



## Warning Signs:

Is Scotland moving towards sustainable transport?

First annual sustainable transport report  
*SUMMARY REPORT*

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# Introduction

We decided to write this report in order to **set out a comprehensive, yet summarised, picture of the current state of sustainable transport in Scotland**. We felt that there was no single volume which captured the current situation, and this is our attempt to fill that gap.

The report takes as its focus the **national, Scottish situation**. We intend this report to be the first in a series of annual sustainable transport reports, and it is likely that future reports will consider sustainable transport at the local level.

Transform Scotland campaigns for a society where everyone can have their travel needs met within the limits of a transport system that is environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and economically responsible. And it

is this vision which provides the **chapter headings ‘Sustainable’, ‘Civilised’ and ‘Productive’, while we commence the report with an ‘Overarching’ section.**

Under these headings, we isolated a set of **progress indicators** with which we can measure whether we are moving towards or away from sustainable transport.

Our determination of whether progress is being made against the indicators was carried out in **both quantitative and qualitative terms**. While the report features some primary research, we mainly focused on evaluating and presenting official statistics in an attractive, user-friendly manner. Progress against each indicator is then rated using **‘road sign’ symbols** to summarise the

current situation and extent of measures needed.

We conclude the report with a **set of recommendations** for action by local and national government and other bodies.

It has obviously been a large undertaking to attempt to comment on all aspects of sustainable transport in so few pages, and we accept that some people may feel that certain topics have not been covered, or not covered in enough detail. However, **this is very much a first attempt at defining a simple set of Scottish sustainable transport indicators** and we would very much welcome your views on how these could be improved in future years. Indeed, we would welcome *any* comments and we will consider them carefully for future versions of this report.

## Key to the symbols



Need to maintain positive progress



No clear trend towards sustainable transport



Drastic measures needed to change unsustainable position

# Executive Summary

## 'Overarching' indicators



### 1.1. Moving to sustainable modes

Unsustainable modes still dominate and inequalities remain



### 1.2. Reducing traffic

Clear evidence of road traffic stabilisation

## 'Sustainable' indicators



### 2.1. Reducing oil dependency

Motorised transport remains entirely oil dependent



### 2.2. Tackling climate change

Emissions targets failed & key measures remain unfunded



### 2.3. Greening the vehicle fleet

EU laws driving uptake of LCVs



### 2.4. Sharing transport resources

Welcome expansion of car sharing schemes

## 'Civilised' indicators



### 3.1. Civilising the streets

Some progress — but local authority leadership required



### 3.2. Improving public transport

Public satisfaction relatively high — but improvements needed



### 3.3. Cleaning the air

Prevarication continues at the expense of human health

## 'Productive' indicators



### 4.1. Investing sustainably

Government budgets reinforcing car use



### 4.2. Getting the prices right

Public transport fares rising ahead of cost of car use



### 4.3. Making the polluter pay

Zero progress on polluter pays principle

# Conclusions

## Trends

**There are some positive trends evident.** EU legislation is forcing cars to have lower carbon emissions. Progress is being made on the 'Sharing' agenda, with car clubs and lift-sharing taking off. And there is evidence of cycling gaining more of a foothold in Edinburgh and other places around Scotland. Most importantly, there appears to have been a levelling off of national road traffic levels.

However, we have found, on balance, that **more indicators are heading in reverse than moving forwards** — hence the "warning signs" of the title of this report.

It is clear that **the path towards a sustainable transport system in Scotland remains long and challenging.** Our motorised transport system remains almost entirely oil dependent: despite the electric locomotive being a Scottish invention, even our railway remains 76% oil dependent 170 years on. Meanwhile, despite September 2012 marking the bicentennial of the birth of the Scottish inventor of the pedal bicycle, our national cycle rate remains around 1%.

Decades of prevarication by local and national government in Scotland have left many urban areas facing the prospect of EU fines due to the failure to reduce toxic air pollutants. The recently-announced failure to meet the first target set by the *Climate Change Act (Scotland)*

2009 demonstrates the urgent need to revise and significantly strengthen current policies and proposals designed to cut emissions.

Most damagingly, **the Scottish Government's own investment agenda has decisively moved to subsidising increased road use and away from investing in sustainable transport.** Its announcements over summer 2012 — an acceleration of plans for dualling of the A9 while savagely cutting back the scope of rail electrification in the Central Belt — demonstrate a **perverse set of priorities, suited neither to tackle the environmental crisis nor the need for development of 'sustainable economic growth'.** There has certainly been no progress towards ensuring that users pay an appropriate price for transport: 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 Scottish and UK governments.

