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Transport poverty a Policy Review

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Transport poverty: a policy review

Contents

Introduction	3
Policy context and links to transport poverty	5
Reducing transport poverty contributes to the National Transport Strategy's four strategic priorities	5
Reducing transport poverty contributes to reducing child poverty	6
Populations at risk of poverty	7
Methods	8
Analysis of population level impact	9
Inequalities analysis	9
Inequalities typology	10
Analysis process and recommendations	11
Results	12
Mapping actions in NTS delivery plan	12
Prioritised policies for analysis	13
Affordability	23
Accessibility	23
Safety	24
Discussion	25
Universal and targeted approaches	26
Policy co-benefits and timescales	27
Limitations of the review	28
Recommendations	28
Appendix	30
Notes	35
References	36

Introduction

Transport is an important health determinant that can have both positive and negative impacts on health and health inequalities. Well-designed transport infrastructure and services are themselves building blocks of good health and enable people to access other building blocks, including employment, education, social interaction, goods, and healthcare and other services. Sustainable transport also provides opportunities for physical activity and reduces the harms to health caused by motorised vehicles in car-dominated environments.¹

In 2024 the Public Health and Sustainable Transport Partnership Group and PHS produced a report on Transport Poverty.² The work involved reviewing published literature and stakeholder engagement to develop a shared definition of transport poverty and a conceptual model of the main causes of transport poverty and how transport poverty can influence health and health inequalities. The report recognised the multi-dimensional nature of transport poverty. It defined transport poverty as a 'lack transport of options that are: Available, Reliable, Affordable, Accessible and Safe that allow people to meet their daily needs and achieve a reasonable quality of life'.

Following publication of the report on Transport Poverty, a small group of members of the Public Health and Sustainable Transport Partnership Group agreed to carry out a review of selected Transport Scotland policies to assess their likely impact on the dimensions of transport poverty. The group agreed to prioritise policies that were particularly relevant to the policy priority of addressing child poverty.

The objectives of the review were:

- To identify a set of Transport Scotland policies likely to impact on one or more dimension of transport poverty.
- To evaluate their likely impact on inequalities and whether they were likely to have a population level impact on these dimensions.

It is important to note that transport policies may have aims other than reducing transport poverty. For example, their primary aim may be to achieve modal shift,

safeguard sustainability of services, support economic or social development. This review only considers their potential to reduce transport poverty and is not an assessment of their effectiveness in meeting their primary aims or of the overall value of the policies.

An academic paper on this policy review has been published in *Transport Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives*.³

Policy context and links to transport poverty

There are strong links between transport poverty and Scottish Government policy priorities. Some of these are highlighted below.

Reducing transport poverty contributes to the National Transport Strategy’s four strategic priorities

The National Transport Strategy,⁴ published in 2020, sets out a long-term vision of a ‘sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors’. It identifies four strategic priorities: Reduces Inequalities, Takes Climate Action, Helps Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth and Improves our Health and Wellbeing (Table 1). Reducing transport poverty contributes to all four priorities.

Table 1: National Transport Strategy strategic priorities and link to transport poverty

Strategic Priority	Link to transport poverty
Reduces Inequalities	Reducing transport poverty is central to this priority.
Takes Climate Action	Actions to reduce transport poverty include reducing car dependence and supporting modal shift, which are important climate actions.
Helps Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth	Transport poverty is an important reason that many people cannot access education, training or employment, so reducing transport poverty is important to support inclusive economic growth.
Improves our Health and Wellbeing	Transport poverty affects health by: reducing access to building blocks of good health, reducing access to healthcare, increasing financial strain, reducing community engagement increasing exposure to transport-related health harms, such as pollution and injury from collisions.

Reducing transport poverty contributes to reducing child poverty

Eradicating child poverty remains one of the top priorities in the Scottish Government Programme for Government 2025 to 2026⁵ and a whole government approach is required to achieve this. Almost a quarter (23%) of children in Scotland live in poverty, higher than adults of working age (20%) and pension age (15%).⁶ The first Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan identified six priority family types as at highest risk of child poverty: lone parents, minority ethnic families, families with a disabled adult or child, families with young mothers aged under 25, families with a child under one, larger families (3+ children).⁷ There are three key drivers of child poverty: the cost of living, income from employment and income from social security.⁷ Table 2 summarises the strong links between transport poverty and these drivers of child poverty.

