

# Cross-Party Group on Sustainable Transport

Tue 1 October 18:00 - 19:15

Minute

Present

MSPs

Graham Simpson MSP, Convenor  
Sarah Boyack MSP, Vice-Convenor  
John Mason MSP, Vice-Convenor

Invited guests

Dr Lee Muir (Sustrans)  
Islay Jackson MSYP (Scottish Youth Parliament)  
David McGill MYSP (Scottish Youth Parliament)

Non-MSP Group Members

In-person

- Abigail Fletcher (Graham Simpson MSP office)
- Richard Gale (Highland Council)
- Colin Howden (Transform Scotland)
- Stacey O'Flaherty (Transform Scotland)
- Laura Hyde-White (Transform Scotland)
- Lawrence Marshall (CRAG)
- Robert Samson (Passenger Focus)
- David Jackson (Consumer Scotland)
- Patrick Miner (individual)
- Alfred Gathorne-Hardy (individual)
- Mark Shields (Sustrans)

- Dr Lee Muir (Sustrans)
- Robert Macbean (Sustrans)
- Scott Runciman (Cycling UK)

## Online

- Chris Day (Transform Scotland)
- Dave du Feu (Spokes)
- David Collins (Cycling Scotland)
- Debbie Chesterman (Intelligent Health)
- Deidre Harrington (University of Strathclyde)
- Douglas Bryce (Disability Equality Scotland)
- Ellie Harrison (Get Glasgow Moving)
- Farid Bardid (University of Strathclyde)
- Ian McCall (Paths for All)
- Jenny Milne (SRITC)
- Jim Densham (Cycling UK)
- Jim Riach (Loch Lomond and Trossachs Countryside Trust)
- John Binning (SPT)
- Karen O'Hare (University of Strathclyde)
- Kate Joester (Living Streets)
- Keith Irving (Cycling Scotland)
- Ken Haig (LMRC)
- Craig Laws (Enterprise Mobility)
- Margaret Dalziel (Intelligent Health)
- Cara McClean (Claire Baker MSP office)
- Mike Harrison (Midlothian Disability Access Panel)
- Paul Tetlaw (Transform Scotland)

- Paul White (CPT)
- Peter Ovenstone (Heritage Railway Association)
- Rhona Malcolm (Scottish Youth Parliament)

## Apologies

Brian Whittle MSP  
 Sarah Boyd (Lothian Buses)  
 Margaret Douglas (Public Health Scotland)  
 Bob Docherty (RIA)

## Agenda item 1: Introductions and new membership

Graham Simpson MSP opened the meeting at 18:01, introducing speakers from Sustrans and Scottish Youth Parliament on the topic of transport, children & young people.

New members were proposed to the group: Trust in the Park, Richard Gale (individual), David Weir (individual), Climate Action Hub Lanarkshire, Get Glasgow Moving. All proposals were approved except David Weir as he was not in attendance.

## Agenda item 2: Children’s Walking and Cycling Index — Sustrans

Dr. Lee Muir provided an overview of Sustrans’ initiatives involving children and young people, focusing on promoting active travel and improving transport infrastructure through various programs.

### Sustrans' Key Projects

- **iBike, Hands Up Scotland Survey, Places for Everyone, Big Walk & Wheel:**  
 These projects, funded by Transport Scotland and local authorities, aim to increase children's engagement in active travel, such as walking and cycling.
- **New Initiative: Children’s Index**
  - Focus on children's perspectives on travel, transport, and safe communities.
  - Purpose: To fill data gaps on children’s experiences and measure the impact of investment on reducing inequalities.
  - The report is expected in early 2025.

- Preliminary data collected from over 1,000 children and young people.

## Key Statistics and Insights

- **Active Travel and Physical Health**
  - **Active Travel:** Approximately 50% of Scottish children travel actively to school, while car use is declining.
  - **Physical Activity:** Up to 42% of children are not meeting recommended physical activity levels; 31% are obese.
  - High Benefit-Cost Ratios (BCRs) for active travel investments.
- **Walking & Cycling Index**
  - Since 2015, Sustrans has collected data for 23 cities across the UK and Ireland, which has been used to shape policy decisions.

