RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

General Comments
East Ayrshire Council supports the overall aim of this Bill to increase sustainable economic growth through making improvements to allow the transport network to operate more efficiently and effectively.

The Ayrshire Growth Deal is a joint venture between the three Ayrshire local authorities. It aims to secure funding from the Scottish and UK governments to develop a number of industrial projects across the region to transform economic prospects for the area. It will support a number of transformational projects across Ayrshire including local and trunk roads, transport links and improvements to rail, ferry and air travel. It is considered that there are many elements of this Bill and other current Scottish Parliament business that will help facilitate change in our area. Improvements to transport provision is a prerogative for East Ayrshire Council. A number of events have been held in 2018 in support of making these improvements, including the Ayrshire Transport Summit in February, and the Children and Young People’s Cabinet in August, and it is clear there is a strong desire and commitment to affect change.

The Transport Summit focused on the importance of addressing multi-modal transport issues in this area, and there are several items in this Bill which are directly related to the issues raised at the Summit.

The Children and Young People’s Cabinet highlighted issues in relation to the need to increase concessionary travel for young people and the improvements required to bus service timetables. There was also agreement on the need for improved connectivity between road and rail.

East Ayrshire Council supports the overarching objectives of the Bill through

- Local Emission Zones to improve the air quality in towns and cities which will lead to a healthier country;

- Improving the flexibility of bus services and developing an integrated ticketing system across all modes of transport. This will result in improved bus service provision and the use of improving technological standards to increase public transport availability and use. This will make potential journeys easier to use and clearer to understand from a ticketing perspective which will lead to increased public transport and active travel use, reducing the use of the private car and thereby reducing carbon emissions;

- Supporting increased responsible parking by ensuring that dangerous and inconsiderate parking is greatly reduced. This will promote the rights of pedestrians including the disabled, the older members of our communities and those using prams, pushchairs and mobility scooters above those who are vehicle users. This will allow those undertaking active travel to do so safely;
Supporting the increased powers being provided to the Scottish Road Works Commissioner and allowing increased regulation of roadworks to improve performance and the standards of roadworks on the road network;

Supporting the financial amendments which will be available to Regional Transport Partnerships to provide the necessary clarity to ensure they work more efficiently and effectively;

Supporting the amendments proposed to Scottish Canals at a time when their remit is changing thereby providing the powers to contribute to the Scottish Government’s objectives to improve tourism, regeneration and the economy.

It is important that these proposed changes to the way in which Transport is delivered in Scotland is also reflected in the developing National Transport Strategy and the Strategic Transport Projects Review.

In general terms East Ayrshire Council supports the principles of this Bill. However, this Council has specific comments on each of the various sections in the Bill.

Part 1 - Low Emission Zones

East Ayrshire Council supports the facility to set consistent national standards in relation to emissions; penalties; exemptions; and parameters for grace periods.

It is noted that five tiers of governance have already been set up and perhaps this multi-layer approach could lead to duplication and loss of efficiency. Also, it is essential that future guidance provides clear direction on how Low Emission Zones will be delivered throughout Scotland. It is essential that when these Zones are established this is undertaken in a consistent manner.

Increased clarity needs to be provided when the Low Emission Zones are extended beyond Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee to the areas with Air Quality Management Issues. It is essential consistency is promoted and that there is national partnership working, with Transport Scotland taking the lead on this matter.

Part 2 - Bus Services

East Ayrshire Council supports improving bus services. This element of the Bill will allow the local transport authority to establish the need to provide bus services and thereby improve accessibility for all.

This will allow local transport authorities to have viable and flexible options to improve bus services in their area and ensure that services meet local users’ needs and create sustainable bus networks.

The Council supports the requirement that bus operators will require to make more information available on services, including routes, timetables and fares; and that operators who withdraw services, will need to provide more information to local transport authorities.
It is essential then when this information is provided it is undertaken in a consistent approach. This Council considers that this should be led by Transport Scotland.

**Part 3 - Ticketing Arrangements and Schemes (“Smart Ticketing”)**

East Ayrshire Council supports the creation of a national standard for the implementation and operation of smart ticketing arrangements and provide local transport authorities with additional powers to develop and deliver effective smart ticketing arrangements and schemes. This will make it easier to use public transport in Scotland across connecting networks.

It is essential that the scheme is national, across all modes of transport, and it is easy to use.