## The benefits of taking action

Not only would greater investment in sustainable transport help the Government to meet its commitments under the Scottish climate change act, it would also generate **an array of wider economic, social and environmental benefits.** Policies and investments designed to

reduce the demand for travel and boost use of active and sustainable modes represent the best value for money in terms of cutting emissions from the transport sector.

It could also help to tackle the burgeoning epidemic of obesity in Scotland, thereby helping to reduce what is a substantial and growing burden on our health system.

Significantly increased investment in these policies and measures would also help to transform our towns and cities into more pleasant, attractive places to spend time and money. It would benefit those in deprived areas the most, but would also boost tourism, cut congestion, and improve quality of life for the whole country.

Achieving these outcomes does not rely on finding new money. Rather, it involves rethinking spending priorities across existing transport budgets, identifying and funding cross-cutting transport initiatives across other Government portfolios and holding local authorities to account for delivering key national priorities through local projects.

**The risks of inaction and indecision are huge, but the potential gains from strong and effective leadership will be transformational.** If Scotland grasps the nettle then there is an opportunity for us to bring about a sea-change in how Scots travel. Doing so is simply common sense.

## The opportunities afforded by a greater focus on local transport

A cursory review of the pages of our mainstream press or the record of parliamentary debates would demonstrate that most attention in transport circles is devoted to modes of travel suitable for longer distance travel.

Given the disproportionate attention given to aviation, high-speed railways and motorways, someone coming new to the field of transport could be excused for thinking that the typical transport journey was one of hundreds of miles.

Yet the simple fact is that **most travel is very local and very short:**

almost 40% of all trips is less than two miles in length and two-thirds of all trips made are under five miles.

With 38% of all car trips being less than two miles in length, many more of these trips should be being made by sustainable means: in 30 minutes, many of these trips could be made on foot.

63% of all car trips are of less than five miles. Again many of these trips should be made by sustainable modes. Cycling is particularly well suited to this length of journey (and is often faster than driving).

Finally, 80% of car trips are under 10 miles in length. Many of these trips, especially in urban areas, should be being made by bus and other local public transport options.

To achieve such a desirable behavioural shift, we need to see not only dramatic action by Government, but also for people to shoulder their part of the responsibility. **Greater attention by the media and politicians to short trips — the majority of transport trips — would also help drive change to the sustainable modes.**

