

The Glasgow Centre for Population Health's response to the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2): Update and Phase 1 Recommendations report.

March 2021

Introduction

The second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) will inform the Scottish Government's transport investment programme in Scotland over the next 20 years (2022 – 2042).

STPR2 takes a national overview of the transport network with a focus on regions and will help deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes that are set out in the new National Transport Strategy (NTS2). It aims to conduct a Scotland wide, evidence-based review of the performance of the strategic transport system, against multiple criteria including safety, environment, economy, integration, accessibility and social inclusion and, fundamentally, to support the Scottish Government's aims, including sustainable inclusive growth and the move to a low carbon transport system. In so doing, STPR2 will make recommendations for potential transport investments for Scottish Ministers to consider as national investment priorities, in an updated 20-year transport investment plan for Scotland.

A consultation process was set up in early 2021 seeking views on the eight Phase 1 themes and associated Phase 1 interventions within the [STPR2: Update and Phase 1 Recommendations report](#)¹.

The GCPH response to specific questions in the STPR2 consultation is provided below. The consultation questions are in black font. The GCPH responses and comments on the consultation questions are provided in blue.

Q5. Do you feel the eight themes within the STPR2 Phase 1 capture what needs to be done in the short term, in relation to the transport investment priorities?

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q6. Do you feel the themes appropriately address challenges and opportunities described within the report?

- Yes**
- No

Q6b. Please use the space below to provide any further comments on the challenges and opportunities described within the report:

We welcome the clear focus in the review on creating a sustainable inclusive transport system that contributes to reducing our carbon emissions and thus to meeting the commitment set out in Scotland's Climate Change Bill to achieve net-zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. Among the many challenges that this commitment poses, probably the greatest will be in reducing car use. The specific commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030 will help us all focus on how this target can be achieved.

However, are there sufficient disincentives to car use - alongside active travel infrastructure and public transport upgrades - that will help achieve this? Given that car use has almost returned to pre-lockdown levels despite a large proportion of the population working from home – and therefore not needing to commute – much more radical measures will be needed to disincentivise car use.

The current transport system is car-dominated and transport investment over the last 70 years has been heavily skewed toward roads. This will have to change. Recent commitments to increase funding for public transport and active travel are necessary but not sufficient; even greater investment in active and sustainable transport will be undoubtedly be needed. To take one example, while the budget for active travel has increased substantially, the £100 million allocation in 2020/21 still accounts for only 3.3% of the total Scottish transport budget. As far back as 2008 the Association of Directors of Public Health were arguing for 10% of the UK transport budget to be allocated to active travel².

This level of investment will be needed to bring Scotland's spending in line with countries with high levels of walking and cycling like the Netherlands and Denmark.

The integrated policy context provided by the Climate Change Plan, the National Transport Strategy and National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) provides a real opportunity to make positive changes for communities, making active travel a safer, more convenient choice, improving the attractiveness and connectivity of places and, at the same time, reducing the impacts of air and noise pollution.

In making this shift to a sustainable low carbon transport system, including taking action to make '20 minute neighbourhoods' a reality, sustained and focussed efforts will be needed to avoid exacerbating existing transport inequalities and indeed to create more equitable affordable transport options that can be accessed by all.

Q7. Do you feel that the Phase 1 interventions associated with the eight themes support the priorities and outcomes of the National Transport Strategy?

- Strongly agree
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q8. Please use the space below to provide any further comments that you wish to make on the eight themes.

Given the necessity to reduce car use and many potential barriers to doing this, it is perhaps an omission to not have given more emphasis to this as a theme on its own. Granted the interventions under several of the themes aim to encourage modal shifts away from car use e.g. active travel freeways, bus prioritisation, mobility hubs, road space reallocation etc., but arguably there is a need for a more explicit and targeted focus on reducing car use. This might encompass a range of measures, including: reducing city and town-centre parking availability, workspace parking levies, tackling financial benefits passed on by employers to employees which incentivise car use, extending LEZ schemes to other cities in Scotland and to neighbourhoods where air quality is poor (and not caused primarily by the local population), and restricting car travel to and from schools to a minimum.

There is strong evidence that whole town or city interventions which may contain many intervention types are more effective than solely localised interventions at increasing levels of active travel and reducing car use³.

Q9 How well do the Phase 1 interventions respond to the uncertainty in travel demand and behaviour that we face in the short term due to COVID-19?

- Very well
- Well**
- Don't know / No opinion
- Poorly
- Very poorly

Q10 How well do the Phase 1 interventions support Scotland's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the short-term?

- Very well
- Well**
- Don't know / No opinion
- Poorly
- Very poorly

Q11 Please use the space below to highlight the Phase 1 themes and interventions, that you particularly support:

We are very supportive of promoting smart and sustainable travel across Scotland: including active travel freeways, expansion of 20 mph zones and influencing travel choices. In relation to this we would make the following additional points:

The STPR2 report points out that 'fear of road danger is the biggest single barrier to increasing active travel rates'. Given this undoubted truth and the fact that cycling casualties have been increasing in recent years^{4 5}, there needs to be an acceleration in the development of safe active travel infrastructure and, crucially, a consistent and comprehensive national approach to reducing road speeds in urban settings.

