



A Manifesto for the Future of Scottish Transport

April 2026

INTRODUCTION

Delivering the Future of Scottish Transport

Transport plays a vital role in every aspect of Scotland’s social, economic and environmental prosperity.

From connecting people to employment, education and health services, to facilitating a strong Scottish exports sector and a productive and competitive economy.

A complex picture of large concentrations of urban density alongside remote rural populations, productivity that despite progress lags behind the UK average[1], and the transport

sector remaining the largest contributor of emissions - 33% of the total [2] - point to Scotland facing a variety of transport challenges across its network ahead of elections in Holyrood.

However, challenges can present opportunity. The sector finds itself in a state of rapid evolution, with technology and transport converging in ways that can address pervasive issues that have long afflicted the sector. In this Manifesto, we set out a number of policy proposals to support the future of Scotland’s transport system.

Value of the ITS sector to Scotland



£240 million in economic value (GVA)



3,345 jobs supported



£71,748 in GVA per job

1. <https://www.productivity.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/PIP045-Scotland-Insights-Paper-January-2025.pdf>

2. (33% emissions include international aviation and shipping) <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/connecting-scotland-the-value-of-transport/decarbonisation-the-key-role-transport-needs-to-play-in-meeting-scotland-s-climate-ambitions-and-the-opportunities-it-offers/>

Summary of Recommendations

1. Provide support to renew obsolescent urban traffic signal infrastructure to futureproof the network.
2. Build upon the MaaS Investment Fund to drive a more strategic approach to integrated transport in Scotland with leadership from Scottish Government.
3. Support greater budgets for operational expenditure at a local authority level, to purchase innovative software tech.
4. Leverage DRT to increase public transport availability, especially in rural and island areas.
5. Deliver a Scottish Bus Open Data Service (BODS) to improve alignment between transport operators and passenger experience.



1

Provide support to renew obsolescent urban traffic signal infrastructure to futureproof the network.

Scotland's urban traffic signal network is becoming a critical infrastructure asset at risk. Currently, a significant number of assets in urban environments have not been upgraded or renewed for a number of years.

As a result, key components such as controllers, signal poles, cabling, and heads are reaching the point of life expiry, and many assets still rely on halogen lamps, which are energy-expensive and increasingly difficult to source as transport authorities move to LED systems.

Glasgow and Edinburgh are the most acute examples. In Glasgow, 47% of signal assets require upgrade, and 45% of the network still uses halogen lamps; while in Edinburgh, around 30% require upgrading and 30% use halogen.

Other Scottish urban areas share the issue, with on average 20% requiring both upgrades and updated lamps across the country.

As a result, Local Authorities are operating ageing traffic signals which is economically and environmentally costly, but also unable to support cutting-edge advancements in traffic technology that can improve safety, cut congestion and reduce emissions.

Updating this infrastructure can deliver: real-time data to inform network management and policymaking; improved traffic flow and reduced congestion - supporting productivity, growth and lower emissions; and greater accessibility. Currently 83 sites in Glasgow are without tactile cones used by disabled users and 129 are without tactile paving.

Local authorities will not be able to meet the costs alone. Support from the Scottish Government will be required through a dedicated, rolling fund. ITS UK would suggest the Scottish Government set up a fund for competitive bids by Scottish local authorities to ensure a fair and cost-effective process.

2 Greater budgets for operational expenditure at a local authority level, to purchase innovative software tech.

Local authority budgets throughout Scotland are under considerable pressure. In 2025/26, councils will need to cover a budget shortfall of £647 million, rising to nearly £1 billion by 2027[1].

The gap in budgets persists despite councils meeting 90% of their savings targets in 2024/25, meaning current efforts to make savings through cost efficiencies are unsustainable. The situation requires a step change in how local authorities are provided with funding.

Whilst capital funding is vital for schools, hospitals and roads, to best leverage innovation in transport, it is also important councils receive increased headroom in operational spending.

Without sufficient operational expenditure (OpEx), local authorities are often forced to purchase transport technology on an ad-hoc basis,

or default to assets which have the lowest operational cost but provide less data or intelligent capabilities. This can lead to higher costs in the medium and long-term.

This can hold back innovation as well as proving more costly in the long term.

If Scottish Government wants councils to deploy and iterate innovative digital tools to better manage the transport network, they must issue long term, more flexible operational budgets.

Explicitly protecting and growing transport technology OpEx (potentially through ring-fenced allocations or multi-year revenue settlements) would unlock innovation and ensure that Scottish Government's capital investments in signals, data and digital platforms deliver better value over time.

[3] <https://audit.scot/news/communities-face-growing-expectation-gap#:~:text=Mounting%20pressures%20from%20inflation%2C%20increasing,libraries%2C%20as%20well%20as%20roads.>

3 Strategically leverage DRT to increase public transport availability, especially in rural and island areas.

Rural and island communities in Scotland face exacerbated challenges in the availability, accessibility and reliability of public transport, with dispersed demand, higher per-passenger costs and long, indirect routes that make conventional fixed-route services hard to sustain.

These conditions contribute to transport poverty, car dependency and difficulties in accessing work, education, health care and social opportunities [4].

To address these challenges and increase the provision of public transport in underserved areas, Scottish Government, at local and regional levels, should leverage Demand Responsive Transport (DRT).

DRT is a public transport mode geared towards local communities, that consist of dynamic, on-demand services. Modern DRT schemes use technology to match flexible services to real-time demand, allowing passengers to book shared vehicles via an app, web or by dialling a phone number.



