South Lanarkshire Council is the local Roads Authority and the Planning Authority. It is responsible for interpreting national and regional policies and developing policies and actions at a local level. As Roads Authority it has a duty to manage and maintain local public roads and has the power to improve infrastructure as necessary. It also has responsibility for road safety.

The Council is responsible for the development of a Local Transport Strategy (LTS), Local Development Plan and Sustainable Development Strategy, and is a constituent member of Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT). The LTS takes account of both the National and Regional Transport Strategies and reflects the aims and policies of various Council strategies including the Council’s Single Outcome Agreement and Council Plan. The Council is also the lead partner in the development of the South Lanarkshire Community Plan, of which transport is seen as a key cross cutting theme.

SPT was created on 1 April 2006 and is the regional transport partnership for the west of Scotland. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 created the provision for seven statutory regional transport partnerships throughout Scotland. It is a partnership of 12 councils and has a range of planning, operational and project delivery responsibilities. For planning purposes, SPT prepares the statutory Regional Transport Strategy.

As outlined in the Council’s LTS it recognises that the safe and sustainable transportation of freight and goods is essential for the economic wellbeing of South Lanarkshire. Most goods within the Council area, as is the case Scotland wide, are transported by road and this has a substantial impact on the structural integrity of roads and bridges and can shorten the lifespan of a road. This leads to increased maintenance costs, with roads requiring to be replaced at more frequent intervals. Freight traffic can also have a detrimental effect on town centres if it is unregulated. Deliveries during peak period can cause congestion and make town centres less attractive to customers.

One of the Council’s policies within the LTS is to encourage developers to consider rail as an alternative to road for moving freight. Where road transportation is the only viable option, it will encourage best practice to be pursued. It is recognised, however, that there are issues surrounding, and barriers to, transporting freight by rail, as well as by road, and these will be discussed later in this response.

As a land-locked authority with no navigable rivers or inland waterways, and no airports, South Lanarkshire has no direct responsibility for waterborne or airborne freight transport. It recognises and understands, however, that these...
modes of transport, together with road and rail, are of strategic regional, national and international importance.

In view of this, while comments will be made below on some key road and rail issues, it is considered that, following dialogue with SPT, the regional overview provided by their response is appropriate to South Lanarkshire.

This approach is supported by the fact that SPT has developed a Freight Action Plan as part of the Regional Transport Strategy and chairs the Strathclyde Freight Quality Partnership, comprising representatives from the Freight Transport Association, Road Haulage Association, the 12 composite local authorities and other key industry partners.

It is also investing, in collaboration with the local authorities, over £3,000,000 this financial year, 2014/15, in transport network initiatives which will improve connectivity for freight. We consider, therefore, that SPT is ideally placed to play a key role in assisting the Scottish Government, the freight transport industry and local authorities in addressing freight transport issues.

1. Can you identify the main infrastructure and policy obstacles to the free flow of freight in Scotland, whether carried by rail, road, air or sea?

With regard to infrastructure obstacles the Council would consider capacity to be the main one, certainly in relation to road and rail. High volumes of road traffic, particularly in urban areas, and road maintenance issues affect capacity. Investment is required for developing new infrastructure and maintaining existing stock.

Similarly capacity on the rail network is constrained by the requirement to integrate freight and passenger trains and there are also maintenance issues, particularly, it appears, in relation to signalling.

While it is generally agreed that a transfer of freight from road to rail is desirable nearly all freight transport requires an element of road movement. In particular, the current trend of internet shopping and home delivery means that more vehicles are required to get goods from distribution centres to individual customers' premises.

Congestion within town centres adversely affects road freight transport and the requirement for waiting and loading restrictions in urban areas, which must balance the needs of residents, commuters, retailers and businesses, can also be an issue.

With regard to policy obstacles there is a perception that the transport of freight by rail is more costly and onerous than by road. While the Freight Facilities Grant seeks to address this issue more could be done to encourage the modal shift.

