



**Report of the Scottish  
Parliament Cross Party  
Group on Sustainable  
Transport's inquiry into the  
Scottish Government's  
commitment to reduce car  
mileage by 20% by 2030**

**TARGETING  
TRAFFIC**

1 November 2022

## Convener's Statement

The Cross Party Group on Sustainable Transport has conducted a mini inquiry into the Scottish Government's stated aim of cutting car mileage by 20 per cent by 2030.

I would like to thank everyone who took part in our four evidence sessions, which have led to this report. Inevitably, people have different views on the subject.

Some will question the need to cut car miles at all, others will say the target does not go far enough.

Whatever your view, it is fair to say that cutting car miles by a fifth within just over seven years is a tall order.

The purpose of this report is not to question the merits of the policy – though that is a valid standpoint – but to drill down into how the target can be best and most-fairly achieved.

Cost of living is a huge issue, so if you hit motorists – ordinary people going about their business – where it hurts then you need to provide a cheaper and better alternative.

When it still costs a couple times more to travel by train than it would in petrol then you have to ask how we are ever going to encourage people onto public transport.

We heard no plans to tackle these issues. Maybe the Scottish Government's long-awaited Fair Fares Review will shed some light on it.

Our report spells out the evidence and views we heard.

We then call on the Scottish Government to spell out what they plan to do, having set the target in the first place.

The measures they may have to take will not be universally popular. My own view, which is not shared by many of the contributors to the group, is that we need more carrot than stick.

However, we have yet to do anything meaningful on either approach.

*Graham Simpson MSP, Convener, CPG on Sustainable Transport*

## Views from the Vice-Conveners

"The evidence from a range of transport experts was clear that we need a plan from the Scottish Government to deliver on its ambitions to reduce transport emissions. My priorities would be a focus on ensuring that public transport is affordable and accessible, with a reversal of cuts to bus services, continued investment in active travel and political support for a shift to low carbon transport across all sectors."

*Sarah Boyack MSP, Deputy Convener*

"This is a fair and balanced report in my opinion. We have highlighted a range of issues which need to be addressed. But I think we all accept that there are no easy answers."

*John Mason MSP, Deputy Convener*

"The CPG discussions have been useful to look at how a clear and achievable pathway to reduce vehicle mileage can be delivered. What stands out for me is that there appears to be no route to meet climate targets without vehicle mileage reduction, it is inescapable. Inequalities are an important consideration in getting the balance between the use of 'carrot and stick' measures to reduce car use. However it's also clear that our current reliance on the car has created deep seated transport inequalities that we take for granted, disadvantaging many different groups of people who have no car access at all. Navigating our way to a better future will need the careful use of a wide range of demand management measures alongside investment in more attractive alternatives. Equalities issues need to be considered at the outset."

*Mark Ruskell MSP, Deputy Convener*

## 1. Introduction.

For the first half of 2022, the Cross Party Group (CPG) on Sustainable Transport concentrated on scrutinising the Scottish Government's commitment to reduce car mileage by 20% by 2030, as introduced in its Climate Change Plan update of December 2020. This included sourcing expert evidence from Scotland and beyond by holding four evidence sessions during which experts were invited to give evidence on different aspects of the target and attendees were able to ask questions on the evidence being provided.

The report below sets out the membership of the CPG, summaries of the evidence given at the sessions, common themes from the sessions and concludes with a set of recommendations to the Scottish Government. The full set of minutes and recordings from the meetings are available on the CPG webpage on the Transform Scotland website.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. CPG membership.

