

Cross-Party Group on Sustainable Transport

Tue 10 December 2024, 18:00 - 19:30

Minute

Present

MSPs

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

Invited guests

Catherine Heeney, Transport Scotland
Heather Williams, Scottish Women's Budget Group

Non-MSP Group Members

In-person

- Abigail Fletcher (Graham Simpson MSP office)
- Colin Howden (Transform Scotland)
- Laura Hyde-White (Transform Scotland)
- David Jackson (Consumer Scotland)
- Patrick Miner (individual)
- Mark Shields (Sustrans)
- Robert Macbean (Sustrans)
- Chris Day (Transform Scotland)
- Margaret Douglas (Public Health Scotland)
- Anne Docherty (Living Streets)
- Blair Moglia (CMAL)

- Fatima Durrani (Living Streets)
- Grace Robertson (Paths for All)
- Kate Joester (Living Streets)
- Kenny Morton (Motability Operations)
- Marian Marsh (City of Edinburgh Council)
- Michaela Jackson (Stirling Council)
- Michelle Thomson (First Bus)
- Naghat Ahmed (MACS)
- Rachael Revesz (Transform Scotland)
- Sally Hinchcliffe (Cycling Dumfries)
- Ruth White (City of Edinburgh Council)
- Lara Henderson (CTA)

Online

- Richard Gale (Highland Council)
- Scott Runciman (Cycling UK)
- Dave du Feu (Spokes)
- Deidre Harrington (University of Strathclyde)
- Douglas Bryce (Disability Equality Scotland)
- Ellie Harrison (Get Glasgow Moving)
- Karen O'Hare (University of Strathclyde)
- 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)
- Rhona Malcolm (Scottish Youth Parliament)
- Karen Conduit-Turner (Public Health Scotland)
- Kasia Sokulska
- Sandra Lavergne (SEStran)
- Rachael Prothero (Paths for All)
- Sara Collier (CPT)
- Kirsty Devlin (ScotRail)
- Greig Hawke (Lanarkshire Climate Action Hub)
- Helen Todd (Spokes)
- Islay Jackson (Scottish Youth Parliament)
- James Harkins (Light Rail UK)
- Mandy Hoggan (City of Edinburgh Council)
- Aaliya Shajahan (Paths for All)
- Alberta Gutteridge (Bike for Good)
- Andrea Thomson (SPT)
- David Giles (SAPT)
- Deidre Harrington (University of Strathclyde)
- Jenny Milne (SRITC)
- Natalie Blenins (Paths for All)
- Linnea Sjogren (Living Streets Scotland)

Apologies

Lawrence Marshall (Capital Rail Action Group)

Kevin Hobbs (CMAL)

Peter Ovenstone (Heritage Railway Association)

Allison Cosgrove (Railfuture Scotland)

Kevin Argue (Glasgow City Council)

Ian Budd (Friends of the Far North Line)

Robert Samson (Transport Focus)

Agenda item 1: Introductions and new membership

Graham Simpson MSP opened the meeting at 18:01, welcoming members and introducing speakers Catherine Heeney and Heather Williams to discuss women and girls' safety in transport and gender-responsive budgeting.

New members were proposed to the group: Motability Operations were approved.

Agenda item 2: Women & girls' safety on public transport — Catherine Heeney, Transport Scotland

Catherine, a researcher at Transport Scotland, presented the organisation's ongoing efforts to enhance safety for women and girls on public transport. This work addresses the specific risks women face while using public transport and proposes actionable solutions to create safer travel environments for all.

Timeline and key milestones

- **2022:** Jenny Gilruth began consultations on safety concerns, including a survey, an evidence review, and a stakeholder workshop to gather insights and data.
- **2023:** Transport Scotland published an award-winning final report. An intern began exploring technological recommendations, and a workshop brought together key stakeholders to refine strategies.
- **2024:** Published research on safety apps, supported policy colleagues in implementing recommendations, and launched a new webpage compiling all research findings to date.

Approach and Key Findings

Evidence review

The evidence review identified several challenges faced by women and girls in using public transport:

- **Economic barriers:** Women with lower incomes often rely on public transport as their only affordable option. However, traditional route planning does not

support trip-chaining (multiple, connected trips) or local travel, which women frequently require.

