

# **Cross-Party Group on Sustainable Transport**

**11 June 2024, 18:00, Committee Room 5,**

**Scottish Parliament**

**Topic: Transport & Poverty**

## **Minutes**

### **Present**

#### **MSPs**

Graham Simpson MSP (Convener, chairing)

John Mason MSP (Deputy Convener)

Sarah Boyack MSP (Deputy Convener)

### **Invited guests**

Guest speaker: Dr Margaret Douglas (Public Health Scotland)

Guest speaker: Bertrand Deiss (Transport Scotland)

Guest speaker: Ralph Hartley (The Poverty Alliance)

Sam Allwood (individual)

#### **Non-MSP**

Ruxandra Carmina Cazan (Ore Valley Housing Association)

#### **In-person**

Mike Connelly (Rock Road)

Adrian Davis (Edinburgh Napier)

Abigail Fletcher (Graham Simpson MSP office)

Suzanne Forup (Cycling UK)

Richard Gale (Highland Council)

Ellie Harrison (Get Glasgow Moving)

Colin Howden (Transform Scotland)

David Jackson (Consumer Scotland)

Susan Jeynes (Transform Scotland)

David Kelly (Community Transport Association)

Iain MacDonald (Light Rail UK)

Lawrence Marshall (Capital Rail Action Group)

Robert MacBean (Sustrans)

Aaron McHale (individual)

Patrick Miner (individual)

Robert Samson (Transport Focus)

Mark Shields (Sustrans)

Paul Tetlaw (Transform Scotland)

Chris Thompson (Living Streets Scotland)

## **Online**

Linda Bamford (MACS)

Sarah Boyd (Lothian Buses)

Douglas Bryce (Disability Equality Scotland)

Catriona Burness (RNIB Scotland)

Sara Collier (CPT)

Seona Carnegie (Scottish Government)

Chris Day (Transform Scotland)

Dave du Feu (Spokes)

Anna Gale (Public Health Scotland)

Sheila Gilmore (Scottish Rural & Islands Transport Community)

Ken Haig (Levenmouth Rail Campaign)

Caroline Hastings (Aberdeenshire Council)

Greig Hawke (Lanarkshire Climate Action Hub)

Jim Harkins (Light Rail UK)

Keith Irving (Cycling Scotland)

Craig Laws (Enterprise Mobility)  
Dennis Macharia (Transform Scotland)  
Ian McCall (Paths for All)  
Anne McCormack (The Poverty Alliance)  
Robyn Mcsharry (individual)  
Heather Noller (Network Rail)  
David Prescott (AllanRail)  
Scott Runciman (Cycling UK)  
Kate Samuels (Sustrans)  
Andrea Thompson (SPT)  
Kim Ward (Lothian Community Transport Services)  
Scott Wilson (3x1 Group)

### **Apologies**

Katy Clark MSP  
Mark Ruskell MSP  
Brian Whittle MSP  
Ian Budd (Friends of the Far North Line)  
Alex Stewart (Siemens)

### **Welcome & introductions**

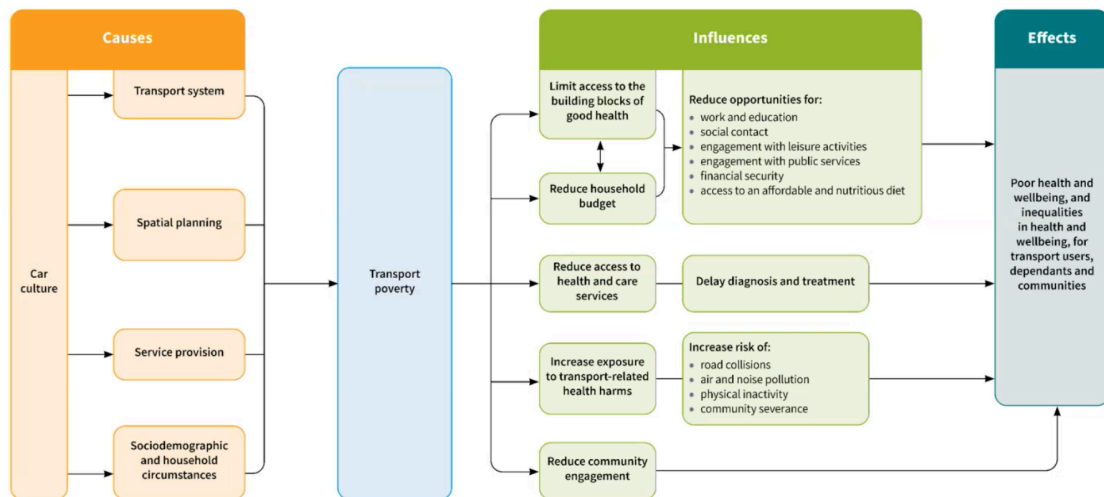
Graham Simpson MSP, Convener of the CPG, opened the meeting at 18:02. He introduced the speakers: Dr Margaret Douglas (Public Health Scotland), Bertrand Deiss (Transport Scotland) and Ralph Hartley (The Poverty Alliance).