### 2.1. MSPs

- Graham Simpson MSP (Convener)
- John Mason MSP
- Sarah Boyack MSP
- Mark Ruskell MSP
- Liam Kerr MSP
- Brian Whittle MSP

### 2.2. Organisations

- CalMac
- Capital Rail Action Group
- CPT Scotland
- Cycle Law Scotland
- Cycling Scotland
- Cycling UK in Scotland
- Edinburgh Bus Users Group
- Friends of the Far North Line
- GoBike
- Grand Union Trains
- Hitrans
- Levenmouth Rail Campaign
- Light Rail Transit Association
- LNER
- Network Rail Scotland
- Paths for All
- Pedal on Parliament
- Rail Action Group, East of Scotland
- Railfuture
- Ramblers Scotland
- Scottish Association for Public Transport
- Spokes
- Stagecoach
- Transform Scotland
- Women's Cycle Forum Scotland
- CoMoUK
- Community Transport Association (CTA)
- Disability Equality Scotland
- Friends of the Earth Scotland
- Heritage Railway Association
- Light Rail UK Group
- Mobility & Access Committee for Scotland (MACS)
- RNIB Scotland
- St Andrew's Rail Campaign (StARLink)
- Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT)
- Sustrans Scotland
- Transport Focus
- Patrick Miner (individual)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://transform.scot/scottish-parliament-cross-party-group-on-sustainable-transport/>

### 3. Evidence to the CPG.

#### 3.1. Evidence Session 1: 27 January 2022

##### Transport Scotland's 20% car km reduction route map

##### Heather Cowan, Head of Climate Change and Just Transition for Transport, Transport Scotland

- The session covered the need for the 20% car km reduction policy, its benefits (e.g. climate mitigation, reduced air pollution, safer streets), and how Transport Scotland will implement change.
- The commitment to reduce car kms by 20% by 2030 was presented in The Climate Change Plan update (CCPu) in December 2020.
- Transport Scotland published the route map to achieve the 20% reduction on 13 January 2022.
- Following the introduction, Heather Cowan set out the case for the target.
- Element Energy modelling demonstrated that a 20% reduction in car distance required by 2030 (from 2019 levels) was required to meet climate targets *even with maximum effort in other areas*, as no other scenario met the targets for the transport sector.
- But various modelling exercises show that car traffic needs to be reduced from today's levels by ~4% year on year between now and 2030 even if Scotland stops selling vehicles with internal combustion engines (ICE) from 2030.
- There are two main options to achieve the required transport carbon budgets:
  - Phase out petrol and diesel vehicles
  - Reduce the amount that these vehicles are used.
- The sooner that petrol and diesel cars are removed from the vehicle fleet, the less the reduction required in usage of the remaining ICE vehicles.
- However, phasing out ICE vehicles has proven to be very slow and every scenario shows that Scotland has to pursue both options to meet climate targets.
- The trips that need to be targeted may not be those that are typically thought of in the context of traffic reduction. Leisure activities are responsible for far more journeys and distance travelled than commuting or school trips and just 3% of trips are longer than 35 miles but they are responsible for 30% of distance and emissions.
- Heather outlined the importance of behaviour change, as electrification alone will not be sufficient to meet climate targets. Reducing car kms might be achieved by some of the following interventions detailed in the route map:
  - Reducing the need to travel
  - Living well locally
  - Switching modes
  - Combining or sharing trips.
- Transport Scotland will work in collaboration with CoSLA to understand how policy may be implemented differently depending on place and space (e.g. how rural experiences contrast to urban ones).
- Transport Scotland is also exploring traffic demand management options and will be developing a new Framework for Car Demand Management by 2025.



### 3.2. Evidence Session 2: 24 February 2022

#### The role of traffic demand management in meeting Scotland’s 20% reduction target Richard Riley, Senior Principal, Element Energy consultancy

- Richard Riley outlined the case for the target, echoing Heather Cowan’s discussion of the Element Energy report finding that demand reduction is needed to achieve decarbonisation.
- The Element Energy analysis showed that demand reduction was needed in all but the low ambition scenario.
- Scotland’s 2030 climate targets, in line with IPCC decarbonisation advice, require a combination of technology and behaviour change.
- Richard then continued to discuss what ‘good’ demand management policy would look like.
- There were challenges of delivering policies including avoiding inequalities: e.g. high earners may be able to afford to switch to electric vehicles faster than low earners.