This Council is concerned that the only outcome from this section of the Bill will result in a National Advisory Panel being formed with a national technological standard being agreed. Accordingly, there is the potential for significant delay in the full implementation of smart ticketing across all modes of public transport and across the whole country.

**Part 4 - Pavement Parking and Double Parking**

East Ayrshire Council supports improving safety for all roads users and in particular pedestrians. This Council considers that by managing dangerous and inappropriate parking will lead to safer roads.

This Council is making excellent progress in meeting the targets set in the National Strategic Road Safety Plan. It is considered that banning pavement parking and double parking will ensure this Council further contributes to meeting these targets. The main advantage of the proposals in the Bill is that all pedestrians will have free movement along pavements. They will be able to cross roads at the safest points and not from between parked cars. The removal of vehicles parked on pavements will also benefit the mobility impaired giving them full use of the pavement width. This Council receives many service requests every year to deal with dangerous and inconsiderate parking. At present, this can only be dealt with by Police Scotland through the offence of obstruction, or by this Council introducing Traffic Regulation Orders. These proposals provide the necessary clarity to allow enforcement to be better managed.

This Council agrees that pavement and double parking is undesirable, and it is noted that there was overall consensus in the responses to the “Improving Parking in Scotland Consultation” from May 2018 that legislation is required.

Nevertheless, there are many roads throughout Scotland which have not been constructed to modern day standards. The increased ratio of cars per household has resulted in many of our residential streets being subjected to pavement parking, and accordingly there may need to be a pragmatic approach taken to address this issue. It will be those drivers who park on pavements and double park who will argue that they have no other places to park their vehicles and by parking in these locations allows the best movement of travel for pedestrians and vehicles.
This Council supports the elements of the Bill in relation to the exemptions provided for certain vehicles.

In addition, it is recognised that the legislation will allow Councils to promote some local exemptions from the prohibition of pavement parking, as long as any guidance issued by Scottish Ministers is addressed. This Council supports this approach but the detail of these potential specific exemptions will only be available when the “Parking Standards Document” is published by Transport Scotland, and accordingly it is not possible to comment directly on the issues that may arise whilst promoting local exemptions.

Clarity may be provided when the “Parking Standards Document” is published. However, East Ayrshire Council intends to follow the spirit of the Legislation in that dangerous and inappropriate parking is considered as not acceptable, but will be pragmatic when dealing with enforcement to ensure there is an appropriate balance between road safety for pedestrians and ensuring that appropriate parking of vehicles and access is maintained.

There is concern that the implementation of the Bill will place a significant but unquantified burden on this Council to implement and enforce the legislation. There is concern that this Council will need to meet the financial cost of undertaking these studies, and then provide traffic signage in locations where there may be no road safety and pedestrian movement issues to address.

This Council considers the potential resource requirements and costs associated with assessing areas for potential local exemptions is not fully appreciated.

Until full guidance is provided by the Transport Scotland through the “Parking Standards Document”, which is still to be published, it is not possible to determine the net cost to the Council taking into account the costs of applying local exemptions; traffic signage requirements; increased number of parking attendants versus the anticipated additional income. Should there be a shortfall then this additional financial burden should be met by the Scottish Government.

Double parking obstructs traffic flow, causes problems for emergency vehicles and raises road safety issues for pedestrians trying to cross roads. This Council supports this part of the Bill.

**Part 5 - Road Works**

East Ayrshire Council supports the increased role of the Scottish Road Works Commissioner and the wider regulation of roadworks. The Council supports the Commissioner gaining improved powers with better options to deal with poor performance, encourage getting roadwork reinstatements right first time; providing better information about roadworks, and ensuring a consistent approach to safety at roadwork sites regardless of which body is carrying them out.

This Council also supports the requirement in the Bill that road authorities will be subject to the existing Code of Practice for Site Works that currently applies to only utility companies undertaking roadworks and also the level of qualification required for road authority operatives and supervisors working on site to ensure consistency.
Part 6 - Miscellaneous and General

East Ayrshire Council supports the proposed revised financial arrangements for Regional Transport Partnerships to allow them to better manage their year-end finances by holding a balance of funds. As a result, this will allow Regional Transport Partnerships to hold and operate capital; renewal and repair funds; and insurance funds, in a similar way to Councils. It is noted that there will be no additional financial burden on Councils that contribute towards their running costs.

The Council supports the proposal to allow Scottish Ministers to vary the size of the Scottish Canals Board to ensure they have the skills to oversee the varied work of the organisation.