

STPR2 aiming to transform investment in transport is out for consultation now

The second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) was presented to The Scottish Parliament earlier in the week by Transport Minister, Michael Matheson, and it offers hope for those who believe that extending the trams in Edinburgh would be a good thing.

What is STPR2? It is a framework of how transport might be encouraged to evolve over the next two decades and aims to deliver the priorities set out in the National Transport Strategy. The document sets out quite boldly that the government will no longer provide road infrastructure for unconstrained growth in private car use.

Set in the landscape of a global climate emergency, the document made 45 recommendations which Mr Matheson said would “represent a repositioning of our transport investment priorities”.

Mass transport in Edinburgh and the south east of Scotland could be a large part of that and is one of the individual recommendations, along with another for improvements on the

Edinburgh to Glasgow rail line.

“STPR2 recommends that Transport Scotland works with regional partners to develop and enhance the cross-boundary public transport system for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland region, potentially comprising tram and bus-based transit modes including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). This would complement and integrate with the region’s current bus, tram and heavy rail networks, to provide improved connectivity between Edinburgh and the surrounding communities in the region, as well as more direct connections between communities outside Edinburgh.”

Mr Matheson spoke to Radio Forth in The Scottish Parliament to explain the reasoning behind the recommendation – partly climate change driven and partly to make public transport more attractive:

<https://twitter.com/RadioForthNews/status/1484215512318021632?s=20>

The overarching principles are that “for most journeys, the

natural and easiest choice should be active travel, then public transport". The other is that the measures must mean that investment is sustainable, focussing on measures which reduce the need to travel (cue for the first mention of a [20-minute neighbourhood](#)), measures to maintain the infrastructure which is in place and to build new roads and bridges only where they are the "only feasible solution".

The [document](#) is now available for a 12-week long public [consultation](#).

Conservative MSP, Graham Simpson said in The Scottish Parliament: "This statement and its accompanying document raise more questions than they provide answers for. We can see the direction of travel, but we do not know how we will get there.

"Why is there still no timescale for a smart ticketing system? Why is there only mention of talks, rather than action, on cross-border high-speed rail? What are the plans to improve the situation in the north? Will the far north line be dualled? There is no mention of that.

"STPR2 was an opportunity to set out a different route for our failing ferry system, but there is nothing there. No multimillion pound investment has been set out. Where is it? Islanders are calling out for it. If we want our buses to be net zero, we need to spend more, but the statement says nothing about how we will achieve that. This is a series of missed opportunities and there remain a lot of questions."

Scottish Greens transport spokesperson Mark Ruskell said: "This strategic vision represents a clear shift in priorities from roads to public transport and active travel which shows the impact of Greens in government.

"I look forward to more detailed plans about how our record

investment in active travel will be spent on the ground.

“The £5bn we have secured for electrification of our railways will mark a step change in the quality and performance of services, while the focus on rail freight will enable a big shift from road to rail. However, I want to see more ambition to expand the rail network in the future.

“This strategy sets a much better direction of travel for future investment and we will continue to campaign for local improvements in our public transport infrastructure across Scotland.”

Alex Hynes, Managing Director of Scotland’s Railway said: “I’m encouraged that today’s report recognises the major role rail will play in moving people and goods sustainably as we move towards a net zero Scotland. At Scotland’s Railway we are keenly focused on a number of clearly defined targets to achieve the Scottish Government’s net zero ambitions and we’ve already delivered a 38% overall reduction in carbon emissions in the last eight years.

“Looking ahead, the financial picture is of course challenging but it’s great to see STPR2 support the potential for even more rail passengers and freight being transported by rail.”

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The report mentions the possibility of setting up “mobility hubs”. This has been welcomed by Collaborative Mobility UK (CoMoUK) is the national charity for the public benefit of shared transport such as car clubs, bike share and digital demand responsive transport. CoMoUK also promotes mobility hubs which involve different modes of environmentally-friendly transport coming together in one place, alongside community facilities.

The organisation operates the national accreditation scheme for mobility hubs, with the first accredited hub recently opening in London.

Rachael Murphy, Scotland director of CoMoUK, said: “This is a very welcome blueprint for the future of Scotland’s transport. “It’s particularly pleasing to see the importance of shared transport identified, which must become an attractive and viable option for more people and communities across Scotland. “Developments such as mobility hubs and digital demand responsive transport can transform how we travel around our communities.

“Shared transport will assist the Scottish Government in making real progress in hitting its ambitious climate change targets.”

Sally Hinchcliffe is one of the organisers of Pedal on Parliament, a decade long campaign to persuade the government to increase spending on active travel measures to ten per cent of the transport budget. Often to be seen on a bike, Ms Hinchcliffe’s views on the STPR2 are best expressed in the long Twitter thread which she published after reading the government document. You can read the thread below. (You may also need to know before reading this thread that Sally’s new book was published in January!)

Sally is largely supportive of the government proposals to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030, but there are a couple of bumps on the road, and some recycled policies mentioned:

Right, so I've finally sat down and read through the [@scotgov](#) [@transcotland](#) plans to reduce car km driven by 20% by 2030 and stand by, because I'm going in (apologies to anyone who recently followed me hoping for hares, witchcraft and literature content) <https://t.co/dU0l37trkd>

– Sally Hinchcliffe (@sallyhinch) [January 20, 2022](#)