Tax the Fuel	Tax at point of use (RUC)	Tax additional benefits
<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
Very simple to implement	Directly correlates with demand	Very simple to implement
Directly correlates with use	Variable pricing can control congestion/health impacts of driving; and/or incentivise less polluting vehicles	Can be adjusted by time of day and place to control congestion/health impacts of driving
Encourages use of more efficient cars & driving	Can be less burdensome in rural areas	EV parking exemptions can encourage shift
<b>Drawbacks</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>	<b>Drawbacks</b>
Disproportionate impact on low income earners	Complex administration proportionate impact on low earners	Very high impact on low earners (often lack of off-street parking)
Can’t implement effectively for home EV charging		Doesn’t correlate with use
Doesn’t tackle congestion/health impacts of driving		Opposition by local residents/shops

- Car demand management can be controlled by tax (price) and planning (space allocation).
- Inequality of current transport costs makes it impossible to raise prices enough to impact high earners’ demand without a big impact on others.
- The very different ratio of purchase to running costs for electric vehicles opens up the opportunity to reduce the cost impact on second hand buyers. Once we have a fully electric fleet, taxes could be raised significantly but there is a very high transport inequality risk in the transition.

### 3.3. Evidence Session 3: 29 March 2022

#### **The equalities impacts of historic traffic growth and the 20% car mileage reduction target**

**Bruce Whyte, Public Health Programme Manager at Glasgow Centre for Population Health**

- Bruce Whyte outlined the relevant policy context including the impacts of traffic growth over time and potential impacts of traffic reductions and the current range of local and national policies to improve active and public travel in Scotland (e.g. the recent increase in the active travel budget).
- Currently there is a mismatch between Scotland's active travel policy and the lack of change in car use.
- Commuting trends in Scotland have been towards massively increased car commuting over the past 60 years.
- This has contributed to obesogenic environments.
- When more people drive, fewer people feel safe walking and cycling.
- The negative externalities of cars tend to affect areas with higher deprivation more than those with low levels of deprivation. This includes higher levels of air pollution, severance of neighbourhoods and the number of pedestrian road casualties. For example children living in poorer areas more likely to be injured by cars than children living in wealthier neighbourhoods and are also less likely to own bikes.
- Car ownership is often overstated, especially in cities. 50% of households in Glasgow do not have access to a car.
- In addition, buses are disproportionately used by those on lower incomes; over recent decades, bus fares have risen above the level of inflation, while the cost of driving has remained below inflation levels.
- A shift from private car use to active travel could have wide-ranging health benefits and the increase in active travel during the first Covid-19 lockdown showed that people will take the opportunity to walk, wheel and cycle when there is less traffic on the roads.
- Another Covid-19 impact has been the reduction in public transport use and getting people back on public transport post-Covid will have its challenges.
- Both improvements for public transport and active travel can require road space reallocation and interact with the traffic reduction target.