Table 2: Child poverty drivers and link to transport poverty

Child poverty drivers	Link to transport poverty
Cost of living	Affordability of transport is an important component of the cost of living.
Income from employment	Transport poverty can affect parents’ access to education, training and employment. It can also affect parents’ access to childcare to allow them to work.
Income from social security	Transport poverty can affect parents’ ability to meet conditions of some benefits, for example to attend job centre appointments, leading to sanctions and reduced income.

Populations at risk of poverty

There are overlaps between the populations at risk of transport poverty, financial poverty and child poverty as shown in Table 3. This is not surprising as affordability is one of the dimensions of transport poverty, which is particularly important for people on low income.

Table 3: Populations at risk of transport poverty, financial poverty and child poverty

Transport poverty ²	Financial poverty ⁵	Child poverty ⁶
Low-income people Women Disabled people Rural communities Children and young people Older people Ethnic minority people	Reported relative poverty rates: 20% whole population 23% children 20% working age adults 15% pensioners 43% Asian ethnicity 50% Black ethnicity 37% young household head aged 16-24 29% single adults 23% households with a disabled person	Priority families: Lone parent families Minority ethnic families Families with a disabled person Families with a mother aged 25 or under Families with a child under one Families with three or more children.

Methods

The review was completed in 2024 by a small group of Transport Scotland and Public Health Scotland colleagues, all members of the Public Health and Sustainable Transport Partnership.

The actions in the 2023/24 National Transport Strategy Annual Delivery Plan⁸ were listed for mapping against transport poverty dimensions. Actions that were at a single geographical site, concerned freight rather than transport of people, or were not specific actions (eg publishing a plan or review) were excluded. The remaining actions were mapped to any dimension(s) of transport poverty they were likely to address. One member of the group mapped all the actions, and all group members reviewed findings, with discrepancies resolved by group discussion.

A list of candidate policies for further analysis was created that combined actions in the 2023/24 National Transport Strategy Annual Delivery Plan and other policies that were on the Transport Scotland website. This long list was circulated to Transport Scotland Team Leads who were asked to select those that were most relevant to transport poverty and should be prioritised for review.

Policy analysis used the PHS Policy Mapping and Analysis Standard Operational Procedure, adapted to be suitable for transport policies. Data for each policy were extracted into a spreadsheet to capture information on:

- Description of policy and links
- Policy aim/anticipated outcomes
- Transport Poverty dimension(s) addressed
- Population group(s) targeted, eligibility criteria, delivery organisation, recruitment strategy and uptake
- Evaluation or monitoring available

Analysis of population level impact

A population level impact is one that is likely to achieve a measurable shift in population metrics in the relevant population. The relevant population could mean the whole population of Scotland. It could also refer to the sub-population eligible for an intervention, such as disabled people or people in defined age groups eligible for concessionary fares.

The analysis of population level impact was adapted from criteria originally developed by Public Health England⁹ and involved consideration of whether the policy was:

- Systematically applied
- Scaled up appropriately
- Resourced over the long term
- Evidence based – including evaluation

Policies were rated High, Medium or Low for each of these criteria. An overall rating for population impact was then applied as follows:

- High = no Low scores and at least one High
- Medium = one Low or all scores Medium
- Low = more than two Low scores

Inequalities analysis

The inequalities analysis included consideration of:

- Voluntary or mandatory - for the transport operator to offer
- Any barriers to uptake including cost

- Reach (national or subnational)
- Structural or individual intervention – see explanation below
- For individual interventions, whether delivered universally, targeted or proportionately universal – see explanation below

Inequalities typology

Individual interventions are delivered to individuals or households, and may be universal, targeted or proportionately universal as defined below.

Structural interventions are changes to the physical, social or economic environment including legislative changes. They affect everyone but may be proportionate in their impacts if people in disadvantaged groups or communities are more affected by the issue they are addressing. For example, speed limits apply universally but pedestrians, especially child pedestrians, in deprived communities are more likely to be injured by motor vehicles so will benefit more from the reduced risk associated with lower speeds.

Universal interventions are interventions delivered to everyone in the relevant population regardless of level of need.

Targeted interventions are delivered only to specific groups within the relevant population who are thought to have greater need. For example, this could involve offering concessionary fares for people in the relevant age groups only if they are on specific benefits or live in specific geographical areas of low income.

