

19<sup>th</sup> April 2005

Ms Rebecca Daddow  
Scottish Executive  
Roads, Policy & Group Finance Division  
Area 2-DD, Victoria Quay  
EDINBURGH  
EH6 6QQ

Dear Ms Daddow

**Tolled Bridges Review – Phase 2 Consultation**  
**Response to Questions Within Consultation Document**

Please find below my response to the current consultation detailed above. Please note that I do not represent any company or organisation: I am a private individual with a specific interest in this issue.

I hope you find these comments helpful.

Yours,



**Martin Gallagher**

<<Response to Tolled Bridges Review Phase 2 Two Consultation>>>

**Exemptions**

1. No Opinion
2. No, I do not think there should be more exemptions as this would reduce revenue intake. The Fire, Ambulance and Police services are the 3 main emergency services likely to be crossing our bridges most often and therefore it is right that these 3 only should be exempt.
3. No, I do not think commercial breakdown companies should be exempt from paying the toll. If there is a breakdown on the approach roads to the bridge but not on the actual bridge itself, it should be the responsibility of the bridge authorities to remove the vehicle if it is such

that it is causing knock-on effects to the flow of traffic on the bridge. It should not be up to commercial breakdown companies where there are already recovery provisions available within close proximity.

4. Yes absolutely exemptions should be considered for buses and MOV's. Personally I find it a disgrace that cars with only one occupant can get a 10% discount with vouchers on the Forth Road Bridge toll, whilst buses have to pay the full £1.40 commercial vehicle toll with no discount available. This is estimated to cost Stagecoach Fife £55,000 p.a. and this is passed onto passengers in their fares. This is unfair. Equally MOV's would be worthy of exemption as this be "carrot" rather than "stick" in the form of even higher tolls for single occupancy vehicles. This would be seen as a "reward" where as higher tolls for SOV's would be seen as a fine.

#### **Discount Schemes**

5. I think that discount vouchers should be restricted to particular vehicles such as buses and MOVs. Especially buses, where the same bus might have to cross the bridge several times in a day. This would enable the operators to pass on their savings in the form of reduced fares, and for MOVs, this would be a reward for helping to reduce congestion and the number of vehicles using that bridge. The current system on the Forth Bridge for example basically rewards people for travelling in their cars.

#### **Classification of Vehicles**

6. I do not think that this would be a good idea as each bridge is different. The tolls should be levied at a level that is appropriate to that bridge depending of the volumes of the type of vehicle being charged. For example, the Forth Road Bridge may take a higher percentage of heavy goods vehicles than the Erskine Bridge, and therefore require to charge a higher toll to reflect the cost of the wear on the road surface. It would be unwise therefore, to set a common classification for all our toll bridges.

#### **Traffic & Congestion on Tolled Bridges**

7. Yes absolutely. As this is line with National Government policy for transport overall we should also be applying this to our bridges. There are numerous ways this could be achieved. For buses, bus lanes and priority measures should be introduced and extended where already in

place to speed up journey times; Queue Relocation & Management systems like that on the A90 from the Forth Bridge should be extended so that queues are relocated to places where bus lanes can be constructed. Where this is not feasible, the use of Queue Management should be utilised to ensure that queues do not occur on the bridge itself. Equally increasing accessibility to public transport in the form of Park & Ride or Park & Choose sites at the Bridgehead areas should be considered or extended where already in place. For MOV's, priority lanes or permitted use of bus lanes where already in place to speed up journey times; priority measures at toll plazas in the form of dedicated lanes and booths for MOVs; and discounts for exemptions on toll prices.

8. This would depend entirely on the circumstances of that bridge and the associated public transport alternatives, however it would be highly likely that this would result in a reduction in congestion overall, as this would be a form of congestion charging. Experience from around the world demonstrates that no city can reduce congestion just by improving public transport alone and the same is also true for our bridges. It is reasonable therefore, to charge a higher toll for drivers who choose to drive at the most congested times, so I do believe that this would be a good idea. This is of particular relevance to the Forth Bridge, where despite the Ferrytoll park & ride facility, and the improvements to cross-Forth rail services, the number of cars using the bridge at peak times has continued to rocket. 3

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

9. The solution for this is simple: the bridge authorities must start charging much higher tolls for HGV's to reflect the much higher wear and tear that they cause. It is estimated that a 38tonne lorry causes 65,000 times more damage than an average car. The higher permitted gross loads coupled with the increasing use of the "super single" high pressure tyres is meaning that our bridge's road surfaces are failing sooner and sooner. Current estimates put the Forth Bridge's southbound carriageway life at 5 years following resurfacing in the summer of 2004, which was at a cost of some £5.2million. The toll for HGV's must be greatly increased therefore, perhaps to levels as high as £10, to reflect the rising cost of surface dressing and maintenance.

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

10. I agree with the PLI format as since the bridges are all in public ownership it is only right that the public are involved and consulted when changes to toll levels are made. If tolls were raised without public consultation that would be a move towards privatisation of our bridges and that would not be right.
11. I think that the approval of Ministers is not necessary provided that the PLI format is maintained. The bridge authority knows better than a Minister what is best for the bridge.
12. No: tolls should be increased as and when is necessary there is no need to link it to inflation.

#### **Executive Transport Agency**

13. The advantages of this would be accountability with Government and Parliament. The disadvantages would be to dilute focus on the needs of each individual bridge; less local accessibility and involvement in decision-making. I therefore would be against a centralised management structure.

#### **Regional Transport Partnerships**

14. No for the similar reasons outlined in answer to question 13. I believe that the existing authorities could cooperate fully with any RTP without the need for the transfer of powers.
15. No Opinion.

#### **Forth Estuary Transport Authority Model**

16. I think the FETA model – whilst not great – is probably the best one we've got available at the moment. In particular the wider powers the Authority possesses, in regards to the financing of other schemes which will benefit the bridge, is very good as this means that Bridge toll revenue can be used to achieve the Authority's objectives relating to public transport and Ferrytoll P&R for example. However the FETA model does need closer scrutinising before being considered for other bridges, as FETA is now burdened with paying for the construction of the new A8000. I think that future FETA models should not be expected to pay for new roads, serving the function of a trunk road, just

because the Executive refuses to pay for it itself. It is ludicrous that the Executive is refusing to pay for the A8000, at a cost of around £25million, a road which everyone in West Edinburgh wants – whilst ploughing ahead with the £500million M74 project, even though the public enquiry recommended it should not go ahead.

### **Tay Road Bridge Joint Board Model**

17. The Joint Board model, previously used for the Forth Bridge, is good in that it serves solely for the operation and maintenance of the bridge concerned. However it is rather limited in this respect and does not fit into the wider picture with regards to cooperation and integration between different authorities and bodies. It also means that any surplus funds are tied up with the bridge and cannot be used elsewhere. I think the Joint Board model is a bit out of date and not suitable for the modern transport challenges we face, and that this model should be phased out altogether.

### **National Tolling Authority**

18. No for the reasons given in the answer to question 13.

19. N/A

20. No further comments.