

**REPORT TO: PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE - 15 AUGUST 2005**  
**REPORT ON: TOLLED BRIDGES REVIEW – PHASE TWO CONSULTATION**  
**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION**  
**REPORT NO: 448-2005**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 This report outlines the purpose of Tolled Bridges Review – Phase Two Consultation and Dundee City Council's response.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 It is recommended that

- a the purpose of the consultation is noted
- b Dundee City Council's response as given in Appendix A is approved.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

## **4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None.

## **5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Provision is currently made for disabled drivers to be exempted from the bridge tolls and it is proposed that this exemption is retained.

## **6 BACKGROUND**

6.1 The Scottish Executive's Transport White Paper published on 16 June 2004 outlined the approach for a review of existing bridge tolls in Scotland:

*"There will be a two-phase approach of tolled bridges. The first phase will deal with existing tolls. It will assess all existing tolls, including the way in which potential changes to tolls could help to achieve our environmental and economic objectives of reducing pollution and congestion. The second phase will include an examination of the broader issues relating to the management, operation and maintenance of the tolled bridges. This will also include an assessment of how the tolled bridges relate to the new regional and national transport arrangements."*

6.2 The first phase of the review examined the existing toll structures, including the impact of tolls and the way in which potential changes to tolls could help achieve the Scottish Executive's environmental and economic objectives of reducing pollution and congestion. The main outcome of phase 1 was that there would be no adverse economic, environmental or traffic effects from removing tolls on the Skye Bridge.

- 6.3 The Scottish Executive are now taking forward the second phase which will examine broader issues, relating to the management of the tolled bridges, including how tolled bridges may relate to the proposed new regional and national transport arrangements.
- 6.4 The Scottish Executive's aim for tolled bridges is to strike an effective balance between addressing access, managing demand (if this is required), ensuring efficient use of the associated road and public transport network, and funding the ongoing maintenance requirements of the bridge.
- 6.5 There are a number of broad issues which are of wide concern and interest and the purpose of the Tolled Bridges Review – Phase Two Consultation is to seek views on the options for future management arrangements in relation to tolled bridges in Scotland.
- 6.6 The responses to the questions asked are set out within Appendix A of this report.

## 7 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

IFS/EES

4 August 2005

Dundee City Council  
Tayside House  
Dundee

Director

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

Convener

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

SNP Spokesperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature*

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*Date*

Conservative Spokesperson

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*Signature*

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*Date*

Liberal Democrat  
Spokesperson

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*Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

## Appendix A

**Exemptions for Disabled Drivers/Blue Badge Holders/Emergency Vehicles**

*Question 1 - Do you think that the system for verifying Blue Badge exemptions should be changed? If so, can you suggest what these changes should be?*

**Response 1** – While it seems overly complicated to require blue badge holders to fill in forms or apply for vouchers and that it should be enough for the blue badge holder to display the blue badge as this has pictorial identification of the holder.

*Question 2 - Do you consider that the exemptions for emergency service vehicles should remain limited to the Ambulance, Fire and Police Services, or should we consider extending this to cover other key services?*

**Response 2** – Ambulance, Fire and Police Services should continue to be exempt. Exemption should be extended to Coastguard vehicles. This gives consistency with Road User Charging (Exemption of Charges) (Scotland) Regulations.

*Question 3 - Vehicles used by bridge authorities to respond to breakdowns on each bridge are exempt. Do you see a case for extending exemptions to the AA, RAC or other commercial breakdown services responding to breakdowns on the road network other than where this is the responsibility of the bridge authorities?*

**Response 3** – There is no case for extending exemptions to AA, RAC or other commercial breakdown services.

*Question 4 - Should public transport vehicles and multiple occupancy vehicles be considered for exemption from bridge tolls?*

**Response 4** – Public transport vehicles on registered services should be exempt from tolls.

The issue of Multi Occupancy Vehicles (MOV) brings up the fundamental question – what is the purpose of the bridge toll? The purpose of the Tay Road Bridge toll is to cover the cost of maintaining the bridge, it is not congestion charging. If exemption of MOV is to be considered as a way of reducing congestion it would have to be considered as part of an overall congestion charging scheme for the area for which there is no support from Dundee City Council. Therefore, MOV should not be considered for exemption from tolls.