Proportionately universal interventions are delivered to everyone in the relevant population but with more focus on groups thought to have higher needs. For example, this could involve offering concessionary fares to everyone in an age group but providing extra support to apply for the concession in specific geographical areas. It could also involve offering discounted fares universally but further discounts or free fares to individuals receiving specific benefits or in specific geographical areas.

Analysis process and recommendations

Two members of the group initially reviewed policies independently, then met with one other group member to review the data extracted and agree the judgements against each criterion by consensus. These were then discussed and agreed by the full working group.

Findings for each policy were tabulated, and a short narrative summary drafted for each of the dimensions of transport poverty addressed by policies included in the review.

Recommendations were discussed and agreed by the group.

Results

Mapping actions in NTS delivery plan

Table 4 summarises our categorisation of actions in the National Transport Strategy 23/24 delivery plan. The Appendix provides a detailed list of actions mapped to transport poverty dimensions. Of the 65 actions identified, 18 were categorised as not a specific action (these included publishing a plan or conducting a review), 15 concerned a specific site and three concerned freight transport only. Of those remaining, 27 were addressing at least one dimension of transport poverty and several addressed more than one. Fourteen actions were addressing availability, most of which involved provision of funding or infrastructure for public transport or active travel. Several of these were also categorised as likely to improve reliability by enhancing frequency of services. Ten addressed road safety, but none of these addressed personal safety. Actions to increase affordability were concessionary schemes for various modes. The actions to increase accessibility were step free access at train stations and the pavement parking ban that aims to improve accessibility and safety for pedestrians.

Table 4: Numbers of actions in the NTS 2023/24 delivery plan addressing transport poverty dimensions

Dimension	Number of actions
Available	14
Reliable	10
Affordable	5
Accessible	2
Safe	10

Prioritised policies for analysis

Transport Scotland colleagues prioritised 12 policies for review that they considered most likely to address transport poverty. They included some of the policies in the Annual Delivery Plan reflected in the above table, and some other existing policies. Eight of the policies address affordability, two address accessibility and three address safety. One policy addressed both accessibility and safety. For this review we excluded policies that concerned development of transport infrastructure or service provision, as understanding their impact on transport poverty would require analysis of their distribution in relation to need. For this reason, we did not consider policies addressing availability or reliability.

Table 5 summarises the policies selected for review and shows that most were addressing the affordability dimension of transport poverty, with two addressing accessibility and three addressing safety. Table 6 provides details of their implementation and shows that most were well established policies. Table 7 presents a summary of the analysis of potential for the policies to achieve a population impact and Table 8 summarises the inequalities analysis.

Table 5. Overview of policies by transport mode(s), name, justification and the transport poverty dimensions potentially addressed

Mode(s)	Policy name and description	Aims/rationale (where provided)	Relevant transport poverty dimensions
Bus	Free bus travel for people aged under 22 years	Embedding Positive Sustainable Travel Behaviours Opening Up Opportunities Reducing Household Outgoings to Aid Children ¹⁰	Affordability
Bus	Concessionary bus travel for people aged 60 and older	Improve older people's health and social inclusion. Promote shift from cars to public transport. Ensure bus operators are appropriately reimbursed. Facilitate improvements to public transport services such as multi-operator ticketing and smart ticketing. ¹¹	Affordability
Bus	Concessionary bus travel for people with disabilities	Improve the health and social inclusion of people with disabilities. Promote shift from cars to public transport. Ensure bus operators are appropriately reimbursed. Facilitate improvements to public transport services such as multi-operator ticketing and smart ticketing. ¹¹	Affordability
Rail	Kids for a Quid: discounted rail fares for children aged from 5 to 15	Make exploring with the family great value for money. ¹²	Affordability