Information is a major barrier. Clearly presented data must be available to enable a consignor to identify what commodity can be moved in what volume to which locations by whom at what cost.
Vehicle Excise Duty and the cost of fuel affect the transport of freight by road and the level of these “taxes” is set by government policy. European legislation, such as the Working Time Directive, also affects road transport.

Of particular concern in South Lanarkshire is a perceived lack of overnight amenities, including secure parking and messing facilities, along the M74 corridor. Some villages and rural locations experience antisocial behaviour as a consequence of Large Goods Vehicles parking up overnight.

Transport Scotland has confirmed that they completed a study a few years ago and overall there is considered to be sufficient lorry parking across Scotland. There are suitable lorry park facilities in the area, most notably at the motorway services at Abington, Lesmahagow and Happendon, but it appears that the drivers in question simply choose not to use these facilities. Part of the problem seems to be that drivers receive around £15 / £20 per night for overnight expenses and they have a choice to spend it at a recognised facility or to retain the money and park elsewhere. While this may not be an issue at some locations where there are appropriate parking areas adjacent to a cafe / hotel where stopping overnight is encouraged and is seen to be of value to the local economy, at other locations, such as in Abington village, where there are no facilities, and especially toilets, it is.

2. How can Scotland's rail, road, air and sea freight routes to the rest of the UK, to Europe and worldwide be improved?

As outlined above significant investment is required to develop new infrastructure and maintain existing stock. As set out in the Government’s Freight Action Plan partnership working between the public and private sectors is essential to delivering improvements.

3. How can the Scottish Government structure its freight grant schemes to support the switch of freight to more sustainable modes of transport?

By clearly explaining and demonstrating the benefits of, and options for, more sustainable modes of transport and offering incentives to switch, or disincentives for those who do not.

4. Are there any European Union initiatives which could provide further opportunities for Scottish freight transport?

The Council recognises the European Commission’s transport infrastructure policy, TEN-T, and the opportunities that it provides. The multimodal TEN-T Core Network with the Core Network Corridors will strongly contribute to European cohesion and strengthen the internal market. A more competitive economy will produce higher employment. Enhanced multimodality on a better rail, inland waterways and maritime infrastructure within the multimodal TEN-T, as well as innovative technologies in the field of transport, will induce modal shift, reduce congestion on road, cut emissions of greenhouse and polluting gases and boost transport safety and security. It is noted that the United Kingdom Core Network Corridor includes the Edinburgh / Glasgow rail upgrading (EGIP).
5. How can the freight industry make a contribution to greenhouse gas emissions reduction?

Freight modal shift from road to rail (or water) should form part of the strategy for meeting Scottish Government’s target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80% by 2050 target (42% by 2020). Transport represents 23% of United Kingdom’s domestic CO₂, and within that freight contributes 30%. Rail freight is able to carry many lorry loads and so is more fuel efficient, generating 25% of the equivalent road based emissions. Rail has the added benefit of electric traction across 40% of the United Kingdom network including both cross-border routes.

As outlined above, however, road haulage will continue to be a vital link in freight transport so the use of low emission vehicles should be encouraged and incentivised.

The Centre For Sustainable Road Freight brings together multi-disciplinary teams of researchers and industry leaders to improve road freight efficiency and reduce its environmental impact. The Centre is collaboration between Cambridge and Heriot-Watt Universities and organisations in the freight and logistics sectors, including key freight operators. Its purpose is to research engineering and organisational solutions to make road freight economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. The centre has a £5.8 million funding for the first 5 years. One of its key aims is to develop tactics and strategies to help meet the Government’s emissions reduction targets.

6. Which policy changes, or infrastructure improvements, are required to increase the flow of goods through Scotland’s major sea ports?

As outlined above significant investment is required to develop new infrastructure and maintaining existing stock. Improving road and rail access to these ports will be vital, as will be ensuring that appropriate intermodal transfer facilities are provided.

22 January 2015