## Children's Index – Key Findings

The Children's Index revealed four major themes based on survey responses:

### Poverty & inequality

- 41% of children are concerned about their family's financial situation.
- 78% support reducing the cost of bicycles.
- 73% of ethnic minority children cycle, compared to 81% of the majority population.
- 74% of disabled children cycle, compared to 83% of non-disabled children.

### Healthy Active Lifestyles

- 90% feel their local area is safe for walking.
- 70% believe their area is safe for cycling.
- 48% express a desire to cycle more often.
- 23% want to be driven less by their parents/guardians.
- 30% are concerned about their health, including issues like stress and anxiety.
- 42% feel the government is doing enough to help children lead healthy lives.

### Access to Services

- 80% would walk more if parks, shops, and playgrounds were closer to their homes.
- 79% want more essential services to be within walking distance.
- 46% think the government can reduce car use by providing more transport options.

### Infrastructure

- 80% agree that more road crossings would encourage walking.
- 79% believe that cycle paths separated from traffic would make them cycle more.
- 62% rate their local area positively for public transport.

### **Practical Applications and Next Steps**

- **Orkney Travel Matters:**  
A local project aimed at understanding residents' travel priorities, which will serve as a foundation for improving active travel infrastructure, particularly in Papdale East Park, Kirkwall. Young people from Orkney were involved in providing feedback on this project.
- **Future Directions:**  
The findings from the Children's Index are intended to guide policymakers and planners in creating transport solutions that address the needs and safety concerns of children and young people, with the goal of reducing inequalities in walking and cycling opportunities.

Dr. Muir emphasised the importance of the Children's Index in encouraging adults to consider the transportation needs of younger populations and to create evidence-based policies that promote healthier, more active lifestyles.

## **Agenda item 3: Young People and Public Transport — Scottish Youth Parliament**

David McGilp MSYP and Islay Jackson MSYP, representatives from the Scottish Youth Parliament's Transport, Environment & Rural Affairs committee, introduced the work of the SYP. They explained that the SYP serves as the democratically elected voice for Scotland's young people, offering a platform to campaign for changes that affect young people.

### **Overview of SYP and Transport**

- The SYP aims to make transport easier, cheaper, and safer for YP, focusing particularly on public transport, though active travel was covered in a previous presentation by Sustrans.
- The history of transport access for young people was discussed, with a focus on the need for improvements in public transport for young people across Scotland.

### **All Aboard Campaign**

- **Free Public Transport for Young People:**  
SYP's "All Aboard" campaign successfully advocated for free PT for all young

people across Scotland, resulting in the current U22 free travel scheme. The scheme has had a huge positive impact on YP, especially in reducing isolation for those who rely on PT as a “crucial lifeline.”

- **Does It Work for Everyone?**

While the U22 scheme has been beneficial, not all young people are benefitting equally. The MSYPs proposed extending the scheme to cover young people up to the age of 26, emphasising that all public transport should be accessible to YP, regardless of their location. This is especially important for young people in rural and island communities, where access to ferries and trains is vital for equal access to opportunities.

## **Next Steps for Public Transport**

The MSYPs outlined key priorities to make public transport more accessible and functional for young people:

- **Affordability and Accessibility:**
- **More Reliable and Regular Services:**
- **Better Route Planning and Connections**
- **Safer Waiting Spaces and Shelters**
- **Accessibility for Disabled People**
- **Attitudinal Changes Toward Young People Using Public Transport**

## **Young People in Decision-Making**

The MSYPs reiterated that young people are experts in their own experiences and should be included in decision-making processes related to public transport. They proposed:

- Involving YP in the **design and delivery** of public transport services to ensure these services meet their needs.
- Increasing YP presence in **decision-making spaces** to improve policy-making and transport planning.
- Exploring ways to **meaningfully involve children and young people** in transport-related decisions to create more inclusive and effective policies.