Mode(s)	Policy name and description	Aims/rationale (where provided)	Relevant transport poverty dimensions
Rail	Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card Scheme: limited free train travel for people looking for work	Ensure that every person looking for work, or for better work, can get to interviews and can enjoy their first month in their new role without having to worry about the cost of travel. ¹³	Affordability
Rail	Disabled Persons Railcard: discounted rail travel for card holder and one other traveller		Affordability
Public Transport	Thistle Assistance Card: physical and digital cards enable passengers with disability or impairment to indicate support needs to staff	Make using public transport easier for older people and those with disabilities or illness. ¹⁴	Accessibility
Ferry	Road Equivalent Tariff (RET): set all ferry fares based on the cost of travelling the equivalent distance by road, plus a fixed standing charge.	Reduce financial burden of islands communities. Promote islands as places to live and work. Promote ferry use. Increase tourism. Benefit local and national economies. ¹⁵	Affordability
Air	Air discount scheme: provides 50% discount on air fares for residents of parts of the Highlands and Islands on eligible routes	Tackle the problem of high air fares in the most peripheral parts of the Highlands and Islands region of Scotland. Improve social inclusion in the areas it covers. ¹⁶	Affordability

Mode(s)	Policy name and description	Aims/rationale (where provided)	Relevant transport poverty dimensions
Motor vehicles Environment	Low Emission Zones: designated areas where vehicles that exceed a set level of emissions may not be driven	Tackle poor air quality by banning the most polluting vehicles from driving within a specified zone. ¹⁷	Safety (Improved air quality)
Motor vehicles Pedestrians	Pavement parking ban: restricts parking on pavements or dropped kerbs, and double-parking	Make it easier for local authorities to ensure pavements and roads are safer and more accessible to all. ¹⁸	Safety and Accessibility (for pedestrians)
Motor vehicles Active travel	20 mph speed limit in towns, cities and villages	Make streets feel safer. Encourage active travel. ¹⁹	Safety

Table 6. Implementation details

Policy	Population group targeted	Eligibility criteria	Budget (annual)	Existing action
Free bus travel aged <22	Children and young people	Residents of Scotland	£102m ²⁰	Implemented January 2022
Concessionary bus travel aged ≥60	Older people	Residents of Scotland aged ≥60	over £370m for both schemes combined	Introduced April 2006
Concessionary bus travel for people with disabilities	People with disabilities	Residents of Scotland with disabilities who have received a National Entitlement Card		Introduced April 2006
Kids for a Quid	Children and young people	Up to four children aged 5-15 travelling with an adult	N/A	Currently available
Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card Scheme	Job seekers	People who are unemployed and receiving either Job-Seekers' Allowance or Universal Credit.	Not publicly available	Currently available
Disabled Persons Railcard	People with disabilities	People with disabilities, and/or who receive Personal Independence Payments or Disability Living Allowance.	N/A	Currently available

Policy	Population group targeted	Eligibility criteria	Budget (annual)	Existing action
Thistle Assistance Card	Anyone with temporary or permanent disabilities or impairments who may need additional assistance	None	None	Currently available
Road Equivalent Tariff	Anyone using the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services network	None	Estimated £25m in 2020 ¹⁵	Currently available Implemented in phases between 2008 and 2015
Air discount scheme	Residents of parts of the Highlands and Islands	Resident of Shetland, Orkney, the Western Isles, Islay, Jura, Colonsay, Caithness and north-west Sutherland	No set budget, cost was £12.8m in 2023/24	Currently available; extended to 2026
Low Emission Zones	Residents and other people exposed to air pollution in identified LEZ areas	Non-compliant vehicles driven in specific geographical areas defined by local authorities. Exemption for blue badge holders.	Funding is available for households on certain types of benefits	Introduced 2022, enforced from 2023 in Glasgow, 2024 in Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen
Pavement parking ban	Everyone, particularly people with	All roads included by default unless	Implementation by local authorities	Introduced nationally Dec 2023, but there

Policy	Population group targeted	Eligibility criteria	Budget (annual)	Existing action
	limited mobility or visual impairments.	LA exempts them. Vehicle exemptions for emergency services, highway maintenance and some deliveries.		is variance in when different LAs are implementing, and staggered implementation within LA areas.
20 mph speed limit	Everyone, particularly pedestrians	Speed limits on 'appropriate roads' (defined by road assessment subgroup + local knowledge)	Implementation by local authorities	In place in Highlands, Edinburgh, Fife and Scottish Borders. Being implemented by local authorities.