**Discount Schemes**

*Question 5 - Should tolled bridges offer multiple crossing discount vouchers to all bridge users, or particular classes of users such as buses or multiple occupancy vehicles.*

**Response 5** – Multiple crossing discount vouchers should not be offered to bridge users. Multiple users are contributing to the wear and tear of the bridge and should be making a full contribution to the bridges' maintenance. Reducing tolls for the regular users will encourage/ induce more frequent trips thus increasing vehicle use and the maintenance burden.

However, as stated in response 4 above, public transport vehicles on registered services should be exempt from tolls, as they contribute towards reduced travel by individual private vehicles and therefore reduce the maintenance burden on the bridge.

## Classification of Vehicles

*Question 6 - What are your views on a common vehicle classification system for levying tolls at all Scotland's tolled bridges?*

**Response 6** – It is agreed that a common vehicle classification system for vehicles should be sought not only within Scotland, but throughout the UK.

## Reducing Traffic and Congestion on Tolled Bridges

*Question 7 - Should we encourage modal shift from single occupancy cars to public transport and multiple occupancy vehicles on all tolled bridges? If so, how might this be achieved?*

**Response 7** – Again the question of the purpose of the tolling is appropriate. The encouragement of Public Transport and MOV and a reduction in Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV) is an overall aspiration of sustainable travel in Scotland, not just on tolled bridges. This question really ought to be considered in the context of broader policy measures to reduce individual car usage and increase the use of public transport.

The need to reduce traffic on the bridge is understandable for Forth Road Bridge where the level of traffic using the bridge is greater than the link capacity and therefore is an immediate issue for the bridge itself. However, an analysis of Tay Road Bridge traffic indicates that the link capacity of the bridge is currently not exceeded and is unlikely to do so in future. The TRB has 2 lanes in each direction, therefore theoretical capacity is 3,600 vehicles/hour (1,800 vehicles/lane/hour), whilst recent traffic count data (period 01/05/2004-30/04/2005) indicates that on an average weekday the maximum flow in either direction is only approximately 1,600 vehicles/hour.

Thus the issue is not how to reduce traffic on the bridge, but how to manage it better as it enters and leaves the bridge and reduce its impact on Dundee city centre at its Waterfront in particular. Dundee City Council is promoting a number of policies to promote public transport, MOV and discourage SOV and the Tay Road Bridge should be considered in this context.

*Question 8 - Do you think that raising tolls at peak times would result in less congestion at those times?*

**Response 8** – Again the purpose of tolling needs to be considered. The purpose of the Tay Road Bridge Tolling is to ensure there is adequate funding to maintain the bridge and repay capital borrowing.

Recent traffic count data shows that only 46% of traffic using the Tay Road Bridge does so during the morning and evening peak between 07.00-10.00 and 16.00-19.00 on a weekday. Therefore, to offer discounted rate to the 54% of bridge users who travel outwith the peak could impact on the available funds for future maintenance without resulting in any reduction in peak time usage.

### **Tolls Reflecting Cost of Wear and Tear**

*Question 9 - Should tolls reflect the impacts of different vehicle types on the need for maintenance, repair and strengthening programmes? If so, do you have suggestions for how this might be done?*

**Response 9** – Tolls are generally charged to meet the cost of repair, maintenance and strengthening programmes and as such tolls should reflect the impact of different vehicle types on these programmes. The common vehicle classification system as suggested in Question 6 should be used for this.

### **Procedure for Changing Tolls or Charges**

*Question 10 - Do you think the current process involving Public Local Inquiries ( PLIs) is appropriate for making changes to tolls or charges to meet the costs of managing, maintaining and operating a bridge?*

**Response 10** – Tolls are generally raised only to meet the cost of increased repair and maintenance and it should be sufficient for this to be agreed by Scottish Ministers without the need and expense of a Public Local Inquiry.

*Question 11 - Do you consider that final approval by Scottish Ministers is an essential safeguard for toll/charge payers or do you think the final decision is a matter for the management authority for the bridge?*

**Response 11** – The responsibility for setting toll levels should rest with the management authority of the bridge with final approval given by the Scottish Ministers.