## **Agenda item 4: Q&A**

**Q: Graham Simpson MSP – How many members on the SYP’s Transport, Environment & Rural Affairs (TERA) committee? How often do you meet? Can**

**CPG members join meetings?**

**A:** The TERA committee has 24 members, meets four times a year, and welcomes CPG members to join.

**Q: Richard Gale – Transport is crucial for rural youth (Highlands), but most services are focused in Inverness. Any thoughts on expansion or community transport?**

**A:** No direct response, but context provided regarding the importance of community transport connections, especially to health services.

**Q: John Mason MSP – The survey shows high figures for safe areas (90%) and good public transport (62%). Was the data split by geography or gender?**

**A:** The survey, conducted by YouGov with over 1,000 children, was separate for Scotland but more detailed analysis (by geography) will be available in February when the full report is released.

**Q: Jenny Milne (SRITC) – Are school buses included in the Sustrans index? Also, issues with Young Scot cards – any plans to digitalise?**

**A:** SYP isn't responsible for the Young Scot card, but personal experiences indicate problems. No current plans to fix this, but the issue should be raised with Young Scot.

**Q: Chris Day (EBUG) – How to get more young people involved in public transport campaigns?**

**A:** MSYPs recommend connecting with local MSYPs and adjusting engagement techniques. Many young people are passionate about transport and accessibility.

**Q: Sarah Boyack MSP – How does active travel and public transport relate to mental health and wellbeing? Do young people prefer PT over driving?**

**A:** Young people are concerned about their health and safety and recognise the benefits of active travel. They are aware of financial and road safety concerns, and many favour public transport over driving due to these factors.

**Q: Dave de Feu (Spokes) – How to encourage more active travel?**

**A:** Use evidence from young people to influence infrastructure decisions and normalise active travel.

**Q: Stacey O'Flaherty (Transform Scotland) – From a bus perspective, what are the top 3 issues young people face?**

**A:** The top concerns are accessibility, affordability, and improved services, especially in rural areas. Also, extending the free bus pass to those up to age 26 is needed.

**Q: Paul White (CPT) – Offer to assist in connecting SYPs with bus operators and support rural services amidst funding cuts.**

**Q: Kate Joester (Living Streets) – How can schools/universities facilitate active travel, including storage for bikes and wet clothes?**

**A:** MSYPs agree that schools and universities need to better facilitate this, and embedding active travel in education is important. Safety remains the largest barrier.

**Q: Graham Simpson MSP – Many parents don't let their children walk to school despite safe routes. Thoughts on this?**

**A:** No direct answer, but discussion on the growing reliance on cars, even with available safe routes followed.

**Q: Jim Densham (Cycling UK) – Do young people choose PT over driving for environmental reasons or due to costs?**

**A:** Many young people are environmentally minded, but personal time constraints and cost also play a role. PT is generally seen as more efficient but depends on geography.

**Q: Lawrence Marshall (CRAG) – Has bus usage increased since the U22 scheme began?**

**A:** Difficult to compare pre- and post-scheme data, but early reports suggest a significant impact on bus patronage among young people.

**Q: Scott Runciman (Cycling UK) – Importance of integrated travel?**

**A:** The need for integrated travel systems was acknowledged, particularly for safety and accessibility.

**Q: Chris Day – Bus patronage is increasing, but operators aren't fully reimbursed, leading to concerns about service provision.**

**Q: Robert Samson (Passenger Focus) – Highlighted the discrepancy in utility of free bus travel depending on geography i.e. the cost/value of U22 travel scheme varies across regions, e.g., c.£300 in Lothian vs c.£40 in the Highlands.**

**Q: Colin Howden – Are young people now more likely to be invited to give evidence on transport issues?**

**A:** There has been some improvement in youth engagement, but more can be done to involve young people in decision-making spaces.