- **Lack of alternatives:** Many women are "transit captive," meaning they lack access to private vehicles, increasing their dependence on public transport.
- **Caring roles:** Women traveling with dependents or in caregiving roles face heightened risks of negative interactions or incidents.
- **Public transport as a 'crime attractor':** The transitory nature of public transport provides anonymity for offenders, limited supervision, and numerous potential targets, creating an environment conducive to crime.

Qualitative research

Key themes emerged from interviews and surveys conducted as part of the research:

- **Familiarity:** Women feel safer when traveling familiar routes or in known environments.
- **Reliability and frequency:** Increased reliability and frequent services contribute to a greater sense of security.
- **Time of travel:** Daytime travel is perceived as safer, with evenings and weekends considered higher risk due to lower service frequency and reduced visibility.
- **Alcohol and drug use:** The presence of intoxicated individuals adds to feelings of insecurity.
- **Normalisation and responsibility:** Women often normalise harassment or feel responsible for ensuring their own safety, highlighting the need for cultural change.

Stakeholder engagement and recommendations

Stakeholder Workshop

Transport Scotland convened a workshop with 40 stakeholders, including representatives from Police Scotland, the Scottish Government, women's sector organisations, and transport operators. The group discussed the report's recommendations and sought consensus on the next steps. Key principles agreed upon include:

- **Consultation with women:** Direct input from women is essential in designing safe transport environments.
- **Simplified reporting procedures:** Streamlining the process to report incidents can build trust and encourage reporting, supported by staff training initiatives.
- **Sharing best practices:** While some organisations are implementing effective measures, these practices are isolated. A coordinated approach is needed to ensure consistent safety improvements across Scotland.

Current efforts

"16 Days of Activism" Campaign (November 2024)

As part of the global *16 Days of Activism* campaign, Transport Scotland launched a dedicated webpage on November 26, 2024. The page highlights their ongoing work, research findings, and recommendations.

Key initiatives include:

- **White Ribbon campaign:** Engaging men to address their behaviour and promote respectful conduct in public spaces.
- **Tackling anti-social behaviour:** Collaborating with transport operators to develop policies and interventions aimed at reducing disruptive behaviour.

Next steps

Transport Scotland continues to focus on implementing the recommendations from their research and stakeholder engagements. Efforts are underway to address the cultural and structural challenges identified, ensuring safer public transport for women and girls while benefiting all users. The [dedicated webpage](#) will serve as a central hub for updates, resources, and future initiatives.

Agenda item 3: Gender budgeting — Heather Williams, Scottish Women's Budget Group

Definition of gender budgeting

Heather Williams of the Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG) introduced the concept of gender budgeting, emphasising its focus on evaluating how money is raised and spent and its impact on inequality. Key questions include:

- Who benefits, and who doesn't, from financial decisions?
- How do current practices embed or address inequality?

In transport, gender budgeting highlights disparities such as the emphasis on "men's modal journeys" (commutes from outskirts to city centres) over "trip-chaining" (shorter, interconnected journeys commonly made by women).

Principles of gender budgeting

Gender budgeting requires a framework that ensures:

- **Transparency:** Clear understanding of where and how funds are allocated.
- **Accountability:** Decision-makers must justify how budgets address inequality.

- **Participatory processes:** Engaging diverse stakeholders in decision-making.
- **Intersectionality:** Recognising overlapping social categorisations (e.g., gender, race, disability) in analysis.
- **Outcomes-focused metrics:** Prioritising performance and results that promote equity.

Findings from the 2024 women's survey

A survey conducted in 2024 highlighted the transport challenges women face:

- **Financial struggles:** 26% of women reported difficulties affording transport costs, with higher rates among single parents, disabled individuals, and rural residents.
- **Adaptation strategies:** Women often cut back on essential expenditures such as food and heating or limit travel to manage costs, leading to increased isolation and mental health impacts.

Insights on women's travel patterns

Frequent shorter journeys

Women typically take shorter, more frequent trips tied to domestic and caregiving responsibilities, compared to men's work-related travel.

