

20% Reduction in Car Use by 2030

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2021, Transport Scotland committed to a highly ambitious target of reducing car use by 20% by 2030. The route map to direct this work, to be delivered by TS and COSLA, has been delayed and the actions within it have still to be agreed.
- 1.2 As the time available to make interventions between the present day and 2030 has reduced, the required interventions have become more intensive. A recent iteration of the draft interventions included Road User Charging.
- 1.3 At the Partnership Board meeting on 6 December 2024, as part of the Partnership Director's Update, there was an extended discussion about the potential use of demand management tools including Road User Charging, to encourage people to use their cars less frequently.
- 1.4 The Partnership Director was requested to take make the board's concerns about such measures, if not appropriately combined with a radically improved active, sustainable and public transport network, clear to Transport Scotland.
- 1.5 This report provides an update on developments since the last Board meeting and seeks to provide assurance to the Board that a revised timetable will allow interested parties to express their views as part of a future consultation process.

2. Background

- 2.1 Transport accounts for around a quarter of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions, with cars making up roughly 40% of these. Research modelling the decarbonation pathway for the transport sector demonstrated that – alongside the transition to zero-emissions vehicles – a 20% reduction in car use by 2030 was needed in order to meet the trajectory for transport carbon emission reductions required to achieve Scotland's 2030 net zero targets.
- 2.2 Transport Scotland (TS) set this challenging target and a draft Route Map was prepared in 2021. It was agreed by COSLA at that time. However, Ministerial changes within the Scottish Government subsequently delayed publication of the Route Map until late 2024.

- 2.3 Given the delay, the Route Map had been significantly amended, including intensive interventions, to attempt to achieve the targeted reduction in a far shorter period.
- 2.4 The Scottish Collaboration Of Transportation Specialists (SCOTS) responded to the consultation on behalf of its members (Scotland's 32 local authorities and seven RTPs), and the RTPs sent a joint response. Both responses welcomed production of the draft Route Map, but emphasised the need to incentivise behaviour change rather than focus on disincentivise current behaviours.
- 2.5 The request to focus on incentivising positive behaviour, is particularly apposite given that several initiatives designed to incentivise the change had largely either been paused, withdrawn, or had not matched the initial expectations. For example:
- The Bus Partnership Fund (BPF), which was to provide £500m of funding to improve bus services across Scotland, mainly through improvements to infrastructure, was introduced in 2023/24. It was paused later that year, then cancelled without announcement in December 2024. To date only around £26m has been spent – entirely on consultants' fees with nothing at all spent on road improvements.
 - In 2025/26 the BPF will be replaced by the Bus Infrastructure Fund, but the scope, qualifying criteria and value of this fund have not been clarified despite it having been announced in December 2024. It is likely that the value will be in the region of £10-£20m.
 - Under the Bute House Agreement, 10% of the total Transport budget would be spent on Active Travel from 2024/25 onwards. It had been anticipated that this could amount to c.£320m in 2024/25. In the event, unforeseen financial constraints meant that only around £190m has been allocated this year, so many infrastructure and behaviour change projects remain unfunded.
- 2.6 At the Partnership Board meeting in December 2024, as part of the Partnership Director's update, there was discussion about the need to offer long-term, appropriately funded, positive behaviour change interventions, relevant to rural and urban communities alike; and that these need time to be well bedded in, before demand management interventions are introduced. Further, it was felt that citizens should not be penalised when the delays in delivering on the government commitment was not their responsibility.
- 2.7 The Partnership Director reported that the issue would be discussed at COSLA's Environment and Economy Board on Friday 13 December, in order to agree a response to the consultation.
- 2.8 The Board requested the Partnership Director to draft an urgent letter on behalf of the Chair to Fiona Brown, Interim Director of Strategy and Analysis at TS, and to copy the letter to Gail Macgregor, COSLA's Environment and Economy Spokesperson.

3. Update

- 3.1 The letter requested in 2.8 was sent by the Chair to both Fiona Brown and Gail Macgregor.
- 3.2 The TS consultation was discussed at COSLA's Environment and Economy Board on Friday 13 December. COSLA members expressed concern, as they had at their previous meeting in November. These concerns included that the document should be considered as a framework, as opposed to a route map, noted a lack of data and evidence, a lack of clarity over available funding, and a perceived lack of engagement with stakeholders like RTPs.
- 3.3 Since that meeting, COSLA and TS have worked closely together, and a number of options were considered at COSLA's Environment and Economy Board on 7 February 2025 (see Appendix 1). After discussion, it was agreed to take forward Option 2, to revise the Route Map and, as a result of subsequent discussions, COSLA has released an outline of a new policy statement which will be published in spring 2025 (see Appendix 2).
- 3.4 On 6 March 2025, in response to a Parliamentary Question about the TS response to the above audit, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport was expected to confirm, among other things, that the target would be revised based on an impending report from the Climate Change Committee, and that the Route Map would now be published in Spring 2026.
- 3.5 For information only - in parallel with all of the above, Audit Scotland published a report titled 'Sustainable Transport: Reducing Car Use'. The report cited a lack of leadership, transparency and guidance, and produced a number of recommendations aimed at getting performance against this target back on track (see Appendix 3).

