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Response to Central Scotland Transport Corridor Study Plans June 2002

Welcome step in the right direction

The Central Scotland Transport Corridor Study must be welcomed as a big step forward in transport planning for Scotland.

For the first time we have a multi-modal study that will produce solutions that are more than simply just new roads. Friends of the Earth Scotland would hope to see this replicated and improved upon with deeper analysis and full multi-modal studies for other parts of Scotland, including the Aberdeen area.

Roads & the economy

Friends of the Earth Scotland still detect a reluctance to depart from the roads = jobs and a good economy line of old. More value must be placed on the quality of life provided by a healthy environment and good health. Both of these considerations and a good long term economy are reliant on a more sustainable and balanced approach to transport.

Bypassing the process

The M74 was allowed to bypass the process of the study by being set as a given from the start. Friends of the Earth Scotland believe that this road is a relic of a bygone age that should be abandoned.

No real analysis has been carried out into the alternatives to this roadbuilders' dream and we firmly believe that regeneration could be provided for by other means.

Friends of the Earth Scotland are concerned that the M74 will simply make it more difficult to tackle the problems of climate change, road traffic reduction, air pollution and social inclusion. We remain worried that the scheme has negative impacts on all these issues that outweigh any benefits from associated transport work.

Any proposal that serves to work against the aims of sustainable development in the way that the M74 does should have been rejected by any full and balanced multi-modal study.

Friends of the Earth Scotland remain utterly opposed to the M74 extension.

The path to a brighter future

With transport the fastest growing source of CO₂ emissions, it is clear that we need this study to lead us onto the path to a brighter future that is not based heavily

around traveling ever further by car.

Friends of the Earth Scotland strongly believe that more emphasis should be placed on sustainable land use planning as a means to achieving traffic reduction in Scotland. Stronger development control powers must be given by the Executive to local authorities to allow green travel plans to be enforced with financial penalties for those that do not meet the required targets.

Housing, retail and industrial developments should only be allowed where high quality public transport links already exist, or will be put in place and guaranteed from the start.

Poor pricing strategy on our roads leads to products traveling across Europe and back by road during assembly without paying the price for the associated congestion, health, climate change and pollution contributions. Similarly, a combination of developer obsession with greenfield sites off main routes and cheap motoring is also adding to our transport woes.

Friends of the Earth Scotland are convinced that any significant increase in road space should be constructed together with or after the introduction of road pricing through distance based trunk road tolling and congestion charging, and even then only after analysis of alternative options. Currently distance based pricing for HGVs using already available satellite technology is planned and expansion to all traffic on main routes is gaining widespread support. Final study papers should recommend the required changes to Scottish Executive policy.

It has been noted that councils have indicated during Steering Group meetings that they would look again at congestion charging if trunk road tolling was introduced.

Social justice

It is important that we remember that we are supposed to be both encouraging the shift to more sustainable modes of transport and improving access for those without a car, tackling the social inclusion problems that have grown from car dependent and poor quality development.

Friends of the Earth Scotland are concerned that the large scale roadbuilding that could result from the study will worsen social inclusion by providing generous amounts of new tarmac that send the wrong message to the public who could be tempted back to their cars from public transport if they have that choice.

This study must serve to support the creation and protection of desirable communities that are sustainable, safe and pleasant places in which to live or work.

On the buses

The role of buses is as underplayed in this study in places as it has been in the Scottish Executive transport plans.

Friends of the Earth Scotland note that bus improvements are often deliverable at a low cost in a short timescale and want to see the effort required (from all sides) put into delivering real improvements to our bus networks.

If we are to see viable quality bus operations it may be necessary to provide greater protection for operators from cowboy operations that can presently cherry pick key sections of routes. Whether Quality Contract, more powers to object to route registrations or some form of new minimum standard are required is debatable.

There are some dangers in providing powers to object to route registration that would need to be considered carefully, whether these powers were part of Quality Contract or provided separately to tackle cherry picking. There has already been some indication that the first use of Quality Contracts could be to remove buses from tram corridors - something that could in places be potentially detrimental to public transport provision and choice.

Well-maintained and lit high quality bus stops with good (realtime on key routes) information are essential in encouraging bus use, particularly amongst women. These measures should be implemented as part of the study.

Further emphasis should be given to the transport impacts caused by the fear of crime resulting from poorly maintained unlit shelters or indeed incidents of attacks on vehicles. Nothing puts off public transport users more than a journey that starts with no information at a dark and wet bus stop and ends with an incident on board or stone being thrown at the vehicle. Crime on and against Public Transport must be moved up the agenda with more police on board and funding for cctv on vehicles that could also serve to enforce bus priorities.

Spreading the word

Friends of the Earth Scotland were heartened by the Wendy Alexander's promise (before she resigned as transport minister) of improvements to the traveline information service which we see as a potentially useful travel information service.

As it stands traveline is a very useful tool for increasing the use of cars with its still non-existent website in Scotland and frequently inaccurate information. We note the website is marked as "under development" but remember that assurances were given on two separate occasions last year that came to nothing.

Friends of the Earth feel that this study must recommend that traveline is improved if we are going to tackle congestion. Information whether by phone, online, at stop or in promotional literature and route guides is key to road traffic reduction.