Table 7. Potential for population impact

Policy	Systematically applied	Scaled-up appropriately (or can/will be)	Resourced over long term	Evidence based	Overall rating	
Free bus travel aged <22	●	●	●	●	High	
Concessionary bus travel aged ≥60	●	●	●	●	High	
Concessionary bus travel for disabled people	●	●	●	●	High	
Kids for a Quid	◐	●	●	○	Medium	No evaluation or uptake data Need parent to pay full fare
Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card Scheme	◐	●	No info	○	Medium	Limited information on implementation
Disabled Persons Railcard	◐	●	●	◐	High	No evaluation but uptake data showed use Need to pay for railcard
Road Equivalent Tariff	●	●	●	●	High	Evaluation showed increased use of ferries

Policy	Systematically applied	Scaled-up appropriately (or can/will be)	Resourced over long term	Evidence based	Overall rating	
Air discount scheme	●	●	●	○	Medium	No evaluation or uptake data
Thistle Assistance Card	○	◐	●	○	Low	Data show variation in uptake and feedback suggests not well recognised by all operators
Pavement parking ban	◐	●	●	◐	High	Enforcement is important and may vary
Low Emission Zones	●	●	●	●	High	Assessment of impact within LEZ areas only
20 mph speed limit	◐	●	●	●	High	Local authorities may differ in assessment of 'appropriate roads'

Key: ● = yes; ◐ = yes, with caveats or minor limitations (e.g. relies on individual gatekeepers or public awareness); ○ = no

Table 8. Inequalities analysis

Policy	Mandatory (for operator)	No barriers to use (e.g. cost or gatekeeper)	National	Structural or Individual	Universal, Targeted or Proportionately universal (to all in eligible population)	Population at risk of transport poverty?	Comments/ Other inequalities issues
Free bus travel aged ≤22	●	◐	●	□	△	●	Need to apply for card but no financial cost
Concessionary bus travel aged ≥60	●	◐	●	□	△	●	Need to apply for card but no financial cost
Concessionary bus travel for people with disabilities	●	◐	●	□	△	●	Need to apply for card but no financial cost
Kids for a Quid	●	◐	●	□	△	●	Need parent to pay a full fare
Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card Scheme	●	○	●	□	▲	●	Must be actively engaged with a Jobcentre Plus adviser
Disabled Persons Railcard	●	○	●	□	△	●	Need to pay for railcard
Road Equivalent Tariff	●	●	○	□	△	◐	Beneficiaries include tourists as well as island residents
Air discount scheme	○	●	○	□	△	◐	May benefit more affluent populations who are more likely to fly.
Thistle Assistance Card	◐	◐	●	□	△	●	Universally available but low awareness and varied uptake
Pavement parking ban	●	●	●	■		●	Proportionately higher benefit for people with most need of accessibility
Low Emission Zones	●	●	○	■		○	Profile of beneficiaries depends on characteristics of people living in city centres but disadvantaged populations more susceptible to adverse effects of air pollution. Low-income people may be more likely to have older, non-compliant vehicles
20 mph speed limit	●	●	●	■		●	Proportionately higher benefit for communities with higher risk of pedestrian injury

Key: ● = yes; ◐ = unclear, or minor limitations exist (e.g. opt-in, but no charge or conditions); ○ = no ■ = structural
 □ = individual ▲ = Proportionately universal ▲ = Targeted △ = Universal

Affordability

Three of the policies addressing affordability were for bus services. There is high uptake of concessionary bus passes for those eligible, and this is likely to make a positive contribution to improving affordability in those groups. However, non-disabled people aged 22-59 who are on low incomes are also likely to face affordability barriers but are not eligible for free bus travel. We reviewed three policies addressing affordability of rail travel but found less information on these. Some of these require purchase of a railcard which is likely to be a barrier for many people in poverty. We found little information on the job seekers rail travel scheme, but its impact may be limited by the reliance on work coaches as gatekeepers. There was one policy addressing affordability of ferry travel, the Road Equivalent Tariff. This had been evaluated, showing increased use of ferries.¹⁵ The analysis suggests this policy is likely to have a population impact on affordability of ferry travel, although the distribution of benefits is less certain. The policy addressing affordability of air travel for residents of specific island and remote locations had not been evaluated and data on uptake were unpublished.

Accessibility

We only reviewed two policies addressing accessibility, the Thistle Assistance Card and pavement parking ban. The Thistle card is a free card or app that anyone can use to let transport staff know they need support. The data and feedback at the time of the review suggested low awareness and low uptake of the Thistle card outside of South-East Scotland, so this was unlikely to be making a population level impact on accessibility. However subsequently efforts are being made to increase awareness and uptake, which may increase its impact.