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The Partnership Board is asked to note that:
- 4.1.1 The 20% Reduction in Car Use by 2030 target is being reviewed
 - 4.1.2 The Route Map will not now be published until spring 2026
 - 4.1.3 Local authorities, CoSLA, SCOTS and RTPs will be consulted prior to the Route Map being finalised

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Appendix

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Policy Implications	There are no policy implications arising as a result of this report
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising as a result of this report
Equalities Implications	There are no equality implications arising as a result of this report
Climate Change Implications	There are no climate change implications arising due to this report

Appendix 1: Options presented to the CoSLA Environment and Economy Board on 7 February 2025

Option 1

The Route Map as previously considered by the Board is jointly published with Transport Scotland in Spring 2025 as originally intended and, where appropriate, includes changes to the content, as suggested by the Board at meetings in November and December 2024, and following feedback from key partners such as SCOTS and RTPs.

Option 2

Officers progress work on a revised document, presented as a renewed policy statement, following a staged approach. Throughout this process, the Board will have the chance to scrutinise and comment on the work being conducted by officers from COSLA and Transport Scotland, with updates provided where appropriate:

The Route Map is reframed as a renewed policy statement and published jointly with Transport Scotland in Spring 2025. The statement is reduced in scope compared to the original route map, setting out the high-level necessity for a reduction in car use and the importance of joint action by key stakeholders such as Scottish and Local Government, as well as key partners such as RTPs. The statement will take into account feedback from the Board, as well as key stakeholders such as RTPs and SCOTS. The statement would be subject to agreement by Leaders. A draft outline of the contents of this statement, as developed jointly with Transport Scotland, can be found in Annex A.

The Scottish Government takes forward in the spring the regulatory review required for the development and implementation of demand management measures required to meet car use reduction targets. This will allow councils with plans for demand management to develop their ideas further with partners. This would not be a joint publication, although COSLA may wish to respond to the review.

From late 2025 onwards, COSLA and Transport Scotland progress work on the development of a costed delivery plan. The plan will be developed to include further detail on the actions, responsibilities, costs, and timescales required to achieve car use reduction targets. The plan will be informed by Audit Scotland recommendations published in January 2025 and updated advice from the Climate Change Committee expected to be received in Spring 2025. This plan will be subject to discussion and agreement by the Board and Leaders.

Option 2 would see the Board agreeing to action in a key policy area and taking positive steps towards net zero in transport, in accordance with the Board's agreed principles, while also retaining a level of scrutiny and oversight over future work in this area which recognises the concerns raised by members at previous meetings.

Option 3

COSLA does not endorse the publication of either a Route Map or revised document. The Board recognises the difficulties this will result in for achieving our shared carbon emission reductions targets, and the potential reputational damage to both COSLA and Scottish Local Government as a whole in future debates on carbon reduction in Scotland.

Appendix 2: Outline of the Renewed Policy Statement

The renewed policy statement may cover the following areas. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list of areas, and the final document may be subject to changes:

- The current position in Scotland regarding car use in 2025.
- Outlining the clear evidence that we need to reduce car use at pace and scale to achieve net zero in transport by 2045.
- Acknowledgement that achieving this target will be difficult, as well as noting that monitoring of the data suggests that we off-track to meet 2030 targets.
- Re-emphasise our joint Scottish and Local Government commitment to car emissions reduction.
- Transport Scotland's long-term position on car use reduction will be set out in the draft CCP covering the period 2026-2040.
- The need for a behavioural change approach to car use reduction, including a new national conversation, and greater communication with the public.
- The identification of four sustainable travel behaviours for people to adopt according to their needs and circumstances.

The need for the creation of an enabling environment for both transport and other sectors, such as health and digital, to empower people to reduce car use via a combination of: Incentives to use sustainable transport – including a reaffirmation of the importance of bus services and active travel.

Disincentives to discourage car use and the need for demand management interventions. This also includes the need for reform of fuel duty.

Commitment in principle to the development of delivery plans, emphasising the importance of action by key stakeholders.

Appendix 3: Audit Scotland Sustainable Transport Audit Recommendations

The Scottish Government should:

As soon as possible, clarify its commitment to reducing transport emissions through the car kilometre target and how it aligns with the new carbon budget approach towards climate change policy.

By the end of 2025 at the latest, publish a realistic delivery plan that sets out how it will work with partners to achieve the restated target. This should include the impact Scottish Government, councils and RTPs are expected to have, clear roles and responsibilities, timescales, costs, and an appropriate monitoring and evaluation plan.

As soon as possible, publish the evidence on discouraging car use through demand management tools.

In 2025, publish guidance for councils on how to reduce car use and the need to travel in their communities, including the role that rural councils can play.

By summer 2025, review the first full year of the new system for active travel delivery, identify and address the identified challenges. It should evaluate the impact of the changes and whether they have resulted in more efficient delivery.

In 2025, start a national conversation with the public about their travel choices using effective behaviour change techniques to educate and encourage people to reduce their car use.

Scottish Government and COSLA should:

By the end of the 2024/25 financial year, confirm the joint governance and collective accountability arrangements for delivering, overseeing and scrutinising progress towards the 20 per cent target. These arrangements should include clear roles and responsibilities and have membership from across the Scottish Government, councils and representation from Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs).

The Scottish Government, councils and Regional Transport Partnerships should:

From 2025, report annually through the climate change plan update, or transport strategy updates, how spending in the year has affected the desired outcomes of fewer people using their car and more people travelling via sustainable modes such as active travel and public transport.

Use the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) process to consult with communities, businesses and the third sector and ensure that efforts to reduce car use are part of a just transition and do not deepen inequalities. The EQIA should clearly capture how bodies have considered and fully involved the needs of different groups as part of their decision-making.

Councils and Regional Transport Partnerships should:

As part of their Local Transport Strategies and Regional Transport Strategies, set out to what extent they will contribute to the 20 per cent target. This should include measurable key performance indicators, costs and timescales.

Regularly share good practise and learning, including their detailed analysis of how to achieve the target in their local area.