

ANGUS COUNCIL

**PLANNING AND TRANSPORT POLICY COMMITTEE
ROADS COMMITTEE**

**24 AUGUST 2000
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SUBJECT: TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORT AND DIRECTOR OF ROADS

<p>Abstract: This report advises members of the publication of the Transport (Scotland) Bill which has commenced its early stages of passage through the Scottish Parliament.</p>
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1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee note the introduction, on 5 June 2000, of the Transport (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament and the context for commenting on the passage of the Bill including via COSLA.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Transport (Scotland) Bill was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 5 June 2000. The policy objectives of the Bill are to deliver a sustainable effective and integrated transport system for Scotland. The Bill is intended to respond to the problems associated with growing road traffic levels, rising carbon dioxide emissions from road transport, continuing localised air pollution problems, and the exclusion of the elderly, those with a disability and those on low incomes from adequate public transport.

2.2 The specific provisions of the Bill cover a number of areas relating to the Scottish Executive's overall policy objectives:-

- joint transport strategies;
- bus services;
- road user charging and workplace parking levy;
- concessionary fares;
- bridges;
- measures relating to school crossing patrols, motorcycle parking and blue badges.

2.3 A copy of the Bill, together with the accompanying Explanatory Notes and Policy Memorandum, has been placed in the Members' Lounge.

3 CONTEXT FOR COMMENTS ON THE BILL

3.1 The Bill, as introduced to Parliament, represents the culmination of over two years of consultation and debate on the future direction of Scotland's transport policy. It is intended to provide for the legislative changes necessary to support the wider integrated transport strategy which the Scottish Executive wish to see taken forward

in partnership with local authorities, transport operators and a range of interested parties.

- 3.2 This wider strategy involves short-term and long-term action on public transport, walking and cycling, roads, rural transport and lifeline links to Scotland's remote rural communities. It seeks to take full account of the crucial policy linkages which exist between transport and land-use planning, the environment, health, social exclusion and a range of other policy areas. Many of the Scottish Executive's proposals do not require specific provision to be made in the Bill, but can be implemented through secondary legislation using existing powers.
- 3.3 Angus Council's comments on the Scottish Executive's proposals for the Transport Bill were previously set out in Report 273/00 to the Planning & Transport Policy Committee and Roads Committee on 9 March 2000. The Bill, as introduced, further develops and details various areas of policy building on previous outline proposals.
- 3.4 As the Bill is now entering its parliamentary stages there will be detailed scrutiny of specific provisions over the coming months. COSLA has recently formed a Transport Members' Network part of the early work of which will be to shape local Government's response to the detail of the Bill's proposals. Councillor David Selfridge, Convener of Planning & Transport Policy Committee, is the Council's representative on the COSLA Network.
- 3.5 A copy of the main points of COSLA's initial comments on the broad proposals in the Bill is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The Transport (Scotland) Bill includes various financial provisions which are relevant to local authorities and bus service operation, including:-
- agreements providing for service subsidies;
 - grants to bus service operators;
 - penalties;
 - repayment of grants towards bus fuel duty.
- 4.2 The Bill is likely to have significant resource implications (e.g. implementing a national minimum concessionary fares scheme, road user charging etc.) but at this stage it is not possible to quantify costs for local authorities. The Policy Memorandum accompanying the Bill indicates that the Scottish Executive will continue to make resources available through the Public Transport Fund, the Rural Transport Fund and other budgets.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Law & Administration and Director of Education have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The introduction of the Transport (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament represents a major step in taking forward the Scottish Executive's integrated transport strategy. Alongside the process for detailed parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill, COSLA have recently established a Transport Members' Network part of the early work of which will be to help shape local Government's response.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/CGR/KW
11 August 2000

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning and Transport

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APPENDIX 1

THE TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL

DRAFT COSLA BRIEFING

General Points

- COSLA welcomes the Transport Bill and supports its intent. 'Do nothing' is no longer an option for Scotland's diverse and pressing transport problems. Local Government wants to work in partnership with the Executive to deliver sustainable and integrated transport in Scotland.
- However, all parts of the transport network are inter-related and should not be considered in isolation. The Bill says nothing about walking, cycling or freight. It has no specific proposals for the trunk roads, ferries and railways which are reserved to Westminster or run by the Executive.
- The Transport Bill is therefore largely a 'some roads and buses bill', for those parts of the transport network which can be influenced by local authorities. But local Government cannot deliver its part in isolation and unassisted. The Executive must accept its responsibilities as a partner for change.
- Local Government awaits a national 'hearts and minds' campaign to promote sustainable transport to the public. This will ease the local introduction of the necessary measures by local authorities.
- The Bill has real resource implications for local authorities, who currently cannot maintain local roads to acceptable standards within the resources available to them. Complex bus and charging schemes will not command public support while the roads are visibly crumbling away.
- Integrated transport planning is already happening, in the transport strategies of local authorities. But they can only deliver change if the Executive takes a part in their preparation, includes its own parts of the network, and then directs its funding in support of the locally agreed transport priorities.