The pavement parking ban aims to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility by preventing parked vehicles on pavements causing an obstruction and forcing people to walk in the road. It is a national policy that is being implemented by local authorities. It was judged to have potential for population level impact, but this

depends on local enforcement. It is an environmental intervention that can affect everyone but particularly benefits people with accessibility needs.

Many of the interventions currently identified to address accessibility are site specific and for this review we excluded site specific actions. Some other relevant policies are reserved to UK government, for example Accessible Information Regulations for buses and coaches.²¹

Safety

We reviewed three policies related to safety: Low Emission Zones, 20 miles per hour speed limits and the pavement parking ban. The pavement parking ban is the only policy we reviewed that addressed two of the transport poverty dimensions and is discussed above.

Low emission zones are an area-based intervention and evidence from elsewhere suggests they can be effective in improving air quality and associated health outcomes. This means they are likely to have a population level impact for people living in the zones. The inequalities impact depends on the characteristics of people living in these areas but there is evidence of both poorer air quality and increased susceptibility to the effects of air pollution in areas of deprivation.²² However, there could also be increased costs for some people on low incomes, who are more likely to have older non-compliant vehicles.

The policy of applying twenty miles per hour speed limits on all appropriate roads is a national legislative intervention with a strong evidence base.²³ It should have a population level impact and have higher benefits for pedestrians in disadvantaged communities who are more likely to be injured by motor vehicles.²⁴ However this depends on local implementation and enforcement.

Discussion

This review aimed to assess the extent to which selected national transport policies are likely to address inequalities and have a population level impact on three dimensions of transport poverty: affordability, accessibility and safety. Although evaluation data were not available for all policies, eight of the twelve policies were assessed as having a high likelihood of population level impact, three medium and just one low likelihood. Most of the policies were for one or more populations at risk of transport poverty, had limited or no barriers to uptake and were universal or structural interventions. Overall, they would be expected to have a broadly positive inequalities impact. It is important to adopt policies that address each of the transport poverty dimensions, as addressing each dimension in isolation is not sufficient. This assessment has only considered the likely impacts on dimensions of transport poverty – this is not an assessment of the overall effectiveness or value of the policies as many are primarily intended to meet other valid aims.

The highest number of the policies that Transport Scotland colleagues prioritised for review address the affordability dimension. We were particularly interested in the likely impact on child poverty. The policy most obviously likely to impact positively on child poverty is free bus travel for children and young people. However, there are no data available on uptake and use of free bus travel among children in priority families. Children in families with a disabled person are more likely to be in poverty²⁵ so may also benefit from free bus travel for disabled people. Extending free bus travel to adults in low-income families, particularly the child poverty priority families, could further reduce child poverty. It could both reduce pressure on family budgets directly and improve parents' access to education, training, childcare and employment, potentially increasing family incomes.

The bus concessionary schemes collectively are a very important intervention to help address transport poverty by improving bus affordability. Bus is the public transport mode most used in Scotland,²⁶ particularly by populations most likely to be affected by transport poverty including those from low-income households and disabled people.²⁷ Bus services have a wider network across Scotland, can be more flexible and are more affordable than other public transport modes. However the national

transport budget funding for bus services is lower per passenger than other public modes.²⁸ The schemes cover populations that are at high risk of transport poverty but miss out many people who could most benefit from support with public transport costs. An estimated 20% of working age adults are in relative poverty.⁶ Eligibility for free bus travel excludes non-disabled people aged 22-59 who are in poverty. People of pension age are all eligible for free bus travel but have a lower-than-average relative poverty rate.⁶ Many older people are in transport poverty due to non-financial barriers, such as accessibility barriers or safety concerns,² which are not resolved by providing concessionary fares in isolation.

Of the two policies we reviewed addressing accessibility, we assessed the pavement parking ban as likely to have a population level impact on accessibility for pedestrians and proportionately universal in its impact. We assessed the Thistle card as unlikely to have a population level impact on public transport accessibility. Further interventions are needed to ensure that public transport is accessible to everyone including disabled people.

All three of the policies we reviewed that address safety were assessed to be likely to have a population level impact on the relevant population. They are all environmental interventions, and improved safety and air quality may particularly benefit populations with highest needs. However, as low emission zones only apply in city centres their impacts will depend on the characteristics of people living there, and those from low-income households may be more likely to have older vehicles incurring increased costs. These policies help to address safety in terms of air quality and road injuries, but we did not identify any specific national transport policies addressing personal safety for travellers. Many of the actions to address this sit with transport operators, British Transport Police, Police Scotland or with spatial planning policy,²⁹ but national transport policy may also be needed to support these.

