In my evidence session on 29 April, I undertook to write to the Committee providing some further detail in relation to specific road upgrades and to climate change.

Firstly, Linda Fabiani mentioned that during the inquiry points were made about the importance of good road links to ports and rail hubs. In particular mention was made of the Avon Gorge to Grangemouth (A801), and the A77 and A75 to Cairnryan. My response indicated that I would provide specific details on the capital spending commitments for the individual areas.

I recognise the importance of this last mile concept to enable the smooth flow of goods. This was particularly apparent during winter 2010. Since then, we have worked in close partnership with freight industry representatives and the wider public sector to improve communication, and co-ordinate network management activity across the public sector to strengthen the resilience of our transport network.

In terms of the A801, A77 and A75, improvements to these roads are identified in the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) which sets out the Scottish Government's 29 transport investment priorities over the period to 2032. The pace at which the STPR projects will be delivered will be determined by the availability of resources in future spending reviews. The financial climate in which we are working has materially changed; external factors out with this Government's control will impact on how and when we can deliver on the investment proposals this country needs.

The STPR supports the objective to improve access to the Grangemouth port and the freight hub, by improving access for both road and rail freight. This allows for improved road access from Grangemouth onto the motorway network through upgrades to Junctions 5 or 6 on the M9 and an upgrade of the A801 between Grangemouth and the M8 (including carriageway improvements and a new viaduct at the Avon Gorge) to serve developing industrial and distribution facilities along the M8 corridor.

It is planned that the upgrade of the A801 will be in the second cluster of investment under the Falkirk Council Tax Incremental Funding (TIF) project and is currently scheduled for delivery in 2021, subject to funding availability. Falkirk Council have recently outlined their proposed approaches to funding the A801 upgrade and I have advised that further funding contributions to the project will be decided on their fit with available budgets in future spending reviews.

The total investment on A77 and A75 improvements since 2008 is approximately £77m, which includes the recently opened A75 Hardgrove and A75 Dunragit Bypass. This total also includes investment on the A77 such as the recently opened A77 Symington and Bogend Toll improvements and the planning and design work on the A77 Maybole Bypass*. The investment to date has helped improve safety and journey times to and from west coast ports.
In addition the STPR recommended a targeted programme of measures on A75 to improve links to the Loch Ryan Ports, including physical works such as 2+1 sections, climbing lanes, overtaking lay-bys and improvements to operation of junctions around Dumfries. The STPR also recommended targeted road congestion/environmental relief schemes on the A77, including an upgrade of the A77 from single to dual carriageway around Ayr and grade-separation of key junctions and enhancements south of Ayr, including a bypass of Maybole which is currently going through the statutory processes.

The Scottish Government is a full partner in the Glasgow & Clyde Valley City Deal, supporting all three strands and contributing £500 million over 20 years to the Infrastructure Investment Fund. The Deal empowers the Glasgow and Clyde Valley partners to identify, manage and deliver projects, which will stimulate economic growth and create jobs in their area. The Infrastructure Fund element of the deal contains proposals for a new road from Gartcosh Business Park to Freightliner and Gartsherrie, with associated junction improvements to M73 Junction 2A, which the City Deal anticipates will support the development of a strategically integrated rail to road facility, removing HGV traffic from existing local roads and improve both air quality and road safety in the North Coatbridge area.

If there are particular constraints causing industry concern, then established avenues exist for investigating solutions, through the Regional Transport Partnerships and Freight Quality Partnerships.

As with other aspects of ports development we would encourage any potential project to be discussed with Transport Scotland Ports Officials at an early stage to help ensure all parties are aware of the proposals and can look to address these issues at an early stage. I think the engagement around the new port developed by Stena was a great example of this working in practice.

Secondly, during discussion on climate change emissions, the Deputy Convener asked if there were targets for freight as opposed to passenger traffic. My response indicated that the focus was more on the levels of emissions. I undertook to write back to the committee with more details on any targets that might be relevant.

One of the foundations underpinning our approach within “Low Carbon Scotland – Meeting the Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027, Second Report on Proposals and Policies” (RPP2) was a desire to identify the most cost effective ways to remove carbon emissions, irrespective of the sector in which the savings were made. This approach meant there were no specific emissions reduction targets set for transport in general, freight, car trips or any other area or sector. Within this general approach we adopted “bottom-up” approach to identify those measures capable of delivering emissions reduction, along with the associated costs to the public sector, businesses and wider society (as well as the benefits). Thereafter, the very fluid nature of transport in terms of trips, distance and mode made it more sensible for the focus to be on the impact from broad policy groupings rather than individual measures.

Together, these policies and proposals covering Scotland’s transport emissions are anticipated to reduce emissions by 4.0 MtCO₂e in 2027 from a Business as usual scenario of 14.5 MtCO₂e.
In commenting on that report, the ICI Committee called on the Scottish Government to consider whether the draft RPP2 could place greater emphasis on the emissions reduction benefits which could be realised from developments in the freight sector through modal shift and technological and operational changes. Our response indicated that reduction of emissions from the movement of freight will rely on the implementation of appropriate measures by the freight industry itself – such as the Freight Transport Association’s Low Carbon Reduction Scheme. For this reason government’s role is to continue to work closely with stakeholders to identify solutions that meet policy objectives, whilst also making good business sense for the freight industry.

It is also important to recognise that plans for alternative fuels - outlined in sections on electric vehicles and LNG/Hydrogen - apply as much for the movement of goods, as for people. The proposals to support the development of electric vehicle infrastructure will benefit goods delivery vans (which represent approximately 30% of the van market) as much as it will benefit cars. It is also the case that advances in vehicle tracking technology can facilitate the better management of vehicles, enabling journeys to be reduced.

Kind regards

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Minister for Transport and Islands
28 May 2015