### **Presentations**

***Dr Margaret Douglas (Public Health Scotland): Transport Poverty – a public health perspective***

Margaret reported on Public Health Scotland’s work on Transport Poverty. She noted PHS’s recent report ‘Transport Poverty: A public health issue’ and outlined the causes, influences and effects of transport poverty (see model below).

**A model of transport poverty: the causes and influences on health and health inequalities**



Margaret noted that transport poverty refers to more than affordability, noting PHS’s definition of transport poverty: ‘The lack of transport options that are available, reliable, affordable, accessible or safe that allow people to meet their daily needs and provide a reasonable quality of life.’ She emphasised that poor transport provision and car domination impacts health as it has knock-on effects for household budgets, access to health care, exposure to pollution or injury and access to community engagement.

Margaret noted groups most likely to be affected by transport poverty were: those living on low-incomes, women, rural communities and disabled people.

She then summarised key recommendations for tackling transport poverty:

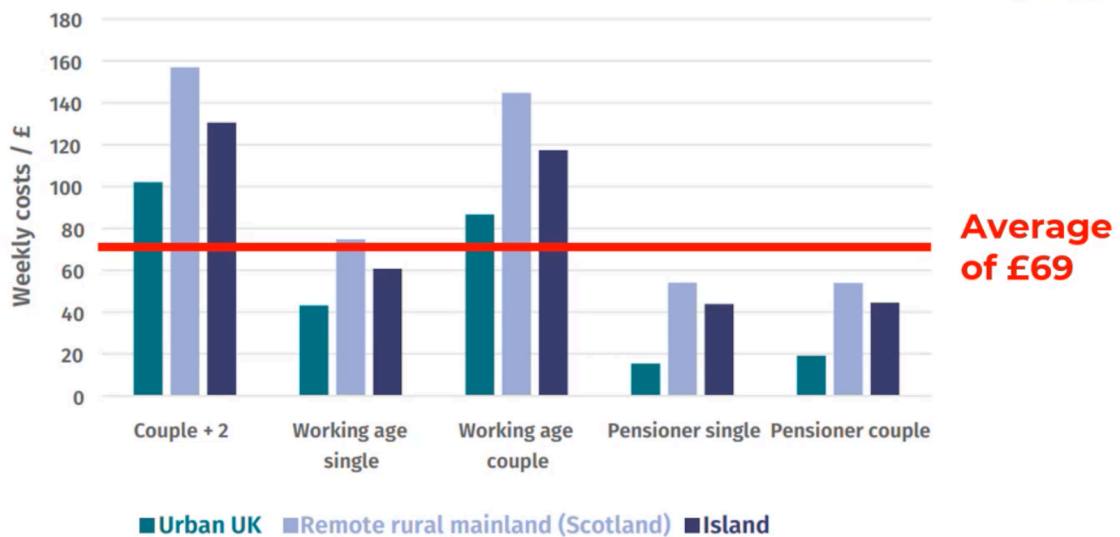
- Develop shared understanding of dimensions of transport poverty (i.e. beyond affordability)
- Develop indicators for each dimension
- Increase awareness across sectors
- Invest in sustainable transport options
- Support sustainable transport hierarchy in spatial planning
- Ensure service provision partners with transport
- Take account of diverse needs
- Understand and address car dependency.