Universal and targeted approaches

Nine of the policies in this review provide a concession or benefit to individuals. Most of these provide free or discounted transport universally for everyone in a defined age group or with a disability, regardless of their financial need. Universal

interventions may achieve a wide reach and be publicly accepted but are likely to be more costly than targeting to people with a high level of need. They may differentially benefit people with a lower level of need if there are cost or other barriers to uptake. Targeted interventions can have a larger impact on a smaller number of people for the same, or lower, level of resource. However, they may be stigmatising³⁰ and may miss many high need individuals who are not in the targeted groups. Targeting by benefits will miss people who are just over the benefits threshold. Targeting by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) will miss many high need individuals as less than half of income deprived individuals live in the 20% most deprived areas measured by SIMD.³¹ Universal approaches may also be needed to achieve other aims such as modal shift or sustaining services. The three environmental policies are applied universally but could be proportionate in their effects, as people with higher needs are most likely to benefit from improved safety and accessibility.

Policy co-benefits and timescales

There are positive interactions between policies to address each dimension of transport poverty. For example, improving affordability and accessibility to enable more people to use public transport could improve viability and sustainability of services. This could enable operators to offer more frequent services, helping to improve reliability, and wider coverage increasing availability. More people using the services can also increase passive surveillance on vehicles and at stops and stations, improving personal safety^{32,33}. Increased frequency and coverage could support further increases in patronage and modal shift,³⁴ creating a less car-dominated environment in communities, also encouraging active travel. Less traffic would also improve safety by reducing collisions, air and noise pollution and other health harms associated with car use.¹

There are also co benefits with other policy aims. As noted above, reducing transport poverty is important to reduce financial poverty and child poverty. Achieving modal shift from private car use to sustainable modes can help reduce transport poverty, is essential for climate goals and would have multiple positive benefits for health.¹

However, it may take time to achieve a population level impact on transport poverty and these wider benefits. Studies show there can be a time lag of 2-3 years to see changes in travel patterns following an intervention as people take time to adjust habitual behaviour.^{35,36}

Limitations of the review

In this review we excluded policies providing infrastructure or funding for active or public transport modes, so none of the reviewed policies addressed the availability or reliability dimensions. However, supporting sustainable transport modes – both active and public transport – is essential to reduce transport poverty² and can achieve other benefits.

This review has not provided a quantitative assessment of the population impact of these policies on relevant dimensions of transport poverty. Rather, it has used existing information to make a qualitative assessment of the likelihood of population level impact based on established criteria. Further work is needed to quantify the level of benefit realised. This requires indicators for the dimensions of transport poverty to be agreed and monitored in the relevant populations.

Recommendations

- Bus concessionary schemes should be maintained as a priority intervention to improve transport affordability. This recognises the importance of bus services to low-income populations and others at risk of transport poverty. The universal nature of the current age-based schemes ensures they are not stigmatising and encourages higher overall bus patronage which may help to sustain services.
- Scottish Government should consider ways to expand bus concessionary travel schemes, as some of those who could most benefit are currently excluded. Priority should be given to other populations in or at risk of financial poverty, such as low-income workers and parents from the child poverty priority families.

- It is important to address other dimensions as well as affordability, to reduce transport poverty for rural populations and people with accessibility needs or safety concerns. Interventions should include both active travel infrastructure and interventions, and support for public transport services to improve their availability, reliability, accessibility and safety. This will bring multiple benefits in relation to transport poverty, financial poverty, health and sustainability.
- Further policy development is needed to improve physical, sensory and cognitive accessibility of public transport for people with mobility and other needs, and to improve personal safety for active travel and public transport.
- Further work could assess whether transport infrastructure and service provision are matched to transport need. This could include public transport services and distribution of shared ownership and hire schemes as an alternative to bike and vehicle ownership.
- The reach and distribution of policies should be evaluated more routinely. Some of the policies had evaluation data available but many did not. In particular it would be helpful to evaluate the uptake and use of free bus travel for under 22-year-olds among children and young people in the child poverty priority families.
- Indicators for each transport poverty dimension are being developed by the Public Health and Sustainable Transport Data and Evidence group. These should be integrated into the NTS monitoring framework and used to monitor progress in reducing transport poverty in Scotland.

