



Finance Committee - Budget Strategy Phase

Submission to the Scottish Parliament Finance Committee

Friday 26th March 2010

1. Introduction

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

2. Our comments

2.1 First of all, we note that none of the questions make reference to the Climate Change (Scotland) Act. Given the challenges of achieving the targets in the Act, we feel that the call for evidence should specifically address the issues of increasing sustainability and measures to mitigate climate change emissions for the public sector within the context of reducing financial budgets.

2.2 Of the questions posed, we wish to address question 3 specifically: *Should any spending area be protected from real term cuts and, if so, what would the implications be for other areas of the public sector? Should there be an emphasis on seeking uniform efficiency savings, or are there particular bodies / spending areas that should be targeted?*

2.3 The most effective interventions in financial terms will be those which require least in the way of expensive infrastructure – for example, the widespread introduction of travel planning, the introduction or increase in parking charges, reductions in road speeds, and introduction of measures to improve the quality of bus services (such as quality contracts or statutory partnerships). The report ‘Mitigating Transport’s Climate Change Impacts’, published by the Scottish Government in August 2009, supports measures such as these in a series of Marginal Abatement Cost Curves, which analyse a variety of interventions for effectiveness in terms of abatement of climate change emissions. Clearly, in order to reduce emissions from transport during a period of budget restrictions, these are the measures which should be focused on and spending in these areas should be protected, if not increased.

2.4 Secondly, in order to deliver against public health and obesity targets, Transform Scotland calls for the Scottish Government to move to levels of spending on walking and cycling measures closer to those found in other European countries. The Scottish Parliament’s Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee report on its inquiry into active travel (published today, 26/03/10) supports this call for additional spending on active travel. In particular, the report says that “the Scottish Government’s cycling targets would be rendered meaningless if its aims were not backed up by adequate levels of finance”. Spending on these measures must be protected during the forthcoming budgetary tightening.

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

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