### 3.4. Evidence Session 4: 24 May 2022

#### Speaker 1:

#### Decarbonisation of freight and logistics

#### Clare Linton, Policy and Research Advisor at the Urban Transport Group

- Clare Linton introduced evidence on the role that freight and logistics play in traffic generation and traffic reduction on roads in the UK.
- Freight and logistics have a significant economic role (£86.5bn to the UK economy, 2.5m employed).
- 79% of freight in Great Britain travels by road.
- Rail freight delivers around £1.7bn of economic benefits and supplies £30bn of goods each year.
- Challenges of freight include congestion, road safety, air pollution, carbon emissions, road/track maintenance, noise, vibration, impacts on quality of life and urban realm.
- Freight by rail and water should be encouraged as far as possible as each freight train takes about 76 HGVs off the roads and can reduce the negative impacts of freight.
- City regions are often the ultimate destination for goods. Making the final mile safer, smarter, greener, unobtrusive, more efficient is therefore key. This can include:
  - Ultra low/zero emission vehicles
  - Cargo bikes
  - Portering
  - Tech: data to optimise deliveries, connected/autonomous vehicles, kerbside management, drones
- As an example, Clare explained that e-cargo bikes have been found to cut emissions by 90% when compared to diesel vans or 33% when compared to electric vans. Cargo bikes are also quieter than motorised vehicles and contribute to improved road safety.
- Goods vehicles are a significant cause of injury and death on urban roads, despite making up a smaller proportion of traffic.
- Last mile deliveries in urban areas can affect local residents through noise and impacts on the urban realm and local environment.
- Low and zero emission vehicles and cargo cycles offer quieter alternatives to conventional fossil fuelled vehicles.
- Improvements in freight operations will require
  - Investment in infrastructure for modal shift
  - Incentivising modal shift
  - Green urban freight
  - Improving safety of urban freight.

## **Speaker 2:**

### **Summary and conclusion of evidence to the CPG**

**Professor Iain Docherty, Dean of the Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Stirling.**

- The 20% car km reduction target is a great example of academic research influencing policy.
- The target comes from research showing a net zero vehicle fleet needs to be roughly a third smaller.
- There's no plausible net zero future without significant modal shift and absolute reduction in motorised car travel.
- Professor Docherty highlighted the importance both of behaviour change and decarbonising the vehicle fleet.
- People automatically assume that an absolute reduction in road traffic means a reduction in economic output. This isn't the case; it is a result of historic discourse surrounding increased transport resulting in an improved economy.
- Travel time budgets essentially have not changed since we started measuring them (over a 100 years or more). Instead we travel further to do the same things. So what we're really talking about is travelling a little less to do the same things.
- So we need to organise things a bit differently and enable people to do what they need more locally, and a car less when they have to travel.
- Lessons from the pandemic that help us think about these things:
  - Change can happen quickly if it must.
  - Our digital tools are now good enough to replace a lot of travel.
  - Significant localisation of economic activity has significant car reduction benefits.
- On the downside:
  - There has been an explosion in light vehicle freight (i.e. vans).
- The key issue is, as ever: who pays and do prices/incentives align with policy goals?
- Pre-Covid driving was getting cheaper across the board; fuel duty freeze, purchase credits etc.
- In a cost of living crisis we must think quickly about how we make the system better and fairer because protecting the status quo won't get us where we need to be.
- The tools are all there but political will is lacking. We won't reach the 20% reduction target unless we get pricing right.



## 4. Common Themes.

The Cross-Party Group on Sustainable Transport heard from five expert speakers during the series of meetings. During the presentations and following discussions a set of common themes emerged:

### Modal shift

Modal shift towards sustainable modes is key to achieving car traffic reduction. Whilst technology can make a contribution, the goals cannot be achieved without behaviour change. Electrification of the car fleet will not on its own prove sufficient to meet climate targets on time.

### Demand reduction

Next to modal shift, demand reduction is the other key component of behaviour change and is essential to reaching the target. Pricing will be a key tool to reduce car traffic demand. However, there is currently no clear way forward for a single pricing intervention that would adequately address car traffic. Any pricing mechanism will have to take account of its impact on people who rely on their cars for their mobility.

### Equalities

Questions around how to deal with inequalities issues will arise as a consequence of the target. However, the status quo also creates inequalities and doing nothing is not considered a viable option. The current transport system advantages drivers who are disproportionately wealthier. People on low incomes are less likely to have access to a car but if they do, would be more significantly impacted by cost increases of motoring. The question therefore is what measures most constructively address inequalities issues. Ensuring that there are affordable and accessible public transport services will be a key element in delivering an equitable transport system.

### Transport Costs

Public transport costs, particularly bus fares, have risen well above inflation over the past years, while the cost of private car use has been rising below inflation and wages. Increasingly expensive fares and the hidden costs of car use that are often underestimated by drivers, can make public transport a less attractive alternative. Ensuring that there are affordable and accessible public transport services that can compete with private car use in attractiveness will be a key element in delivering an equitable transport system.