**Bertrand Deiss (Transport Scotland): The Scottish Government's actions to eradicate transport poverty**

Bertrand introduced his role at the Climate Change & Just Transition Unit at Transport Scotland, responsible for coordinating the transport input into forthcoming Climate Change Plan, developing the Transport Just Transition Plan and the plan to cut car use by 20% by 2030.

He discussed how transport poverty varies across geographies (i.e. more strongly felt in rural Scotland).

**SG actions to eradicate transport poverty**



Bertrand noted that the draft Transport Just Transition Plan sets out a target to eradicate transport poverty by 2045 and reported the recommendations and actions from the recently concluded Fair Fares Review – including improving services and fare structures, with a focus on supporting bus use.

**Ralph Poverty (The Poverty Alliance): Transport poverty – Rural and Urban perspectives and lessons from lived experience**

Ralph opened his presentation noting that low income groups travel less as transport accounts for a significant portion (average 14%) of household expenditure – which results in reduced access to services which may help people escape poverty i.e. work, education. He added that low income groups also rely more on buses, and that the cost of bus fares has risen 26% above inflation between 2010-2020.





Ralph noted that transport poverty and poverty are inextricably linked and that approaches to transport policy must have anti-poverty practices at their heart e.g. include a focus on cost and affordability.

Ralph reported on the Alliance's research and engagement with citizen panels in urban and rural Scotland with lived experience of poverty which identified the following themes (see slide below): reliability, concessionary travel schemes, safety, accessibility, engagement in policy making, and quality of vehicles. Improved public transport was also cited as a key factor in reducing car use.

**The Fair Fares Review – Key Messages from Lived Experience**

**the POVERTY ALLIANCE**  
WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

Reliability and trust in our public transport system	Concessionary travel schemes only available on buses – not ferries or trains	Safety is a key barrier, particularly for women, disabled people and BME people
Accessibility is a problem for disabled people and people with prams	People living on low incomes should be involved in policymaking & service design	Quality of stock needs to be improved (clean, safe and accessible)

 [www.povertyalliance.org](http://www.povertyalliance.org)    @PovertyAlliance

For rural residents, Ralph highlighted the premium paid for transport costs (additional £50 per week). He cited the rural transport system adopted in Switzerland as an example for Scotland to follow before summarising The Poverty Alliance's key policy asks:

- Improve affordability and accessibility of public transport
- Expand concessionary travel to under 25s, people in receipt of low-income & disability benefits, and unpaid carers
- Integrate transport systems
- Expand concessionary travel across all modes incl. rail, ferry, tram
- Ensure public transport funding is directed towards affordable reliable, safe networks which meet the needs of local people

## Discussion

Graham Simpson MSP asked for an update on Transport Scotland's route map to reduce car kms by 20% by 2030, and for details on the location and timings of the Fair Fares Review's proposal of a flat fare pilot.

Bertrand Deiss (Transport Scotland) advised that the route map will be published by autumn 2024 and that the timetable for the flat fare pilot is unknown.

Ellie Harrison (Get Glasgow Moving) noted the lack of urgency and support to deliver bus regulation and asked what the Scottish Government is doing to support it.

Bertrand Deiss stated that the regulation to allow the powers for franchising will be delivered alongside guidance expected in the autumn so local authorities and regional transport partnerships will have the powers needed to change the way public transport is operated.

Chris Day (Transform Scotland) asked whether The Poverty Alliance's research identified a reasonable single journey bus fare price.

Ralph Hartley (The Poverty Alliance) reported that this was not covered in the research but further work may look at this.

Richard Gale (Highland Council) asked what needs to be done to improve patient transport and access to healthcare, particularly in rural Scotland.

Margaret Douglas (Public Health Scotland) noted that there are various working groups, including a policy stream in Government, looking into this issue but there is no singular answer at present.

Sarah Boyack MSP noted that a third of women struggle to pay their transport costs and asked how we get more affordable buses across the country (not just densely-populated areas).

Kate Samuels (Sustrans) asked when bus fares will be capped as in England.

Bertrand Deiss noted that the flat fare pilot will be looking at this.

Robert Samson (Transport Focus) reported high levels of passenger satisfaction with the England £2 capped fare scheme and the resulting increased patronage. He noted also that 50% of people use the bus as they don't have access to any other mode, i.e. rail or car, and that this should be considered in future policy work.