Appendix

Actions from NTS 23/24 delivery plan mapped to transport poverty dimensions

	Not specific action	Single site	Freight not people	Available	Reliable	Affordable	Accessible	Safe
Publish STPR delivery plan	X							
Publish Just transition plan	X							
Publish Islands connectivity plan and Long term plan for vessels for ports	X							
Publish LTS guidance	X							
Evaluate/Publish Accessible travel delivery plan	X							
Levenmouth rail project		X						
East Linton station		X						
Bus and concessionary fares funding						X		
Bus partnership fund – bus infrastructure eg bus lanes				X	X			
Community bus fund – support to local authorities for new ways to deliver bus services				X	X			
Implement digital travel data services					X			
Step free access at various stations							X	
Fair fares review	X							
Peak fares removal pilot						X		

	Not specific action	Single site	Freight not people	Available	Reliable	Affordable	Accessible	Safe
Ferry fares review	X							
Ferry scheme for young people						X		
Young persons free bus travel						X		
Free bus travel for asylum seekers						X		
Publish climate change plan	X							
Publish final 20% car km route map	X							
Develop car demand management framework	X							
Publish Transport climate adaptation plan	X							
Publish trunk roads adaptation plan	X							
A83 Rest and be thankful works		X						
Funding for railway maintenance and decarbonisation				X	X			
Funding for ScotRail and Caledonian Sleeper				X	X			
Railway electrification/decarbonisation								
Mobility and scrappage fund								
Publish zero emission task force	X							
Zero emission bus challenge fund								

	Not specific action	Single site	Freight not people Available	Reliable	Affordable	Accessible	Safe
Smart ticketing projects				X			
Smart ticketing advisory board	X						
Dualling of A9		X					
A96 enhancements		X					
Dualling A96		X					
A75 and A77 developments		X					
Maintain support for airports				X	X		
Develop aviation strategy	X						
Specific air services				X	X		
New ferries for specified routes		X					
Rail freight growth target	X						
Freight facilities grants			X				
Pilot of electric powered lorries			X				
Support TimberLINK shipping service		X	X				
Contracts for lifeline ferries		X					
Support Scottish Rail Holdings – rail service provision				X	X		
Update Road asset management plan	X						
MaaS investment fund 5 pilot projects – multimodal and real-time travel information. Some include new digital responsive transport				X	X		
EV infrastructure fund							

	Not specific action	Single site	Freight not people Available	Reliable	Affordable	Accessible	Safe
Plugged in Communities community transport fund - Replacement of existing vehicles with zero emission alternative							
Implement national speed indicator							X
Implement 20mph on appropriate roads							X
Online reporting system for dangerous driving							X
Implement Low Emission Zones – improve air quality							X
Pavement parking ban - Pedestrian safety and accessibility						X	X
Active travel budget – funding of active travel infrastructure				X			X
Active travel transformation project– funding of active travel infrastructure, behaviour change and bike access				X			X
Active travel transformation fund- funding of active travel infrastructure				X			X
Bus franchising and partnership regulations – bus service provision				X			
Active freeway network – active travel infrastructure				X			X

	Not specific action	Single site	Freight not people	Available	Reliable	Affordable	Accessible	Safe
Places for everyone programme– active travel infrastructure				X				X
Support Local Transport Plans	X							
Fort William Integrated transport plan		X						
Levenmouth reconnected programme		X						
Funding in Aberdeen to Inverness rail route		X						

Notes to Table of NTS 23/24 delivery plan actions

- Actions that are single site, concern freight transport or are not a specific action are excluded.
- Investments in public transport or active travel infrastructure are identified as increasing Availability of those modes.
- Investments in active travel infrastructure are also identified as increasing Safety as they allow separation of cyclists and/or pedestrians from motor vehicles.
- Investments in public transport service provision are identified as increasing both Availability and Reliability as they are likely to increase coverage and frequency of services.
- Digital/real-time information is identified as increasing Reliability as it allows people to plan and track services.
- Pavement parking ban is identified as increasing Safety and Accessibility for pedestrians as it prevents parked cars obstructing the pavement and forcing them to walk on the road.

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