*Question 12 - Do you consider all tolls should be subject to increases linked to an inflation index?*

**Response 12** – While increases should relate to the cost of maintenance and repair programmes it need not be subject to annual review. Any increases need only be applied when the overall projected funding of the bridge requires it at a level which is sufficient to cover this funding. Coinage is also a factor which needs to be considered

### **Executive/Transport Agency**

*Question 13 - What advantages and disadvantages do you see if any or all of the tolled bridges were to be managed by the Scottish Executive or the national transport agency?*

**Response 13** – The Tay Road Bridge connects into the trunk road network at either end and taken at face value it might be considered to make sense for the Scottish Executive or National Transport Authority to manage the Tay Road Bridge. However, the majority of traffic that travels on the Tay Road Bridge is local in nature and has a disproportionate effect on Dundee city centre. Therefore, it is considered that the Scottish Executive should not have a transportation role with the Tay Road Bridge.

### **Regional Transport Partnerships**

*Question 14 - Should we consider transferring some or all of the powers and functions of current bridge authorities to Regional Transport Partnerships in future?*

**Response 14** – Again the answer here revolves around the question of the A92 being a Trunk Road. The A92 in Dundee is described as a non-core trunk road by the Scottish Executive and there is a good case for de-trunking this road in Dundee as it plays a far more significant local role than national.

It is considered that the RTPs would not be in a position to have some or all of the powers and functions of the current bridge authorities. Furthermore consideration of potentially conflicting priority resolution would have to be made given different the local authorities and elected members represented on the Tay Road Bridge Joint Board and the Regional Transport Partnership.

*Question 15 - As the Erskine Bridge functions both as a key national and strategic link for the West of Scotland as well as an important local link for communities north and south of the River Clyde, do you see any argument for de-trunking it so that it could become the responsibility of the RTP for the West of Scotland?*

**Response 15** – No comment.

#### **Joint Board (FETA Model)**

*Question 16 - Do you have any views on the advantages or disadvantages of the FETA model, for any or all of the bridges?*

**Response 16** – It appears that FETA has been successful in operating and maintaining the Forth Road Bridge and promoting associated transportation projects in the surrounding area. However, it must be recognised that there are significant differences between the Forth Road Bridge and the Tay Road Bridge.

In the main at the Forth Road Bridge, the traffic that is delayed by the congestion caused at the bridge is traffic that is also using the bridge. Furthermore the link capacity on the bridge is exceeded so the bridge itself has a transport problem. Although the Forth Road Bridge plays an important part in the neighbouring authorities' Local Transport Strategies and SESTRAN Regional Transport Strategy, and the likely South & East RTP statutory Regional Transport Strategy, it can clearly be seen that there is a benefit for a FETA Transport Strategy which looks in detail at the bridge, its immediate approaches and the surrounding area.

This does not run true at the Tay Bridge. In the main the traffic that gets caught up in the congestion is not bridge traffic, but traffic in Dundee city centre and the greater Dundee area. The level of delays for traffic (and local buses) which has no intention of using the bridge is way in excess of the delay caused to traffic using the bridge. As stated earlier the link capacity of the bridge is not exceeded and is unlikely to be exceeded in future.

There is therefore already a Local Transport Strategy that looks at this in detail and it is expected that it will also form a significant part of the Central & Tay RTPs Regional Transport Strategy. It would not be appropriate for a FETA model to be used at the Tay Road Bridge as the issues are already given appropriate consideration in detail. The FETA model would provide a transport strategy for an area which the Dundee Local Transport Strategy covers in great detail. This is likely to cause more confusion rather than resolve congestion problems.

The role of the Tay Road Bridge Joint Board should continue in its current form and its role reiterated as being responsible for the administration, management, maintenance and operation of the Tay Road Bridge ie no local transport responsibilities.

### **Joint Board (TRBJB)**

*Question 17 - Do you have any views on the advantages or disadvantages of the TRBJB model, for any or all of the bridges?*

**Response 17** – Given the responses to questions 15, 16 and 18, it is considered that the TRBJB is the most appropriate model for the Tay Bridge.

### **Single Tolled Bridges Authority**

*Question 18 - Do you think there would be any merit in having a single body responsible for operating and managing all tolled bridges in Scotland?*

**Response 18** – No. The creation of yet another body to be responsible for operating and maintaining all tolled bridges in Scotland would simply add further confusion and fragmentation to public service provision in Scotland.

*Question 19 - If you think all bridges should be run by one body what form, powers and functions should this body have?*

**Response 19** – See response to question 18.

*Question 20 - Are there any other management options that you would like to suggest?*

**Response 20** – No.