Graham Simpson noted the need to flag the cost of bus fares across Scotland, not just in cities.

Aaron McHale (individual) noted his experience of living with sight loss which means he relies heavily on trains and public transport to make a positive contribution to society (i.e. access to work/social opportunities).

David Prescott (AllanRail) asked why rail is not included in concessionary fares schemes.

Bertrand Deiss noted that there are no plans to extend the concessionary scheme to rail but that it may be included as part of considerations on zonal integrated travel.

John Mason MSP asked how we tackle car culture, noting that despite good public transport provision in Glasgow, people often choose to drive.

Margaret Douglas noted that buses can be stigmatised in some places and should be challenged. She added that there is a vicious cycle in which public transport provision drops as they become less frequently used. She attributed dominant car culture to the car industry: marketing and advertising, a historic emphasis on building places suited for cars, in addition to being part of culture more generally.

Bertrand Deiss noted that land planning also underpins car culture, and that digital connectivity has a role to play in reducing car use.

Dave du Feu (Spokes) noted that improving transport for vulnerable groups (women, disabled people, low-income groups and rural communities) improves sustainable transport for all.

Ruxandra Carmina Cazan (Ore Valley Housing Association) asked to what extent green transport options and net zero transport infrastructure is conditional to tackling transport poverty.

Margaret Douglas noted that low density housing makes it harder to provide good sustainable transport which meets people's needs.

Ken Haig (Levenmouth Rail Campaign) praised the extension of the off-peak rail fare trial.

Mike Connelly (Rock Road) noted that financiers (of sustainable transport) look for certainty and structure and the ability for local authorities to regulate fares, suggesting structures across Scotland are needed to deliver fair bus services which meet people's needs.

Adrian Davis (Edinburgh Napier University) stressed the need to undo the work of the 1985 Transport Act which facilitated privatisation and that structure is needed to give people confidence.



Lawrence Marshall (Capital Rail Action Group) noted Luxembourg's free public transport fares and Germany's D-Ticket and asked what could be learned from their experience (in terms of poverty reduction as opposed to modal shift).

Bertrand Deiss noted that these schemes had been reviewed as part of the Fair Fares Review which concluded that these schemes are unaffordable in Scotland.

Margaret Douglas noted that concessionary/free fares are one part of transport poverty; there is no point having free/cheap fares if there is no service available.

Sheila Gilmore (Scottish Rural & Islands Transport Community) emphasised the need for operators to work together to ensure connectivity e.g. between rail and ferry.

Robert Samson (Transport Focus) said the starting point for better transport was first principles and passenger needs, which would then inform decisions on the necessary structures.

Sarah Boyack MSP noted the need for local and regional engagement i.e. not just top-down approaches to transport provision.

Ellie Harrison (Get Glasgow Moving) noted research which flagged the UK bus industry as an instance of privatisation which has negatively impacted human rights and poverty. She suggested national standards and regional delivery were needed i.e. regardless of location, passengers should be paying the same. She flagged the governance used in Zurich as an example to follow.

Paul Tetlaw (Transform Scotland) reiterated the need for better spatial planning and highlighted that the railway is the only mode of transport which charges passengers for use at peak times. He noted that reallocation of road space and congestion-reducing measures are needed to improve bus and tram speed.

Richard Gale (Highland Council) noted that there is a depopulation issue in Scotland (particularly in rural regions) and access to services/transport is an integral part of this issue.

Sarah Boyd (Lothian Buses) emphasised the need for reliability and that tackling congestion is key to ensuring reliable/attractive bus services.

### **Date for subsequent meetings and close of meeting**

Graham Simpson thanked the speakers and attendees for joining and contributing.

Colin Howden (Transform Scotland) noted that the CPG's current focus on Transport & Equalities would run until summer recess 2025 and would include five meetings: the current meeting on poverty as well as 4 further events expected in September

2024, November 2024, March 2025 and May/June 2025. Themes were to be finalised but would likely cover: women, disabilities and young people. He added that Transform would be advertising a voluntary position to assist with CPG meeting coordination and preparation of minutes and report-writing.

Graham Simpson closed the meeting at 19:30.

## **Minutes**

Draft minutes prepared by Laura Hyde-White (Transform Scotland) on 18.06.24.