### Freight

The impact of freight on traffic generation on Scottish roads has to be addressed more thoroughly than it has so far. The target addresses car kms, so is primarily focused on private car travel. The increase in freight traffic, particularly van deliveries, needs to be considered to deal with the environmental and social impacts of road traffic in a comprehensive manner.

### Political Action

Many of the problems and solutions that were discussed in the evidence sessions have been widely understood for many years. However, action on these problems has often been lacking or solutions have only been implemented very slowly.

### Transport 'Myths'

There are certain popular myths, which do not stand up to scrutiny but are often repeated and can hamper the debate. This includes the assumption that a reduction in road traffic necessarily leads to a reduction in economic output.<sup>2</sup> Addressing these myths could help move the debate forward and allow more constructive discussion.

### Shifting expectations

Traffic reduction is often assumed to involve significant disruption and upheaval to our lives. However, organising life somewhat differently to accommodate traffic reduction would not necessarily be as disruptive long-term as is often assumed. Many car journeys are short and could readily be shifted to walking, cycling or public transport with the appropriate improvements in place. Better local services would also enable people to do what they need in their neighbourhood, and use a car less when they do travel. Not taking any action and failing to address increasing would also bear significant risk through its detrimental impact on congestion, climate, safety and health.

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<sup>2</sup> The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment (Sactra), 1999. Transport and the Economy: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/468208>

## 5. Recommendations.

Drawing from the expert evidence given during this series of evidence sessions, the CPG recommends that the Scottish Government consider the following when progressing its policies to reduce car kms by 20% by 2030:

### 1. Provide clarity around policies, expected impacts, and timescales for implementation.

Provide clear information on what the expected impact of proposed policies and interventions is on traffic levels and emissions. The traffic reduction route map describes a large number of policies but it is unclear how many of these will be in place to take effect in time to contribute to reaching the target by 2030. It is also unclear whether or not the policies set out in the traffic reduction route map will lead to the targeted traffic reduction.<sup>3</sup> Before the end of 2022 the Scottish Government should set clear and realistic timeframes for the implementation of traffic reduction policies and begin projecting the expected traffic impact of each policy and report on its progress against the target.

### 2. Pursue policies that target unnecessary car journeys.

Recognise that demand management will be necessary to deliver the traffic reduction target and pursue options that target unnecessary car journeys and help achieve the 20% mileage reduction.

### 3. Consider the equalities impacts of traffic reduction policies.

Consider the equalities impacts of any proposed policies on groups such as disabled people and people facing transport poverty. It must be ensured that groups already facing more limits to their mobility are not disproportionately impacted by traffic reduction policies. In addition, any opportunities to improve transport access through traffic reduction policies for groups who are currently excluded or disadvantaged should be promoted and pursued.

### 4. Ensure greater affordability of public transport services.

Ensure that alternatives to car travel are available and affordable. Considering the cost of living crisis and the cost increases of public transport over the past decades, the cost of public transport needs to be cut in real terms. The Scottish Government should review the affordability of bus and rail travel and ensure that Scots are able to afford using public transport.

### 5. Include van traffic as part of the traffic reduction target.

Consider the impact of freight on traffic volumes and emissions from road traffic. It must be ensured that reduction in emissions from cars is not cancelled out by an increase of emissions from delivery vans. Van mileage should therefore be included in the 20% reduction target.

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<sup>3</sup> See an example produced by the IEA.: <https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/c5043064-58b7-4066-b1e9-68d7d9203fe9/A10-PointPlanToCutOilUse.pdf>. The IEA set out its ten point plan to reduce oil use within one month of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The plan models the impact of individual interventions on oil consumption. It is not unreasonable to expect the Scottish Government to produce a projection of traffic reduction from the various components of its route map within two years of setting the target.

