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13th June, 2005

Dear Miss Daddow

I enclose our response to the consultation on the Tolled Bridges Review from the Liberal Democrat Councillors in the East Area of Fife.

I hope that these can be considered along with other responses to the consultation.

Yours sincerely


Councillor Tim Brett

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RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON TOLLED BRIDGES REVIEW APRIL 2005

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?

Yes, as the present arrangements are bureaucratic and can lead to delays at the bridge tolls. Either more effective checks should be in place to ensure that only those entitled to Blue Badges should be given them or Badge Holders should pay the same as others as it could be argued that any mobility allowances would cover the cost of transport and tolls.

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?

No, retain the limits for the Ambulance, Fire and Police Services.

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 and other commercial breakdown services responding to breakdowns on the road network other than where this is the responsibility of the bridge authorities?

No.

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

Public transport vehicles should be exempt from bridge tolls but not private hire mini buses or coaches.

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? If so, why should this be?

There should be a multiple crossing discount voucher system available for the following reasons:-

- a) This is common practice on all bridges with the exception of the Tay Road Bridge.
- b) If bridge vouchers are purchased in advance, this can speed up the flow of traffic through the tolls.
- c) Any cost would be partially offset by money being paid up front and in advance for vouchers.
- d) It would provide some benefit to regular users of the crossing.

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

There should be a common system of classification. It seems reasonable that multiple axle vehicles of greater weight should pay more than car users.

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?

There is limited congestion on the Tay Road Bridge and this could be improved by the replacing of the existing tolling plaza and using electronic systems for toll collection. Charging more for single occupancy vehicles is likely to be very contentious but before this was done, alternative solutions such as the park and ride facility at Ferrytoll should be in place at all bridges including the Tay Road Bridge.

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

Probably not as people who can avoid the peak times will do so to avoid delays and the higher toll would be seen as an extra penalty.

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?

Yes, see answer to Question 6.

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

No, bridge authorities should have the power to increase charges where this is appropriate as they are made up of local Councillors.

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?

It should be a matter for the management authority for the bridge.

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

No, as rising levels of traffic have increased income.

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

We would not support this as we believe that the management of tolled bridges is best undertaken by a local management body that is responsible to the local users.

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

Possibly, as these bodies will have region-wide transport responsibilities and there could be confusion with bridge management agencies if they continued.

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?

If this were the case, similar arguments could be put forward for the Tay Road Bridge.

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

Seek advice from Tony Martin but on the face of it, the FETA model seems to be one that works well.

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

Probably the better model as why should bridge authorities have responsibility for local road networks as this should be the responsibility of other bodies.

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?

No, this should be a local responsibility.

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

No, see answer to Question 18.

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

All road bridges should become part of the national road network and be paid from road tax, petrol tax and general taxation. Rail travellers do not have to pay an extra charge for crossing the Tay Railway Bridge or the Forth Railway Bridge.