

Transport Scotland: NTSreview@transport.gov.scot

Scottish Cities response to the National Transport Strategy consultation

In response to the National Transport consultation draft Scotland's seven cities, as drivers of the Scottish economy, broadly welcomes the findings and acknowledges the collegiate way that the development of the document was taken forward in conjunction with all of the professional bodies and stakeholder groups.

Scotland's Cities represent 53% of the population of Scotland (2.86m) and are home to 55% of businesses, 61 % of jobs (1.51m), 67% of GVA (£84.6bn), and 63% of Scottish exports. Cities are also hubs for Scotland's transport networks, tourism gateways, and, as home to further education colleges and some of the world's most renowned Universities, act as centres of excellence in skills development for people from all parts of the country, therefore a world class transport infrastructure is crucial to their ongoing economic success.

There are however still concerns remaining around some areas in terms of the information presented, and assumptions made. It is relevant that in many areas matters have moved on since the working groups concluded and it is important that the document reflects the most up to date thinking, practices and political situation.

The most crucial part of the strategy will be the delivery plan and we believe that it should set out the strategic direction and national actions to deliver the strategy without being overly prescriptive about how they are taken forward at a regional and local level.

There is also a need to bring clarity to how future funding models will operate and how current funding commitments will be met. There is an urgent need to set out clearly how the Scottish National Investment Bank, the Infrastructure Commission and the Scottish Futures Trust will support and assist local and national government to deliver on what are, in some areas, competing strategies without duplication or gaps developing.

It is felt that the document does not fully promote the issues around demand management, and the financial and social issues which will arise as society needs to adapt to the need to travel less. The document therefore needs to highlight issues such as the decline in bus patronage, as an efficient and affordable public transport network will be key to changing travel habits.

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In terms of the policies set out in the document these were worked up between all the stakeholder groups and are representative of the broad range of views however they were drafted at a moment in time and they should be tested through scenario planning to see if they are still achievable. As an example, the implications of any policy effects of an exit from the European Union needs to be considered more fully once the final details emerge.

In relation to the governance section the encouragement to work more closely at a regional level is welcomed but there also needs to be a clear commitment that devolution of activity and resources from central government would be part of any regional considerations. Similarly, consideration needs to be given as to whether policy, roads hierarchy and specifications could all be dealt with more effectively at a national level.

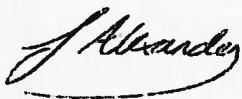
While the document focusses on the synergies and benefits of regional working there also needs to be consideration of what operational matters are best dealt with at a local level as part of the place making agenda, allied to the need to more closely involve communities in decision making. Government at all levels need to cede control back into local communities whether through established, or emerging networks. Until use of the existing consultation networks has been fully considered we should avoid putting in any other engagement layers, such as the suggested Transport Citizens Panel. Many local authorities are developing sophisticated engagement strategies and tools to inform decision making, building on long standing and trusted relationships. The NTS work needs to complement rather than compete with this.

While the impact of moving to a zero carbon economy in Scottish Cities is explored in some detail, the document concentrates less so on the connections between cities and the interdependency of the seven cities and the national transport network. There also needs to be an acknowledgement that while the cities form the critical nodes of our transport network the solutions for each of them will be different, and will be influenced by their dependency on their wider city regions

In terms of the finer detail of the document in relation to definitive actions generally the (insert body) comments tie in with those received from SCOTS and the RTP lead officers. One area of major concern however is around the cross referencing of the National Transport Strategy with other government documents and plans, particularly those concerning climate change, Clean Air, strategic planning and economic development. It is noted that the targets and ambitions in many recent documents, including the programme for government, do not necessarily align. In some areas the ambitious targets stated do not match with current legislation and this can cause serious problems when dealing with matters such as development plans. It is suggested that a resource be dedicated to reading across these strategies and setting out a clear narrative in relation to the government's direction.

We welcome this opportunity to comment on the draft strategy and hope that the comments of Scottish Cities will be given due consideration.

Your sincerely



Cllr John Alexander, Leader of Dundee City Council
Chair of Scotland's City Leaders Group