

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

The City of Edinburgh 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 Council has not experienced significant road safety concerns while operating similar bus lane facilities in the vicinity of the southern approach to the Forth Road Bridge. Bus lanes on the A90 between Dalmeny and west of the B924 southbound merge slip at Dolphington were introduced in January 2000. At the same time the Council also introduced a bus lane on the southbound merge slip of the Burnshot Junction. Subsequently in April 2001 the Council introduced a further bus lane on the B924 southbound merge slip. The Council has not noted any ongoing road safety concerns since implementation of these bus lanes; retrieval of detailed collision data for the A90 Dalmeny - B924 at Dolphington reveals only two collisions where the causation can be linked to the bus lane traffic signals in the most recent 10 year period.

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*". The Council considers this to be too restrictive and notes that no rationale to explain the decision to restrict use to vehicles with a 28 passenger capacity or larger has been provided. No evidence has been provided to show that use of the hard shoulder by smaller buses would jeopardise road safety or reduce the effectiveness of the bus lanes. As such the Council suggests that a lower threshold is required in order to maximise the use of the Public Transport Corridor; a restriction limiting use to vehicles carrying 8 or more passengers (as per the existing bus lanes between Ferry Toll and Barnton) would be reasonable.

The bus priority scheme was identified in the Forth Replacement Crossing Public Transport Strategy (FRCPTS) and is in alignment with the Council's views on the importance of allocating resources to ensure the provision for public transport is an integral part of the construction process, and of the long term future of the scheme.

The Council notes that, as set out in the Consultation document and the FRCPTS, the bus priority lane on the M90 southbound from Halbeath towards the bridgehead will be provided initially on a temporary basis. 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. The Council continues to be supportive of the permanent installation of these bus priority measures.

In conclusion, the Council supports to installation of a bus lane facility making use of the hard shoulder. Experience from similar facilities on the south of the Forth has shown minimal road safety concerns over a 10 year period. The Council would suggest that, in line with the sentiments of the FRCPTS, the facilities for, and use of, public transport provision should be maximised where possible, and as such the requirement for minimum vehicle capacity should be lowered to 8 passengers. The Council also continues to be of the opinion that measures should be taken to ensure that a permanent bus lane facility can be included as part of the scheme in the long term.