4. https://ruralmobility.scot/images/Scottish_Rural_and_Island_Parliament_-_Transport_Forum_Report.pdf

DRT services already have a foothold in Scotland - schemes operate in Falkirk, Fife, Moray, Aberdeenshire and a number of Highland towns as well as across a number of urban and interurban areas.

However, the variety of funding and delivery varies greatly, with some schemes being funded by councils, grants and charities. Consistent and reliable funding frameworks, are currently holding back councils and operators from further investing in expanding schemes [5].

Another major barrier, is the exclusion of DRT as a tool for the delivery of desired transport outcomes in regional and national policy.

While many DRT schemes underpin access to essential services, and meet high-level goals in Scotland's 2020 National Transport Strategy, such as reducing inequality, reducing emissions, inclusive growth and improving health, DRT's omission as an instrument to achieve these policy outcomes, makes services harder to procure, or to be perceived as a 'nice to have' as opposed to necessary.

Through improved funding frameworks and statutory requirements, DRT can supplement the bus network where necessary, and provide public transport where bus routes are not viable; interurban, rural and island areas can offer more frequent, door-to-hub services in low-density areas, improve first and last-mile access journeys, and reduce the need to run empty or near-empty fixed services.



4 Build upon the MaaS Investment Fund to drive a more strategic approach to integrated transport in Scotland with leadership from Scottish Government.

If Scotland hopes to incentivise the use of more sustainable transport modes, it is key passengers have access to convenient, affordable, integrated methods of transport. Mobility as a Service (MaaS) or Digital Mobility Platforms can play a key role by leveraging technology in pursuit of this transport network desired by passengers, Government and transport operators alike.

(MaaS) or Digital Mobility Platforms are a means of bringing all available methods of travel, transport providers and payment options together into one single, digital service - usually an app - giving travellers seamless access to multimodal travel, from trains and trams to buses and bikes.

Scottish Government should build on its recent investments and ongoing work in MaaS, to lead - with active collaboration across the public and private sector - on utilising MaaS to deliver a more integrated, technologically enabled transport network.

Scottish Government has already laid the groundwork to explore MaaS applications. The MaaS Investment Fund (MIF) ran from 2018 - 2023, as a £2 million programme to test, in a practical application, the viability of MaaS in Scotland. The fund delivered pilots like GetGo Dundee, Go-Hi, ENABLE, GoSEStran and the St Andrews MaaSsterplan.



These projects show that MaaS can simplify access to sustainable transport modes, improve awareness of non-car options, and support behaviour change.

ITS UK welcomes these initial investments by the MIF, and supports the conclusions of Technology Scotland's MaaS roadmap, **"Implementing Mobility as a Service: A Roadmap for Scotland"**, written with insights gained from the pilots, and support from subnational transport bodies,

The roadmap recommends Transport Scotland takes leadership and accountability over the delivery of a MaaS scheme, leveraging the recently instituted Transport Integration and Connectivity Directorate within Transport Scotland.

As Scotland's national transport body, Transport Scotland is best placed to define the scheme, provide multi-year funding and coordinate multiple stakeholders on the delivery of an integrated transport initiative [6].

Although Government should lead, collaboration across Government bodies, and industry will be key to the effective delivery of MaaS in Scotland.

Incorporating private-sector innovations and knowledge exchange across what is necessarily a wide array of stakeholders is key, as is all parties learning from past MaaS delivery both in Scotland and abroad.



5 Deliver a Scottish Bus Open Data Service (BODS) with clear funding streams and statutory backing, to improve alignment between transport operators and passenger experience.

High-quality, open and standardised bus data is essential for a modern bus system: it underpins accurate journey planning, real-time information, disruption alerts, and integrated ticketing and MaaS platforms. In the context of bus services that are still recovering from the pandemic, it is imperative transport operators and providers leverage technology to improve the performance and experience of services.

ITS UK welcomes current efforts in Scotland to deliver a Scottish Bus Open Data Service (BODS).

Bus open data (or “BOD”) means information about buses and bus routes which is published, free of charge and electronically, by bus operators.

Information such as the fare for a specific journey, real time information about where the bus currently is, the route, the

timetable and on-board information (such as the availability of accessible spaces) are all examples of BOD [7]. Delivering a BOD in Scotland, would improve alignment between operators and passenger experience in several ways: by ensuring that every bus operator, feeds data into a common system; by enabling accurate



[7] <https://www.transport.gov.scot/consultation/scottish-bus-open-data/>

multi-operator journey planning and disruption information; and by giving authorities and operators richer data for planning, monitoring and targeting interventions.

With over 85% of bus operators already providing services across borders in England and Wales, extending these open data standards provides a strong foundation for integrated, accessible public transport information throughout the UK, with minimal impact on the operator community.

BODS in Scotland would also reduce the fragmentation and duplication of information, lower the barrier to entry for innovators, and support the evaluation of bus franchising, fares initiatives and behaviour-change interventions using consistent metrics.

To be effective, BODS will need clear statutory backing, a strong governance model, a sustainable funding stream, and close institutional coordination with Transport Scotland's wider transport strategy.

About ITS UK

Intelligent Transport Systems UK (ITS UK) is the voice of the transport technology industry. ITS UK provides a national platform to support the roll out of technology for a cleaner, safer and more effective transport network, both at home and abroad.

We support our **200+ members** - from both the private and public sector, and covering all sizes and disciplines - through advocacy to policymakers, connecting people and organisations, promoting the industry overseas and supporting innovation across the intelligent transport ecosystem.



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