CONSULTATION

The Scottish Ministers welcome comment on the proposal to make the Regulations and in particular in relation to the bus lane provisions, and would welcome any specific reference to safety considerations by consultees in support of their comments.

Comments

Fife Council

Consultation on the M9/A90/M90 Trunk Road (Kirkliston to Halbeath) (Variable Speed Limits and Actively Managed Hard Shoulder) Regulations 2012 and the A823(M) Trunk Road (Pitreavie to Masterton) (Variable Speed Limits) Regulations 2012

Introduction
Fife Council welcomes the introduction of the Intelligent Transport System (ITS) which includes a temporary bus lane on the hard shoulder of the M90 (southbound) from Halbeath Interchange. The bus priority scheme was identified in the Forth Replacement Crossing Public Transport Strategy (FRCPTS) which was published by Transport Scotland in January 2010 in partnership with SEStran, Fife Council, the City of Edinburgh Council and West Lothian Council. The FRCPTS was developed as a result of representations made by the Councils and others to the Forth Crossing Bill, which was approved by MSPs on 15 December 2010.

The representations to the Forth Crossing Bill were largely based on the SEStran Integrated Corridors Study (SITCoS) (2005) which recommended that a series of short term measures, including the following, should be delivered immediately:-

- Make Public Transport More Attractive;

- Provide new, bus-based Park & Choose site at Halbeath and expand Rosyth into Park & Choose location;

- Provide a newly constructed southbound High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lane between Halbeath and the northern bridgehead;

- Procure additional bus services on key Cross Forth routes

Whilst SITCoS recommended an HOV lane for the M90, all parties to the FRCPTS understand that the bus priority lane on the M90 southbound from Halbeath towards the bridgehead will be provided initially on a temporary basis. The Draft 2012 Regulations state that "*the bus lane will operate at least for the duration of the construction of the Forth Replacement Crossing project.*" The FRCPTS explains that Transport Scotland will review the operation of the bus lane to enable a decision to be taken on the long term future of this facility. In the meantime the provision of a permanent bus hard shoulder will be retained in the FRCPTS.

In line with the SITCoS recommendations, the bus operators involved in the development of the FRCPTS have also given a commitment that they will review bus operations in the cross-Forth area and provide appropriate additional and revised services to maximise the public transport potential in this area. The bus operators noted that 20 new services had been identified as part of the modelling work and although it was not possible to confirm at

this stage that these specific services would be provided, they did give the commitment that new services would be provided to complement the FRCPTS.

The Forth Replacement Crossing will be a flagship project for the Scottish Government, who has also set very ambitious targets for carbon emissions reduction through the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The use of the Public Transport Corridor must be maximised in order to deliver these reductions, and there are 2 issues which Fife Council wishes to raise in this regard.

1. The Seating Capacity Of Buses Entitled To Use The Bus Lane

The Councils and Bus Operators involved in the FRCPTS have challenged the proposal to limit access to the bus lane to vehicles with a capacity in excess of 28 passengers since March 2011, and the matter was most recently raised at a meeting in Rosyth on 7 February 2012. The existing bus priority measures on the A90 from the Forth Road Bridge into Edinburgh only have a minimum level of 8 paying passengers. It is understood that these bus priority measures have operated satisfactorily since their introduction about 10 years ago, and it would be prudent to offer consistency of approach to bus priority measures in the same Cross Forth Corridor.

The consultation document states that the 2012 Regulations will restrict use of the hard shoulder as a traffic lane to buses which can carry more than 28 passengers to "*support safe and effective use of the lane and as directed by the Safety Management Steering Group.*" No evidence has been provided to explain why use of the hard shoulder by smaller buses would be less safe or less effective. Also, there is no acknowledgement of the wider objectives of the Managed Crossing Strategy or the implications of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 in relation to achieving the Scottish Government's carbon emissions reduction targets by maximising modal shift to public transport on this key strategic corridor.

In conclusion, the case for a restriction of buses to those vehicles carrying more than 28 passengers has not been demonstrated. A lower threshold is required in order to maximise the use of the Public Transport Corridor, particularly during the initial period of significant congestion anticipated when the Ferrytoll Interchange is reconstructed.

2. The Discontinuous Nature of the Bus Lane and the Need to Maintain Priority for Buses

Since 2009 Fife Council, the City of Edinburgh Council, West Lothian Council and SEStran have raised concerns with Transport Scotland about the ability of the M90 bus lane to continue to offer satisfactory levels of priority for public transport for a reasonable period after the new bridge has opened. This culminated in a meeting on 23 March 2012 in Rosyth, where the results of indicative sensitivity testing were presented by Transport Scotland.

It was clear from these results that the strategic and local road networks in the Forth Bridgehead Area will have difficulties in coping with the demand for travel beyond 2017. For example, the 2027 model required to simulate signalised improvements at the junctions of the A921/B981, A985/Kings Rd, A985/Queensferry Rd in order to prevent 'gridlock' at these locations and thus enable the model to continue to function.

The information presented for 2027 also included evidence of 'shockwaves'/queues at locations on the main line and on the merge/diverges. Despite increases in traffic flow by 2027, the hourly peak flow across the FRC was virtually the same as 2017 (ie about 3900 to 4000 vph in each direction), illustrating that the FRC itself will effectively be operating at

capacity during the peak hours beyond 2017.

For expediency, the traffic modelling sensitivity tests assumed that the bus priority lane would be continuous from Halbeath and Ferrytoll southwards to the FRB. However, the proposals in the M9/A90/M90 Trunk Road (Kirkliston to Halbeath) (Variable Speed Limits and Actively Managed Hard Shoulder) Regulations 2012 are for a discontinuous bus lane in order to enable merge/diverge manoeuvres for general traffic at Masterton, Admiralty and Ferrytoll.

The ability of the corridor from Halbeath to the FRB to offer unrestricted flow for buses for a reasonable period beyond the opening of the new bridge has therefore not yet been satisfactorily demonstrated, and the risk of buses getting 'caught' by queuing vehicles in these merge/diverge locations, when the main line is either stationary or running as a slow moving queue, will need to be minimised.

Fife Council is therefore seeking the inclusion of a commitment in the updated Forth Replacement Crossing Public Transport Strategy that Transport Scotland and Fife Council will continue to work together to examine the monitoring results of the temporary bus lane and carry out modelling work to minimise the delays to buses at all times on the strategic and local road networks in the Forth Bridgehead Area, in an effort to cater for future growth in the demand for Cross Forth travel by maximising the modal shift from single occupancy cars to public transport. This work should continue until at least 2027, and may produce amendments to the bus priority measures in due course.