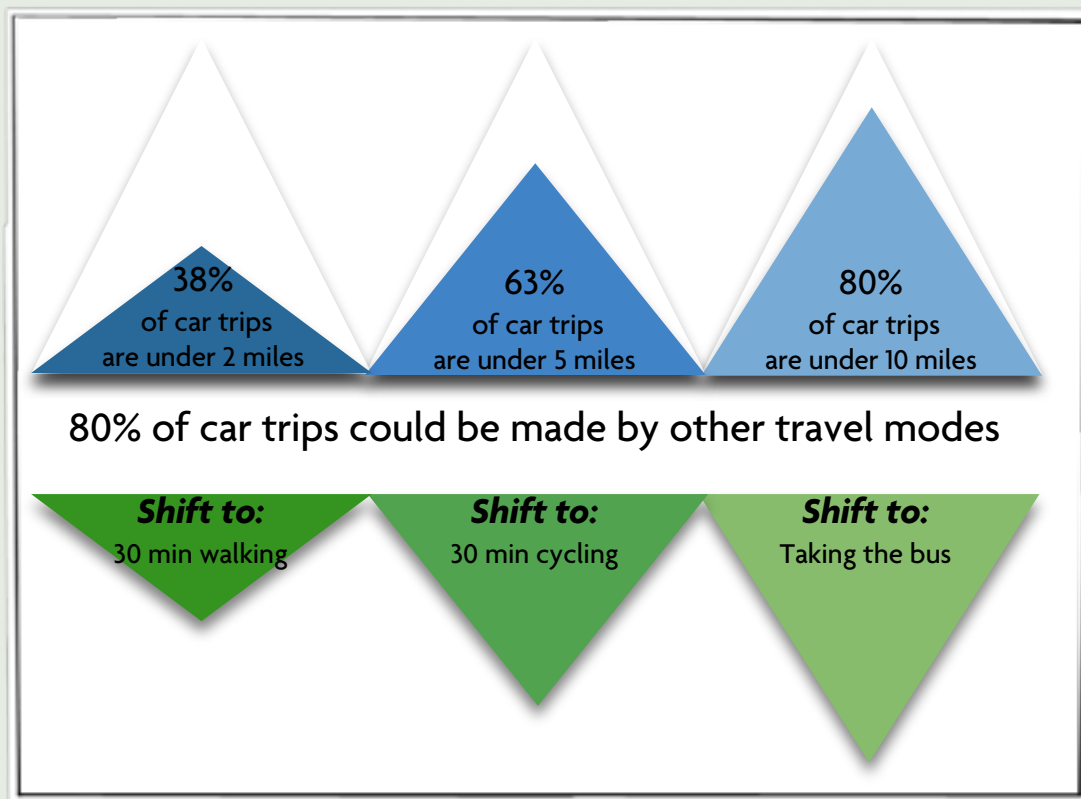


Table 5.1. Cross-modal comparison of car trip lengths



# Recommendations

This report makes the case for a programme of action from the Scottish Government and other bodies to deliver measures required to accelerate progress towards a stronger and lower carbon economy and a better society — both during the term of the current Parliament and over the period to 2050. Inaction would be the recipe for a weaker economy and a poorer society.

## Traffic levels

- Transport Scotland should revise its out-of-date forecasts for road traffic growth.
- The Scottish Ministers should take account of the evident stabilisation of road traffic levels in making its investment decisions.

## Decarbonising transport

- The Scottish Ministers must fund — *in full* — the ‘Proposals’ in its climate action plan (the RPP) in order for them to meet their legal commitments under the *Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009*. Greater focus needs to be given to small-scale, low-cost ‘Smarter Choices’ measures (e.g. school, workplace and personal travel plans, car sharing, travel awareness campaigns, and videoconferencing).

## Low Carbon Vehicles

- The Scottish Public Sector should provide a role model in the uptake of low emission vehicles.
- The Scottish Government, in alliance with private sector bodies, should take advantage of Scotland’s bus operations and manufacturing capacity to establish Scotland as a centre of excellence in sustainable technology for public transport.

## Sharing

- Local authorities and RTPs should continue to work proactively with the private sector in further establishing car- and bike-sharing operations.
- The Scottish Government, for its part, should continue its modest investment in this area as part of delivery of the RPP.

## Civilising the streets

- Local authorities across Scotland need to follow the leadership example provided by The City of Edinburgh Council in order to move towards matching the best practice seen across the Continent.
- Scottish Ministers should deliver the actions committed in 2010’s *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland* and put in place a robust National Walking Strategy.

## Public transport

- Transport Scotland needs to show greater urgency in delivery of a Scotland-wide transport smartcard.
- The Scottish Ministers should provide better bus user representation by extending Passenger Focus’s remit in Scotland to cover buses (as in England).



- Bus operators need to complete the upgrading of their fleet to meet accessibility standards.

## Air pollution

- Local authorities with long-standing air pollution problems must end their decades of prevarication and take action to stop human health being harmed by establishing Low Emission Zones. In the absence of action, Scottish Ministers (along with their UK counterparts) are liable to prosecution by the EU.

## Sustainable investment

- The Scottish Parliament should conduct an inquiry into the evidence regarding claimed links between expenditure in transport infrastructure and economic growth.
- Scottish Ministers should focus 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.
- Scottish Ministers should give preventative spend measures a much higher priority in their investment decisions. Investment in active travel infrastructure would not only benefit local companies, it would also have large public health benefits.

- All government bodies, local and national, should implement a programmed increase in the funds made available for active travel investment to 10% of total transport budgets.

## Transport prices

- Scottish Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that their Budget decisions do not lead to public transport use becoming even more unaffordable compared to private car use. Continued cuts to bus investment (e.g. further cuts to BSOG) will further damage the affordability of bus use; we instead need to see lowered and simplified fares relative to the costs of car use.

## Polluter pays

- The Scottish Government should commission independent research into the external costs of transport.
- In order to reduce transport externalities, meet national climate targets and raise revenue for infrastructure improvements, the Scottish Ministers should instruct Transport Scotland to work in conjunction with the relevant local authorities and RTPs to develop road traffic demand management options (e.g. workplace parking levies, road pricing) for Scotland's four major cities.



# About Transform Scotland

Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance. We campaign for a society where everyone can have their travel needs met within the limits of a transport system that is environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and economically responsible.

We are the only organisation in Scotland making the case for sustainable transport across all modes. We have a membership of over 60 organisations across Scotland, including public transport operators, local authorities and sustainable transport voluntary organisations. Transform Scotland is a registered charity, politically independent, science-based and strictly not-for-profit.

Transform Scotland Limited is a registered Scottish charity (charity number SC041516).



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