

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.

The council generally welcomes the installation of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) on the sections of the M9/A90/M90 as proposed in 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'.

The council acknowledges that the use of mandatory Variable Speed Limits can help to reduce congestion in locations with limited capacity such as the trunk road network in the vicinity of the Forth crossings. While the introduction of Variable Speed Limits is unlikely to prevent congestion on the M9/A90/M90 completely, particularly in light of the forecast increase in traffic volumes in the Central Belt, this intervention will allow a more efficient management of the existent road space and facilitate the free flow of traffic.

The council is also supportive of the introduction of temporary bus lanes on the M90 hard shoulder as this will allow buses to bypass traffic congestion in some locations and make public transport more attractive. The council is, however, concerned that restricting the scheme to buses which carry more than 28 passengers will reduce significantly the potential for modal shift from the private car to public transport. This, in turn, will jeopardise the success of the wider Forth Replacement Crossing Public Transport Strategy and make it more difficult to achieve the Scottish Government's objectives for congestion and climate change.

In order to provide a scheme that is consistent with both the existing bus priority measures on the A90 between the Forth Road Bridge and Edinburgh, and the definition of a 'bus' contained in the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD) 2002, the council requests Transport Scotland to amend the draft 2012 Regulations to allow all 'motor vehicles constructed or adapted to carry more than eight passengers (exclusive of the driver)' to use the hard shoulder bus lanes. The council appreciates that the enforcement of this arrangement may be more challenging but believes that effective enforcement technology can be integrated into the ITS system. Unless there are overriding safety or traffic management reasons, the council would also like to see the hard shoulder bus lanes to be retained after the bridge works are completed. This would help to establish bus travel as a viable, quick and convenient long-term alternative to the private car and maintain the travel habits formed during the construction period.

I trust you find the above comments useful but please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.