

South West of Scotland Transport Partnership (SWestrans) Strategic Transport Policy Asks- 2026 Scottish Parliamentary Election

The following six 'asks' represent the key requests from SWestrans for inclusion in your 2026 election manifesto:

1. Secure Long-Term, Ring-Fenced Funding for Regional Transport

To effectively deliver the long-term ambitions of our Regional Transport Strategy, SWestrans requires a stable and predictable financial settlement. We ask for a commitment to a multi-year, ring-fenced funding model for all Regional Transport Partnerships. This stability is essential for strategic planning, efficient project delivery, and leveraging private sector investment, ultimately providing the confidence needed to progress transformational, multi-year transport projects that underpin regional economic growth. National transport funding needs to align with regional transport priorities to ensure local priorities are supported, and cognisance of regional economic strategies needs to be taken when funding is allocated.

2. Deliver Investment in our Strategic Transport Network

Improving connectivity is fundamental to the economic and social prosperity of Dumfries and Galloway. We ask for a clear commitment to fund and accelerate the major infrastructure projects identified in strategic reviews, ensuring the same level of investment for Dumfries and Galloway as other local authority areas in Scotland. While our RTS contains many priorities, specific examples of nationally significant projects include:

- **Upgrades to the A75 and A77:** Essential for improving safety, resilience, and journey times on these critical economic corridors, which provide lifeline connections to the ports at Cairnryan. This includes progressing key schemes such as bypasses for Crocketford and Springholm to remove strategic traffic from local communities.
- **Targeted improvements on other key routes:** Investment in the A7, A76, and A709 is also crucial for inter-regional connectivity, resilience, and supporting local economies across Dumfries and Galloway.
- **Rail Network Enhancements:** Investment to improve capacity, frequency, and line speeds on the Glasgow South Western and West Coast Main Lines to enhance services for both passengers and freight, supporting modal shift and connecting our communities to the central belt and beyond.

3. Reform Bus Funding to Focus on Social and Economic Value

The current funding mechanism for subsidised bus services needs reform to better address the challenges of a rural network. We ask for a review of how funding (including the Network Support Grant and concessionary travel reimbursement) is allocated, placing a greater emphasis on social value, service integration, and reliability. This will ensure that funding supports lifeline services that connect people to employment, education, and healthcare, tackling social isolation and supporting our local economies.

4. Champion a Rural Transport Fund and Impact Assessment

A one-size-fits-all approach to public transport does not work for a rural region like Dumfries and Galloway. We ask for the establishment of a dedicated Rural Transport Fund to pilot and scale up transport solutions tailored for rural areas. This should include support for subsidised bus services, but also demand-responsive transport

(DRT), new models of community transport, and enhancing the Taxicard scheme in areas where conventional bus services are not viable. Furthermore, all national transport policies should be subject to a Rural Transport Impact Assessment to ensure they do not unintentionally disadvantage our communities.

5. Deliver a National Smart Ticketing System

To simplify journeys and remove barriers to public transport use, we ask the next government to mandate and fund the rapid development of a universal, integrated smart ticketing system. This system must be valid across all bus and rail operators in Scotland, allowing for seamless connections and straightforward payment, which is particularly beneficial for passengers making multi-stage journeys across our rural region.

6. Accelerate Investment in a Green Fleet and Infrastructure

To meet Scotland's ambitious climate goals, we must accelerate the transition to a zero-emission public transport network. We ask for an increase in dedicated capital grants available to councils and Regional Transport Partnerships to support the procurement of new low-and-zero-emission buses. This must be coupled with funding for the roll-out of resilient charging infrastructure across our dispersed rural region, which is critical for making a green transition feasible and helping to reduce long-term operating costs.

Thank you for your consideration of these key strategic transport issues.

Councillor John Campbell
Chair, South West Scotland Transport Partnership