-essential shops, pubs and restaurants.

Anxious and Affected are more likely to be reliant on public transport. They used public transport regularly before March 2020 but do not expect to be using it as much in the future. They don't feel that enough is being done to ensure safety on public transport and are more likely to be women, be in Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups, have a long-term physical/mental condition or a disability, have lower household incomes than the average, and live in urban areas.

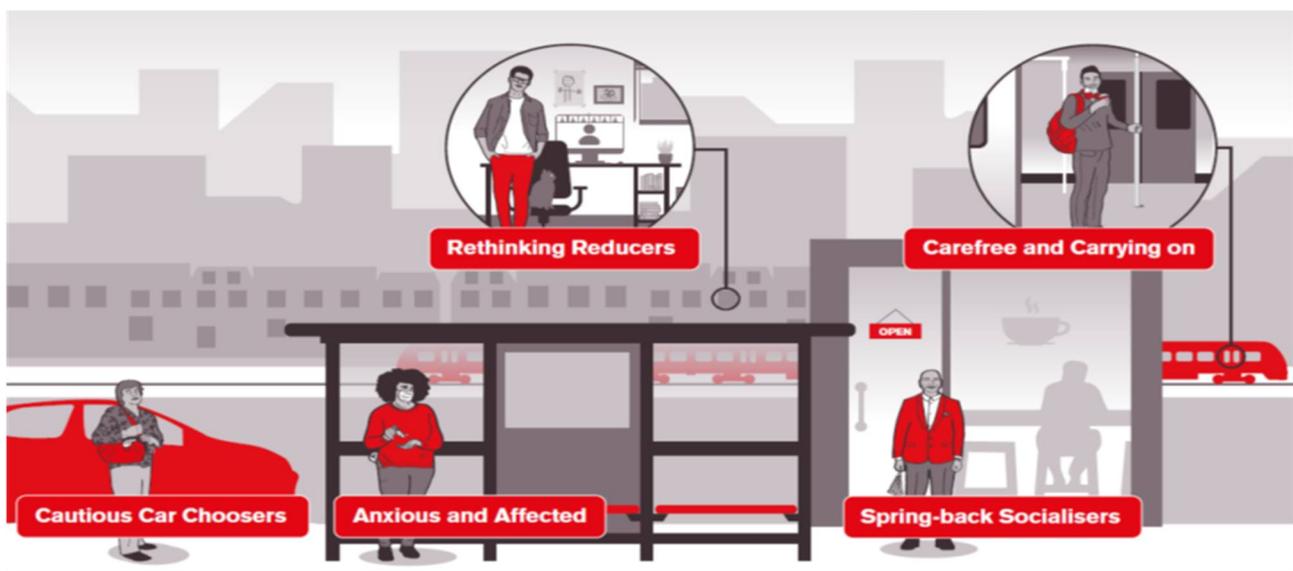
Rethinking Reducers are more likely to have used public transport before March 2020, but they don't expect to use it as much in the future. They are more likely to

say that they will never again feel completely comfortable travelling on public transport. They are more likely to be aged 18-44, be in Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups, be working full time and be in higher social grades or have higher household incomes than the average. They are more likely to have children under 18 years of age at home and to live in urban areas.

Spring-back Socialisers are more likely to be previous public transport users who expect to use it in the future as much as they were previously. They are less anxious than others about using public transport and more likely to feel that enough is being done to ensure safety on public transport. They are more likely to be male, be older than others (65+), retired, white, and to be in higher social grades or have higher household incomes than the average.

Carefree and Carrying on are more likely than others to have been using public transport recently and to expect to use it in the future as much as they were before March 2020. They are the least anxious about using public transport and more likely to believe enough is being done to ensure safety on public transport. They are more likely to be male, to be younger (25-34), to be working full time and to have children under 18 living at home.

Transport Focus are using the analysis to help build a picture of the future market for public transport. This includes the types of people that may return to public transport first, or those who will need the most reassurance or incentives to consider public transport again.



Including Road Danger and Vulnerability in Scottish Road Safety Statistics

For many years road safety campaigners have called for better statistics on road danger. The Parliamentary Advisory Council on Transport Safety (PACTS) has published recommendation on how road safety statistics should be presented that they say the Scottish Government should consider.

The new report seeks to show road danger as well as vulnerability. It presents an analysis which assesses the overall risks involved with different modes of transport, including the risks posed to others. This can provide additional insights into the nature of road safety and the priorities in relation to danger reduction and promoting active travel.

There has been very little reduction in UK road deaths or serious casualties since 2010 when national targets for casualty reduction were abandoned. The UK government needs to step up its ambition and actions in line with its recent endorsement of the UN resolution Improving global road safety, and the target to reduce global road deaths by 50% by 2030. Improving safety is important not only in its own right but also in relation to delivering other agendas, particularly active travel, public health, and reducing emissions from transport.

Importantly the report notes the importance of analysis of the impact that the use of different transport modes has on other road users. PACTS consider that common omissions from road safety statistics include:

- Not distinguishing vulnerability from danger.

- Failure to convey that UK road users are much more likely to be killed in a car, or by a car, than any other mode.
- No presentation of total fatalities by mode.

Pedestrians and cyclists, sometimes viewed as “unsafe”, pose very little risk to other road users

The report finds that pedestrians and cyclists, sometimes viewed as “unsafe”, pose very little risk to other road users. In fatal collisions between motor vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists, it is almost always the pedestrian or the cyclist who dies, not the occupants of the motor vehicle. There were 3 people in motorised vehicles killed in collisions with pedestrians and cyclists in 2019 compared with 517 pedestrians and cyclists killed by motorised vehicles. By contrast, some modes which may be seen as comparatively ‘safe’ to travel in, are disproportionately dangerous to other road users relative to passenger miles travelled:

PACTS emphasise that they are not suggesting that the current government statistics or analysis are in any way incorrect. Rather they suggest that that additional analysis of data already collected would provide a more balanced and helpful picture.