Walking and cycling

If we are to note that up to 20% of traffic in our towns and cities is generated as part of the school run, then surely we should place more importance in the study on tackling this and other (often) short journeys?

Friends of the Earth Scotland would like to see more weight given in this study to the benefits for health, economy, environment and social inclusion by encouraging the transfer of short journeys to walking and cycling and the reduction in congestion that would result.

Rail freight

Friends of the Earth Scotland would like to see the study acknowledging the need for better rail freight facilities serving areas outwith the study boundaries.

The current over-reliance on one major rail hub on the A8 is a major problem for both rail freight and road congestion.

Park & Ride/Choose

Friends of the Earth Scotland remain wary of Park and Choose (where you could effectively car share/pool from a P&R site) because it may reduce public transport use and encourage car use.

Conventional P&R takes passengers off public transport as well, but at least puts them onto a bus, train or tram for the end journey into a major destination whether it be a town or retail park. Pricing structures would have to be in place to benefit those using public transport as opposed to merely car sharing.

Light rail

Light rail has had only a few mentions during the period of the study, but could play a big part as both Edinburgh and Glasgow edge towards building a network.

It would seem likely that some of the currently proposed developments such as Ravenscraig would be ideal candidates for serving by light rail. Much of Lanarkshire is currently in need of a minor revolution that could include light rail, bus and rail improvements to form a properly integrated network and yet we seem to have steered clear of journeys that do not go from end to end on our corridors.

Friends of the Earth Scotland would like to see more analysis of light rail as a method of serving these corridors.

HOV lanes

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcome the introduction of HOV lanes to the interurban roads in this study. We would not support extending access to bus lanes to HOV or HGV use where these serve to ease entry into town or increase reliability for key public transport services inside town.

HOV lanes could be useful in encouraging car pooling and making a dent in the exceptionally high single occupancy vehicle rate on these roads. Car sharing where it pulls people off public transport is unwelcome but we cannot see how to tackle this problem.

Not so HOT lanes

Friends of the Earth Scotland are concerned that HOT (High Occupancy Tolling) lanes are HOV lanes with the benefits removed as single occupancy vehicles may pay to enter. We would much prefer that they were left to encourage car sharing, speed buses along (if the positioning suits them) and effectively discourage single user commuting.

A80

The HOV lane, rail improvements and P&R proposals on the A80 route are welcomed, but we remain concerned that the scale of the road will induce traffic and send the wrong signals to the travelling public.

Friends of the Earth Scotland would like to see road user charging introduced to counter this negative impact from increased road space. We would also question whether it would not be wiser to re-examine the proposed final stage linking to the Stepps bypass until at a later date to ensure that it is the best solution.

Currently we worry that the increase in options for travel into Glasgow could mean growth in traffic rather than traffic reduction on this corridor with all the the problems that failure to hit the targets would bring.

A8

Friends of the Earth Scotland accept the need for road improvements on this stretch of road and would welcome the introduction of ramp/mainline metering and HOV lanes with the considerations mentioned elsewhere in this paper.

We will await the full EIA before making any detailed comment on the road impacts as with the other road construction or rail construction parts of the project.

Rail improvements

The improvements listed for rail are welcomed but as with the other demand management and public transport proposals we will have to watch carefully to ensure that funds are committed to actual implementation.

Friends of the Earth Scotland would call for the public transport and demand management measures to be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity, which in many cases could be prior to the roadbuilding elements.

Climate Change

Friends of the Earth Scotland must express serious concerns that the planned roadbuilding may make even the current unambitious climate change targets very hard to meet.

Air quality

The solutions proposed at the end of this study must actively encourage sustainable travel decisions and aim to tackle air pollution problems in areas effected by the corridors.

If travel is easier drivers find themselves able to travel further in a shorter amount of time and may be tempted to help continue the trend of previous years by traveling further.

This would obviously lead to problems with air pollution and congestion elsewhere that would harm health, wealth and environment.

Impacts on biodiversity, wildlife sites/corridors and watercourses

Friends of the Earth Scotland will be awaiting the full EIAs for the major infrastructure proposals. We will call for the handling of road run-off on the current routes to be improved where this is possible and wildlife sites protected.

Noise

Consideration should be given to calling for wider distribution of noise control measures including window insulation to ensure that this growing area of concern is not skimmed over.

Changes in building legislation may be required.

Friends of the Earth Scotland welcome the introduction of lower noise surfaces into the proposals and would like to see these as a basic consideration for pavement reconstruction works and new projects elsewhere.

Conclusion

It is clear that there are still problems with the funding of public transport in Scotland that are yet to be answered. Local authorities appear reluctant to spend money on public transport schemes and often do not possess the expertise required to pick the right projects.

Old war wounds caused by the loss of council-owned bus operations and other political misgivings must not be allowed to get in the way of the creation of a high quality public transport network.

Friends of the Earth Scotland believes that the creation of Transport Authorities or PTEs with teeth and direct funding will be required to bring the required high-quality integrated transport network to Scotland.

We thank you for the opportunity to make these comments and look forward to the response.

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