Joint Transport Strategies

- COSLA welcomes the Executive's decision not to take powers to impose new statutory regional transport bodies. Voluntary and locally appropriate arrangements are already working.
- COSLA supports voluntary joint transport strategies between local authorities, and also the principle of the Minister having powers to facilitate co-operation if voluntary arrangements do not succeed.
- However, the Bill gives the Minister powers to impose joint working, without providing details on when the powers might be used, the issues to be covered in the strategies, the role of the Executive as a partner, the duties of those affected, the sanctions against them, or the funding for the work.

- The Minister should not use these powers simply to prescribe how and when local authorities must address complex and politically contentious issues such as road user charging. Local authorities are best placed to know the problems which concern local people and the measures they will support.
- COSLA expects the Executive to be an active partner in all joint strategies, and they should cover all parts of the transport network, including those reserved to Westminster or run by the Executive. The Executive should direct its transport funding in support of the priorities which the strategies identify.

Bus Services

- COSLA welcomes statutory backing for Quality Partnerships. However, the facilities and standards expected in Quality Partnerships will not be appropriate or deliverable in many areas outside the largest urban centres, where operator investment and competition are low.
- Quality Partnerships will only persuade people to rely on buses if local authorities can set maximum fare ceilings and minimum service frequencies. The Bill should explicitly provide for both.
- Quality Partnerships are unlikely to ensure improved bus travel in many areas and the Executive should be realistic about this when local authorities apply to initiate Quality Contracts instead.
- Quality Contracts can offer stability in the bus market and security to smaller operators, thus encouraging competition. COSLA is concerned that the Executive still views Quality Contracts as a measure of last resort rather than as an essential tool for increasing bus use.
- The time taken to set up a Quality Contract means that no real improvement in bus travel will be possible until well into 2003. The Executive's proposed lead-in time of 21 months in all instances therefore requires very careful justification.
- COSLA believes that bus services should not change more than twice a year, in order to encourage stability in the network and the confidence of potential users.
- COSLA welcomes joint ticketing and information provision, but this must include rail and ferries. There should be a duty on operators to provide information as requested by local authorities.
- COSLA believes that all buses and coaches should be exempt from fuel duty, in recognition of their role in reducing car traffic, car dependence, social exclusion, and environmental impacts.

Road User Charging and Workplace Charging Levy

- COSLA welcomes these proposals, but recognises that road user charging is politically contentious and operationally complex. It will not be appropriate in most local authority areas and therefore cannot be seen as a general source of funding for local transport.

- The Executive should take ownership of its proposals and initiate a 'hearts and minds' campaign on the need for them. This will ease the introduction of the necessary measures by local authorities.
- Successful charging schemes will bring benefits to all sectors of society, to businesses and to our environment. The Executive should promote them as a 'contract with the community'.
- Real improvements in bus services are a pre-requisite for road user charging, but they will not be delivered by Quality Partnerships as currently proposed. It will be late 2003 before Quality Contracts can deliver improvements and 2004 before road user charging schemes can take effect.
- Road user charging schemes will place significant upfront funding burdens on local authorities, both for the schemes themselves and for the public transport improvements which must come first.
- The Executive should be prepared to act as a partner and allow limited trunk road charging as part of a local scheme, where requested by a local authority.

Travel Concession Schemes

- COSLA welcomes the proposal for a national scheme for pensioners and people with disabilities, but is deeply concerned about the costs to local authorities. The bill should make clear the Executive's responsibility for funding the scheme.
- The Executive should act as a partner in the scheme by including trains and ferries in its proposals.

Other

- COSLA supports the principle of the transfer of control of the Forth Road Bridge to a joint board of local authorities. However, there should be widespread consultation on the proposal and its financial implications.
- COSLA welcomes the proposal to allow inspection of 'orange badges' by Police Officers, Traffic Wardens and Parking Attendants, but believes that the 'orange badge' system is discredited and should be reviewed.
- COSLA welcomes the proposals for school crossing patrols and bicycle and motor cycle stands.
- The Executive should make clear its proposals for the National Transport Forum.