

Stewart Stevenson MSP  
Minister for Transport, Infrastructure & Climate Change  
Scottish Government  
Victoria Quay  
Edinburgh  
EH6 6QQ

15th September 2008

Dear Mr. Stevenson,

**Joint letter from Friends of the Earth Scotland, Scottish Association for Public Transport, Spokes, Sustrans Scotland, Transform Scotland and WWF Scotland:**

***'Strategic Transport Projects Review needs to deliver wise investment'***

We understand that the Government is due to announce the results of Transport Scotland's Strategic Transport Projects Review. Scotland faces major challenges in tackling the nation's transport crisis, and it is imperative that the Scottish Government now places its focus on delivering healthy, low carbon transport.

As you will know, we have taken opportunities to communicate our views to your civil servants. However, we remain concerned that the Scottish Government's current transport priorities are heavily loaded towards road-building and airport expansion – the very things that have exacerbated the problems we face. Your announcement on the STPR needs to lead to investment being switched into sustainable transport, and away from making traffic growth even worse.

Clearly, the Government's plans must tackle climate change. We welcome the challenging targets outlined in the Scottish Climate Change Bill, but these have no prospect of being met unless robust action is taken to reduce levels of road and air traffic.

Similarly, the plans must outline measures to reduce transport's over-dependence on fossil fuels. The oil strike at the Grangemouth oil refinery in April 2008 demonstrated just how exposed the Scottish transport sector is to security of oil supplies. It is imperative that the Government prepares for a post-oil Scotland, not one increasingly dependent on foreign supplies of oil or unsustainable biofuels.

We also need to see transport make a major contribution in tackling the obesity crisis. For public health and quality of life reasons, the 'zero carbon transport' modes – walking and cycling - should be given strategic priority, not be treated as an afterthought.

A strategic approach needs to go beyond large infrastructure projects. A genuinely strategic programme of transport investment would not only address connectivity

but also deliver reductions in dependence on fossil fuels and provide a much greater focus on public transport and the active travel modes.

Firstly, we want to see a national strategic programme of investment in active travel. Walking and cycling can make a major contribution towards tackling the country's obesity crisis. The Danes and the Dutch have cycle journey shares of 20-25%, which puts Scotland's 1% to shame. It is surely not accidental that these countries also feature obesity levels less than half of Scotland's. With around 99% of Scotland's transport budget devoted to motorised transport, it is perhaps unsurprising that rates of walking and cycling remain so low.

Secondly, we want to see demand management measures on major roads, giving priority to buses and multi-occupancy vehicles. Expanding road capacity is deeply counter-productive if no attempt is made to lock in the benefits and prioritise public transport and car sharing.

Thirdly, we want to see a programme of investment in the Scottish inter-city rail network to link all Scottish cities by modern, efficient train services to match the best in Europe. Rail travel provides substantial productivity benefits that are not afforded by trunk roads, and provide massive safety benefits as railways are 27 times safer than car travel.

Fourthly, there needs to be a strong focus on Smarter Choices measures - such as school and workplace travel plans, car clubs and lift sharing. With a quarter of all car trips being less than two miles in length, these have the potential to tackle peak hour congestion. The Government's sustainable travel towns programme is a welcome first step, but the scale of investment is tiny compared to the funds allocated to major infrastructure projects.

Finally, we must see a halt to the growth in air travel - the most polluting and energy inefficient mode of transport. A first step would be for the Government to remove the proposals for airport expansion at Edinburgh and Glasgow airports from the National Planning Framework. It is quite incongruous for the Government to be advocating greenhouse gas emission reduction whilst simultaneously promoting airport expansion.

The Scottish Government will have to invest wisely if it is to deliver on these major challenges. A 'business-as-usual' approach of subsidising road use through more road-building will only make matters worse. It would be unrealistic to ignore the impacts of long-term rises in oil and carbon prices on the economic case for strategic projects. We look forward to the publication of the Strategic Transport Projects Review, and trust that your decision-making will deliver wise investment into sustainable transport.

Yours sincerely,

Duncan McLaren, Chief Executive, Friends of the Earth Scotland  
John McCormick, Chairman, Scottish Association for Public Transport  
Dave du Feu, on behalf of Spokes, the Lothian Cycle Campaign  
John Lauder, National Director, Sustrans Scotland  
Colin Howden, Director, Transform Scotland  
Richard Dixon, Director, WWF Scotland