

Dear Sharon,

I am replying to your request for views on behalf of the Scottish Labour Party. The Party welcomes the opportunity to put forward views in this consultation exercise. We agree that there is no consistent approach to parking policy in Scotland, with 25 stations having car parks where charges are applied. We would be concerned if the consultation led to policy proposals for charging at more stations as we believe there is no public support for extending charging and furthermore that the general introduction of charges could result in reduced train patronage and higher vehicle emissions as a result of increased car use. Our view therefore is that parking provision should, wherever possible be expanded, it should be free and for the exclusive use of passengers using the rail services. We also believe that more attention needs to be paid to improving lighting and fencing round station car parks in improve security, that consideration should be given to providing bus services to stations in places like Linlithgow, Dunblane or Bearsden where there is no more space for parking facilities and/or where existing parking fills up before 8am.

The Scottish Government should be making sure they don't just deal with cars but have an integrated approach which starts from the principle of making the rail network accessible to everyone.

- One of the main problems with car parking is that parking spaces are full to overflowing because there are often poor bus services, both in terms of routes and times of day (Linlithgow is an example of this)
- Bike access and parking is also often poor. What about a specific bit of research to see what it would take people to bike and rail? Bike routes to station improvements (see the comments below about the new Airdrie to Bathgate line)
- Train tickets are already very expensive and we should be looking to make rail use more attractive, if both trains and parking spaces are expensive then there's no incentive for people to park and ride. (Refundable parking charges or free parking tokens issued with tickets are better than parking charges having to be paid on top of rail fares)
- Maybe part of the solution would be to provide more availability of integrated ticketing - a holy grail for integrated transport enthusiasts, but it would make the bus/rail car/rail options more attractive.
- The issue of timing is also important. Although trains tend to run regularly throughout the day, buses are often infrequent outwith peak times making access to trains difficult if parking spaces are full. It would be if some demand research were commissioned to identify potential market opportunities for rail users.

As suggested above we are concerned that transport planning does not focus on most people might get to rail stations. There is concern that the opportunity was not taken to promote direct, short traffic free paths to the stations from neighbouring towns and villages on the new Airdrie to Bathgate railway. Walkers and cyclists are expected to use existing roads when to get to these new stations. Why not follow the example of the superb link between

Glenrothes and Markinch Station, which won Fife Council an award, and incorporate this approach in the access arrangements for new and existing stations. Failure to do this results in situations such as that at Croy Station on any weekday where there is endemic traffic congestion with many cars parked on the footways. In any other Northern European country foot- and cycle - paths would be a standard element of the planning process for new railway stations.

Poor planning seems endemic. My colleague Michael McMahon MSP has informed me that Strathclyde Partnership for Transport have decided to build a multi-storey car park at Uddingston Station in anticipation of this 'Caledonian Express' service on the Glasgow Central - Shotts - Edinburgh line. Unfortunately, Transport Scotland have decided that Uddingston cannot be used as one of the stops as the West Coast Main line runs through Uddingston and they cannot timetable the 'Caledonian Express' to stop at Uddingston without it impeding services on the WCM line. Transport Scotland have, therefore, decided to use Bellshill as the main stop in Lanarkshire for the 'Caledonian Express' but there is only a 16 space car park beside Bellshill station whereas Uddingston will have spaces for hundreds. In effect SPT are building a car park where the train it is designed for isn't stopping. Richard Simpson suggests reopening Blackford station as a way of easing problems at Dunblane where commuters have great difficulty finding any space near the station.

Cathy Jamieson MSP is concerned that the introduction of charges at rural station such as Auchinleck, new Cumnock, Maybole, Girvan and Barrhill would encourage passengers to use their cars for the whole journey, especially where the service is infrequent and the trains do not run at times that passengers would find most useful. At Kilmarnock and Ayr, where services are more frequent, refundable charges are in operation. The problem there is that all too often there are no spaces left, so users find themselves driving round and away again. Cathy's view is that more people will be encouraged to use trains on the Ayr - Girvan /Stranraer line and south of Kilmarnock via Auchinleck and new Cumnock if there are more trains, and they run at times which suit commuters. Increased patronage therefore depends on a variety of factors but there is no doubt that the introduction of charges would be a considerable disincentive. Similar concerns have been expressed by colleagues from other parts of Scotland and I hope that these point will be borne in mind when you review the evidence from the consultation.

Yours sincerely,

Des McNulty MSP

Labour Spokesperson on Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change