

# Commuters being 'driven away' from public transport

SCOTTISH government policies are 'driving people away' from public transport, a study claims.

Sustainable travel group Transform Scotland accuses Holyrood of a 'perverse' agenda that holds back progress and fails to address fare hikes.

The study, released today, says there has been 'no progress towards ensuring that users pay an appropriate price for transport'.

It adds: 'While public transport fares have increased above inflation since the Scottish parliament was set up, vehicles users are paying less – and this has been actively encouraged by the actions of the

by **KIRSTEEN PATERSON**

Scottish and UK governments.' The group is calling on Nicola Sturgeon, in her new role covering transport, to direct investment towards greener and cheaper projects in next week's Budget.

Co-author Sandra Wechner said: 'The overall picture is fairly bleak. Public transport fares are rising ahead of the price of using a car, and the government's cuts to bus investment are likely to drive people away.'

The report calls for the SNP administration to reconsider budget cuts for investment in buses, walking

and cycling and bring in a country-wide smartcard to pay for journeys.

Transform Scotland director Colin Howden said: 'It is imperative that John Swinney focuses public expenditure on assisting investment by small-scale, local, Scottish companies and public bodies.

'Tackling the roads maintenance backlog would provide greater local economic benefit than paying foreign companies to build new roads.'

The Scottish government said: 'Ministers are focused on transport initiatives aimed at reducing traffic congestion and increasing the proportion of journeys made.'



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