

Transport (Scotland) Bill

Friends of the Earth Scotland Stage Three briefing

Date: 4th October 2019



Summary

Friends of the Earth Scotland is calling for MSPs to **vote in favour of the Transport Bill**, and support amendments which strengthen key measures within the Bill. With the correct amendments, the Bill has the potential to cut air pollution and improve health in Scotland.

At stage 3, MSPs should:

- Retain provisions which give local authorities the power to introduce a Workplace Parking Levies or run publicly owned bus services, should they wish.
- Improve the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) grace periods.
- Set a clear purpose for LEZs and allow flexibility for LEZs to tackle future air quality challenges.

To achieve this, MSPs should back amendments:

43 which will remove unworkable exemptions.

57 and 145-148 which will ensure grace periods are an appropriate length.

54 and 135 which set out a clear purpose for LEZs.

49, 55, and 137 which ensure LEZs can help meet future air quality challenges.

65 which will give councils public ownership powers for buses.

The need to improve our air quality

Road traffic is Scotland's leading contributor to both climate change and air pollution.¹ Greenhouse gas emissions from road transport have grown 11.1% since 1990, and air pollution is linked to 2,500 early deaths a year in Scotland.² The Transport (Scotland) Bill provides an opportunity to deliver on our new climate change targets, while tackling one of our greatest public health challenges.

The Bill has had a number of improvements during its passage through Parliament. Giving local authorities the power to run their own bus services has the potential to transform public transport - services can be run as a public good where there is currently little or no provision, and profits can be reinvested in the network. The introduction of the

workplace parking levy also has the potential, where councils feel appropriate, to introduce a mechanism that deters car use and generates investment for public transport - supporting a transition to a cleaner transport system.

However, the Bill needs to be improved to ensure Low Emission Zones are effective.

Low Emission Zones

Grace periods

Throughout the Bill's lifetime, Friends of the Earth Scotland has consistently argued that the Grace Periods set out in the Bill are too long. Allowing up to 6 years of delay until LEZs come into effect means up to 6 more years of dangerous pollution for people living in Scotland's cities.

The recent Cleaner Air for Scotland Strategy review recommended that "*LEZs need to follow legal and policy timetables*

1

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-greenhouse-gas-emissions-2017/>

2

<https://foe.scot/press-release/new-research-means-2500-deaths-a-year-in-scotland-are-from-air-pollution/>

and be in place and delivering within 4 years”³. Grace periods must be reduced.

Friends of the Earth Scotland encourages MSPs to **vote in favour of amendments 54 and 135**, to create a clear purpose for the zones and provide clarity to local authorities.

MSPs are also encouraged to **vote for amendments 57 and 145-148**. These would ensure LEZ grace periods are in accord with expert advice and the urgent need to reduce air pollution.

National consistency

To effectively tackle air pollution and improve public health, the Bill must deliver LEZs which are robust and consistent, while also giving local authorities enough flexibility to meet local needs.

Friends of the Earth Scotland would encourage MSPs to **vote for amendment 43** to ensure exemptions do not undermine the LEZs. Voting **for amendment 49** will ensure there is a LEZ in any area with dangerous levels of air pollution. Voting for **amendment 55** will give councils the power to create an ultra low emission zone, if needed.

Expanding local authority bus ownership

Improving Scotland’s bus network will deliver improvements across a number of policy areas - opening up economic opportunities, tackling the health effects of transport pollution, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Under private ownership, the bus network is patchy, expensive, and only adequately serves the busiest of routes. Local authority ownership has the potential to reverse this. We need to run buses as

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/cleaner-air-scotland-strategy-independent-review/pages/15/>

public services, where profits are reinvested in improving the service.

Friends of the Earth Scotland urges MSPs to **support amendment 65** which allows councils to own and run their own bus services.

Workplace Parking Levy

The powers in the Bill allowing Scottish Local Authorities, where appropriate, to introduce a Workplace Parking Levy, are welcome steps⁴. This gives councils access to the same powers that their equivalents in the rest of the UK have, and introduces a proven measure to reduce congestion, tackle air pollution, and raise funds for sustainable transport options.

A WPL scheme can, for example, generate revenue which supports public ownership of buses and improvements to services.

Glasgow and Edinburgh Councils have requested these powers⁵⁶. The legislation, as presented, creates a framework which gives councils flexibility to create locally appropriate WPL systems - including locally set exemptions. Setting some exemptions nationally and some locally risks creating two-tiers of exemption, and will leave some groups overlooked.

Friends of the Earth Scotland encourages MSPs to **vote against all WPL exemptions**. This will ensure councils who wish to use these powers can design locally-appropriate schemes.

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⁴ <https://foe.scot/resource/workplace-parking-levies-briefing-feb-2019/>

⁵ <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/councillorsandcommittees/viawSelectedDocument.asp?c=P62AFQDN2UUTZL2UDX>

⁶ https://www.parliament.scot/S5_Rural/City_of_Edinburgh_Council_TB.pdf