

Response from Ross Greer MSP to the East Dunbartonshire Council Transport Options Report- February 2019

Firstly, I would like to thank council officers for their work on this report.

Although I do not believe that the options set out do everything within the council's power to ensure modal shift, clean air and sustainability, these are to be noted as welcome aims, and I certainly support the words in chapter 3 on reducing car use and tackling climate change. Further, the six proposed Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) reflect the necessary priorities well.

Buses:

Priorities on improving bus shelters and real-time information are particularly welcome. These issues have been raised with myself by constituents. Bus services are used extensively by all demographics and are important for accessibility, so shelters need to be well designed for all weather conditions, be accessible and include seating. I support the aim of deploying improvements across the council area rather than targeting specific corridors.

Overall, I would like to see the council working more intensely with SPT and the bus companies to provide services which serve more communities, including the Mosshead/Kilmardinny area of Bearsden and Westerton Village. These clearly help meet the proposed TPOs, especially 1-3, and would improve air quality, particularly in the designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs).

Many residents in the Mosshead area live around a mile from the nearest public transport route- an unacceptable situation for a suburban area with a high proportion of older people and young families.

I would ask the council to revisit the loop bus proposal as a matter of priority, considering it as investment in a public service which provides wider benefits, rather than the financial loss which the study seems to view it as.

I also urge the council to continue working with the University of Glasgow to support public transport access to Garscube Campus, perhaps through a shuttle bus from Westerton or Anniesland stations. Improvements here would relieve the unacceptable situation residents on Switchback Road and the surrounding streets face from the obstructive parking of those using the campus.

Roads:

It is good to see a number of schemes listed which aim to reduce emissions, such as improvements to idling enforcement and fuel-efficient driver training for council employees), as well as the initiative to work with local schools to improve road safety. Parking and road safety issues around our primary schools in particular which I am sure council officers and elected members are as familiar with as I am.

It's also welcome to see winter road maintenance and pothole repair prioritised but I would make the council aware of the feedback I have received from constituents that walking and cycling routes appear to be given less priority than those used by motor vehicles. Not only does this create an issue of inequality for residents who are unable to access or use a car, it obstructs the council's aim of modal shift. Revisiting these plans to give appropriate priority to popular active travel routes would be in the best interests of residents and the council.

The relatively weak commitment to 20mph zones is disappointing, given the overwhelming evidence in their favour, in terms of health and wellbeing, accessible treats and road safety.

I'm confident that the Scottish Parliament will soon pass the Restricted Roads (20mph Limit) (Scotland) Bill which would make the default speed limit 20mph on restricted roads. I would encourage the council to take on the evidence in favour of a 20mph default in residential areas and follow the lead of our neighbours in West Dunbartonshire by making this change as soon as possible.

Following feedback from residents, I would also ask that a filter be considered at the junction of Milngavie Road, West Chapelton Avenue and the entrance to ASDA.

Active Travel:

The lack of a commitment to revisit the BearsWay project is disappointing. The way this has been left has resulted in local residents, both those supportive and opposed, feeling deeply frustrated. To leave the BearsWay unfinished is also contrary to the TPOs in this document. This project should be reconsidered, starting with intensive, quality consultation with local residents and clear communication from the council as to the rationale behind it.

The walking link to Mugdock Country Park is an excellent project and this enhancement will be very welcome.

Rail:

The council will be aware that I commissioned a report in 2018 from AllanRail consultancy, which not only makes a strong case for the redoubling of the Westerton- Milngavie Line, but also outlines how this could go hand-in-hand with a new Allander station.

Based on the AllanRail Report and accompanying documentation, I would question the March 2018 A81 Transport Options Study on the following grounds, which I believe have led to the feasibility of an Allander Station being underestimated, inevitably resulted in the wrong conclusion regarding the project:

- 2.1.18 Seems to concentrate purely on constraints on the section between Hillfoot and Milngavie, yet problems with rail through the A81 corridor largely originate elsewhere, particularly the single track between Westerton and Bearsden, and the single lead junction at Westerton.
- 5.2.26 & 5.2.27: While AllanRail were unable to access the track to confirm this for sure, the inspections that were done suggested that the assumption made by WSP here is incorrect. With the exception of one very small section just south of where it crosses Allander Water and the A81, the remaining track appears to be as it was before singling, so does not run down the centre of the formation. That is not to say that modern clearances will permit the reinstatement of the second track, but the challenges should be minimised by a combination of sensible assessment of risks and risk management and modern engineering. The suggestion that “the existing railway line runs down the centre of the rail corridor” seems to be unsubstantiated.
- 6.3.3 Seems to miss the point that any car abstracted from Milngavie to Allander will almost certainly deliver a new passenger at Milngavie due to the freed up parking space (where the car parks are consistently full at present), so there would be an extra transfer to rail.
- 6.3.10: Given the current performance of the Milngavie branch train services- frequently the worst in Scotland- the benefits from redoubling are unlikely to be "marginal" They could be substantial and very far-

reaching. There does not appear to be any clear rationale for this statement and it runs contrary to existing evidence.

- 7.4.8 and elsewhere: WebTAG is mentioned 63 times in this document. WebTAG is the DfT's England & Wales Appraisal Methodology. The Transport Scotland STAG methodology is based less on "value for money" and includes qualitative assessment, an approach which has led, for example, to the successful Borders Railway project. This is such a fundamental oversight it calls into the question the whole document. The study seems to use 2010 prices, and it's not clear why this is, unless this is a WebTAG requirement.
- Appendix E2 Model Inputs 2026 & 2041: This has the service frequency set at 30 minutes, when we know it is 15 minutes. Why is this the case? This would also reduce the wait time from 15 minutes to 7.5 minutes
- Appendix E3: Where has the cost of an additional 4 car EMU (Note all the MMUs used in the Glasgow North electric area are 3 car) come from? This should only apply to the single platform station because the timetable would be more easily adjusted for a redoubled line. It is recognised that is too difficult for an appraisal, which are hugely simplistic, but difficulties with the appraisal should not prevent the consideration of a valid solution.

The analysis above does not support the conclusion that an Allander station can be dismissed into the "not taken forward" category. It is also inadequate support for the claim that 'Do Something 3B' (a double line with an Allander Station) "is clearly not economically viable". This conclusion cannot be allowed to stand, and should be revisited.

Parking capacity is clearly an issue at stations between Milngavie and Westerton. A solution to this would relieve congestion and improve air quality on the A81 and/or roads into Glasgow, including the AQMA on Drymen Road. I fully back increasing car parking capacity where this is geared towards supporting the use of public transport. However, I'm aware of concerns around the suggestion of a decked car park, both due to visual impact, and congestion caused by vehicles exiting and entering such a large structure and would share these concerns. The council should carefully consider alternatives to any new multi-storey parking structure. My strongly preferred long-term option is an Allander station.

A further parking issue, not mentioned in the document, is the long-term use of Milngavie station car park by West Highland Way walkers. While it's great for the local economy that walkers are welcomed to Milngavie, it should not be necessary for them to use parking spaces which are needed on a daily basis by residents and commuters.

I would urge the council to explore the provision of a safe and secure long-term car park elsewhere in Milngavie, possibly accessible for a specific period by prior arrangement. This would free up parking capacity for commuters trying to reach public transport routes into Glasgow.

It's disappointing to read that the Westerhill and Woodilee proposed stations are not being taken forward as proposed or alternative. I urge the council to put forward a bid to the next round of the Scottish Government's Local Rail Development Fund to seek to fund further feasibility work.