The expansion of 20mph zones should make towns and cities much safer, particularly for the most vulnerable road users (wheel-chair users, pedestrians and cyclists) and encourage more people to walk, cycle and wheel. However, what is outlined appears to be slow progress, involving a further review and a strategy for implementation. The implementation of 20 mph limits and zones needs

to be accelerated alongside the other actions that are being taken to encourage active travel. There is also a potential inequalities issue arising from the encouragement of localised approaches to 20mph limits across Scotland, which is that those local authorities that implement such schemes like Edinburgh benefit from reduced road casualties (accompanied by increased active travel), while residents in other areas do not and continue to experience a higher risk of being a pedestrian or cyclist road casualty.

In terms of encouraging behaviour change, there needs to be an inequalities focus given pre-existing transport inequalities and Covid impacts on public transport. Taking cycling as one example, some groups in the population face a range of barriers in accessing and using a bicycle. Cheap access bike hire schemes and tailored local support can help overcome such barriers⁶, but this type of work needs to be funded on a larger scale and on a more long-term sustained basis.

We also welcome the 'smart and sustainable towns and villages' theme. It would support place-based investment, including town centre revitalisation and ambitions to develop 20-minute neighbourhoods. However, care needs to be taken in planning these developments at scale to avoid creating greater inequalities, where an affluent neighbourhood is more likely to be able to adapt and therefore benefit, in comparison say to a community on a peripheral housing estate. We would argue that as well as focusing on pilots for 20-minute neighbourhoods, the principles to create such neighbourhoods need to be more widely embedded across all planning decisions.

The themes of 'Transforming Cities' is one we strongly support. The '[Spaces for People](#)' programme has been delivered quickly during the pandemic and offers lessons for how active travel developments, which often go through lengthy and convoluted planned processes, can be accelerated. That said, inclusive and meaningful community engagement should always be part of this process.

Glasgow provides a pertinent current example of the need to manage down car demand while expanding active and sustainable travel. The Glasgow Avenues project, which is taking road space away from motorised vehicles, increasing dedicated space for cycling and walking and enhancing the attractiveness of the city centre streets, will be delivered over the next 7 – 8 years in the city centre. To be achievable, there will need to be a significant increase in public transport use and active travel to compensate for a required reduction in motorised traffic in the city of approximately 35%.

We are supportive in principle of the concept of developing a Glasgow Metro system with its strategic focus on creating a better public transport system that addresses the inequalities in access within the current system and its wider contributions to reducing carbon emissions and air pollution. The gathering and assessment of evidence on socio-economic factors, health characteristics and travel patterns of residents in the city region is detailed.

The potential contribution a metro system could make to transport planning objectives is assessed to be strong. Nevertheless, at this point in time, much has still to be decided about how this system will be developed and where. It is noted that the 'Metro provides an opportunity to target people who currently choose to use car due to either a perceived or actual lack of effective alternative'; for a future Metro system to be judged a success it needs to contribute to significant reductions in single occupant car journeys and thus to significant reductions in climate change and air pollution emissions.

We are also strongly supportive of efforts to encourage more people to use public transport, in particular bus use which has been suffering a prolonged decline for many years. Increasing bus passenger numbers is vital if we are to see a modal shift away from single vehicle car use, and this will be even more of a challenge given the restrictions and fears around public transport use

that have arisen as a result of the pandemic. Efforts to make bus travel more attractive will require a mix of approaches: bus prioritisation measures, affordable pricing, integration with other modes, improved frequency and coverage of services and media campaigns to encourage people back on buses.

References

¹ Jacobs UK Ltd and AECOM Limited. *STPR2: Update and Phase 1 Recommendations*. February 2021. Available at: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/49098/stpr2-update-and-phase-1-3-feb-2021.pdf>

² Association of Directors of Public Health (press release) *10% investment in walking and cycling needed now to tackle UK obesity crisis*. April 2008. Available at: http://www.adph.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Active_Trave_release_FINAL-24-April-081.pdf

³ Davis A. *No 182 Sustainable Travel Towns: An evaluation of the longer term impacts*. 2019. Available at: <https://travelwest.info/essential-evidence/no-182-sustainable-travel-towns-an-evaluation-of-the-longer-term-impacts>

⁴ Young M and Whyte B. *Cycling in Scotland: review of cycling casualties*. Date: February 2020. Available at: https://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/924_cycling_in_scotland_review_of_cycling_casualties

⁵ Understanding Glasgow. *Transport Section*. Available at: https://www.understandingglasgow.com/indicators/transport/road_casualties/adult_road_casualties/cyclists_and_pedestrians

⁶ Yates G, Whyte B. *Bikes for All evaluation: Phase one report 2018/2019*. Glasgow: GCPH; 2019. Available at: https://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/911_bikes_for_all_widening_access_to_cycling_through_social_inclusion