Active travel barriers

- **Safety and accessibility:** 59% of respondents felt safety-related questions about cycling routes did not apply to them because routes often don't serve their needs, such as trips to schools or doctors.
- **Cycling investments:** Spending on cycling infrastructure disproportionately benefits white men, focusing on the length of new routes rather than their utility for care-related journeys.

Dominance of car travel

Many women rely on cars due to:

- Public transport's failure to reach essential destinations or accommodate tight schedules.
- Active travel infrastructure's inability to support care-related tasks, such as travelling with dependents or carrying heavy loads.

Case study: coping with transport costs

The survey's findings revealed women often reduce essential spending or limit travel due to rising transport costs. This has significant effects on isolation and mental health, particularly for single parents and those in rural areas.

Gender analysis in transport planning

Heather Williams outlined critical questions to address gender disparities in transport planning:

- Do proposals include demographic data on affected groups?
- Are women's and men's safety priorities reflected?
- How do plans impact unpaid care responsibilities?
- What effects do transport changes have on related services and partnerships?
- Are equality impact assessments comprehensive enough to address inequality?

Reflections on current expenditure

Williams criticised the disproportionate focus on metrics such as kilometres of cycling infrastructure built, arguing for a shift towards planning that considers utility and inclusivity. She pointed out that if active travel schemes show no positive impact on equity or accessibility, their effectiveness should be re-evaluated.

Recommendations

Heather concluded with recommendations to ensure gender equity in transport:

- **Centre unpaid care:** Planning must account for care-related journeys to make transport accessible for everyone.
- **Rethink active travel investments:** Focus on connecting care-related destinations and addressing barriers for underrepresented groups.
- **Conduct meaningful impact assessments:** Budgets and proposals must include detailed analysis of how they address inequality.
- **Incorporate diverse voices:** Engage women and underrepresented groups in shaping transport policies and infrastructure.

Agenda item 4: Q&A

The discussion during the Q&A session centred around various key themes related to improving transport safety and accessibility, particularly for women and vulnerable groups.

Key themes and questions:

- **Implementation and next steps:** Catherine Heeney emphasised the importance of moving from discussions to concrete actions. Heather Williams called for adding a fifth principle addressing resources and training, which is crucial for achieving safer, more inclusive transport systems.

- **Transport accessibility and safety:** Colin Howden (Transform Scotland) and Heather Williams highlighted the challenges with bus use, particularly for women, noting how new housing developments fail to consider transport needs. Michelle Thomson (First Bus) spoke from personal experience as a bus driver about the role of buses in making journeys safer for women, particularly at night, citing well-lit bus routes and confidence/security in drivers as factors that make women choose the bus over a taxi for instance.
- **Gendered impacts of transport policy:** Sarah Boyack MSP and Heather Williams discussed the systemic issues exacerbating inequality in transport. Heather mentioned that the current infrastructure often forces women to rely on cars due to lack of accessible alternatives.
- **Data and accountability:** The need for better data collection and analysis to understand the impact of transport policies/spending on women was repeatedly raised. Anne Docherty (Living Streets) expressed concerns over the need for more rigorous/time-consuming data collection which could delay action, noting that we do already have data about what *doesn't* work (i.e. existing transport proposals/systems).
- **Policy and legislative changes:** Mark Ruskell MSP raised questions about road-building projects and the potential benefits of disaggregated data to understand the true impact on different demographics. There was a discussion around the potential need for legislative changes and the integration of transport considerations into planning applications.
- **Community and behavioural change:** Grace Robinson (Paths for All) and Marian Marsh (City of Edinburgh Council) talked about the role of active travel and community engagement in making transport safer and more appealing. Marian Marsh suggested learning from Stockholm's approach to incorporating safe walking routes into new developments. There was emphasis on the need for funding to support social infrastructure (behaviour change programmes) as well as physical infrastructure to deliver a more equitable transport system.
- **Challenges and obstacles:** Heather Williams noted the disconnect between funding and achieving desired outcomes in transport policies. Marian Marsh highlighted the need to address the culture of fear among women to increase confidence in using public spaces.

Close

Graham Simpson thanked all attendees and speakers, reminding the group that the fourth event in the series on tackling transport inequalities would be on the topic of disabilities — and would be scheduled for February 2025, with a final event and report due in May 2025.

Graham Simpson closed the meeting at 19:29.