

PE1657/Q

Transport Scotland submission of 10 August 2018

Thank you for your letter of 2 July regarding the A75 and A77 petitions that the committee is considering. I have been asked to respond to the points raised.

I note the petitioner's first query concerns the traffic volume used in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 3 assessment for the A77 Maybole Bypass. I can confirm that the traffic survey data for this project was collected on Wednesday 20 and Thursday 21 June 2012, as the month of June is considered to be a 'neutral' month that avoids the busiest summer months and the quietest winter months.

Traffic growth for the A77 Maybole Bypass was taken from the UK Government's "National Road Traffic Forecasts" (NRTF), which contain growth factors for each class of vehicle. This reflects the fact that the growth of cars may be different from the growth in Light Goods Vehicles or the growth in Heavy Goods Vehicles. Due to the uncertainty in predicting future traffic levels the NRTF provides three different traffic growth values: Low, Medium, and High Growth, where these reflect differences in expected future population, household size, car ownership, trip making and fuel prices. Based on a review of historic traffic data on the A77 near Maybole it was determined that NRTF Low Growth was the most appropriate growth scenario to use for the assessment of the A77 Maybole Bypass, with NRTF Central Growth being used to provide a sensitivity test.

Traffic data was collected by a permanent Transport Scotland traffic counter site, ATC08523, which is located on the A77 north of Maybole (approximately 200m north of the junctions between the A77 and Kirkmichael Road). The average weekday traffic recorded (two-way) in March 2012 was approximately 10,790, while in March 2018 it was approximately 11,310. This is a growth of 4.8%, or a growth factor of 1.048. For comparison the NRTF Low Growth factor for cars (which makes up approximately 80% of all traffic) used in the Maybole Bypass assessment was 1.054¹, or a growth of 5.4% over the same period.

With regards to the petitioner's query around vehicle speeds and weights used in the assessment, the dynamics of the vehicles in the traffic model are governed by an 'acceleration versus speed' curve that is defined within the traffic model, not the weight of the vehicle. There is a different curve for each class of vehicle. The stated vehicle weights have been left at their default values within the model. They are available for situations where it is appropriate to apply a weight limit to a section of road, and thus ban all vehicles above a certain weight. There are no places in the Maybole model where this is applied.

The maximum speeds that appear in the quoted table define the maximum mechanical speed for each class of vehicle. As a vehicle's speed increases and gets closer to this maximum value its ability to accelerate reduces. When it reaches the maximum mechanical speed the vehicle can no longer accelerate. This models realistic vehicle behaviour. Individual roads within the model have their own posted speed limit. Vehicles will approximately obey the posted speed limit on the road but will have the mechanical ability for some to exceed the posted speed limit, as would be expected on a normal road.

The petitioner's second query relates to a request for further details regarding any plans to raise the speed limit of 50MPH for cars and vans on the A77 travelling north from Monkton roundabout to Bogend Toll. The process of preparing a Speed Limit Order to return the speed limit at this location to the national speed limit began in 2015. This included the required

¹ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/41412/dmrb-stage-3-traffic-and-economic-assessment-report-a77-maybole-bypass.pdf> - Table 17, Page 51

statutory consultation with residents and stakeholders, and a number of objections to the proposal to increase the speed limit were received. Since these objections could not be resolved, the matter was referred to an independent Special Projects Team within Transport Scotland. In addressing points raised by this independent team, relevant evidence was considered. This followed from the outcome of the 2009 Public Inquiry in relation to the junction improvements at the location and the engagement with stakeholders and objectors to the proposed speed limit change. Further evidence gathering continued, including video surveys and accident analysis. In reaching a decision on the most appropriate course of action, Transport Scotland concluded that the 50 mph limit is an appropriate speed limit for this section of the A77. This has been accepted by the Scottish Ministers and there is no intention to increase the speed limit.

The petitioner's third point relates to the public engagement phase of the South West Scotland Transport Study. Stakeholder and public engagement, which will be fundamental to gathering information on issues and opportunities in the South West, will commence in late summer. Wider engagement will be undertaken with the general public through an online survey platform. The link to the wider public survey will be publicised through the Transport Scotland website as well as the websites and social media profiles of study partners. I would be happy to keep the committee notified of opportunities for engagement as the study moves forward.

I hope this is helpful.