

10th November 2003

**Public Local Inquiry into the  
proposed M74 Northern Extension**

precognition of

**David Spaven**

witness for

JAM74 / FoES

## WITNESS STATEMENT

DAVID SPAVEN – JAM74 / FoES

### Summary of Precognition:

- (a) My name is David Spaven, and I am the Chair of TRANSform Scotland, the campaign for sustainable transport. I have been involved in campaigning against the M74 Northern Extension since the early 1990s when I lived in Glasgow, and spoke as an objector at the 1995 hearing held by Glasgow District Council. From 1997 to 2002 I lived within one mile of the proposed line of the motorway within Glasgow, and I have walked the length of the proposed route between Shields Road in Glasgow and the River Clyde near Cambuslang. In my professional life I am a transportation consultant specialising in rail and freight issues.
- (b) I wish to address four aspects in particular of the incompatibility of the M74 Northern Extension with Government policy and international best practice in transport policy, namely:
- (i) The absence of genuine multi-modal appraisal of the M74 NE corridor, in contrast to that undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Executive for the A8 and A80 road corridors, where alternative transport solutions have been evaluated.
  - (ii) The failure of the Scottish Executive to comply with its own guidance on economic development grounds for road-building, despite wider economic benefit claims being instrumental in forcing the case for the road.
  - (iii) The failure of the road s promoters to consider sustainable investment in alternative transport infrastructure, traffic management interventions and wider transport policy measures, instead of the M74 Northern Extension.
  - (iv) The failure of the road s promoters to consider international best practice in urban motorway policy, in particular the experience of smart growth cities in the USA such as San Francisco and Portland (Oregon).
- (c) Following the election of the Labour Government in 1997, a wide range of government policy documents were issued at the UK and Scotland level setting out the core transport policy principle that before new roads are built alternative solutions (such as investment in public transport) should be properly evaluated. Quoted examples of particular relevance to Scotland include:
- (i) *"We want to see new roads built only where it makes sense to do so: that is, after a thorough appraisal of the costs and benefits associated with any proposed scheme and any possible alternative modes which might serve the same route."*  
(Donald Dewar, Scottish Transport White Paper, 1998)
  - (ii) *"Before including major new [road] schemes in their strategy, local authorities should be able to demonstrate that they have looked at alternative or complementary solutions, such as public transport improvements and traffic management measures, and that the road scheme is consistent with an integrated transport strategy."*  
(Scottish Executive Guidance on Local Transport Strategies, 2000).

- (d) In November 1999, the Scottish Executive Transport Minister Sarah Boyack, in association with the publication of her Strategic Roads Review, explicitly rejected the M74 Northern Extension as a trunk road project because of concerns that it would be primarily a car commuter road serving local demand. She instructed Glasgow City Council to review its proposal for the M74 because of the "*substantial volumes of car commuting*" that would be carried on the road, and stated that the City Council should "*review alternative transport solutions for the area.*" For a time, therefore, it was expected that a proper multi-modal study of alternatives to the road would be undertaken, in line with government policy at Scottish and UK level.
- (e) In September 2000, after sustained lobbying by business groups, the local authorities and sections of the Labour Party, the Transport Minister reversed her previous view, accepting in principle the need for the M74 Northern Extension and including this corridor in the multi-modal studies programme. However, unlike the M8 and M80 appraisals — where no presumptions were made about the outcome of the studies in terms of the relative roles of different transport modes — the M74 corridor study was based on "*accepting the M74 Completion Scheme as a starting point*". (Central Scotland Transport Corridor Studies — M74 Corridor; MVA, May 2002)
- (f) The Scottish Executive had therefore contradicted the letter and spirit of established public policy positions and formal guidance to Local Authorities by deliberately preventing the costs and benefits of the M74 Northern Extension scheme from proper scrutiny and comparison with alternative transport solutions along the corridor instead of the road scheme. Given that the key traffic flows along the M74 Northern Extension would traverse one of the highest density population corridors in Scotland, there is a prima facie case for viewing this corridor as one of the best prospects for improved public transport (as well as traffic restraint and traffic management) being a realistic alternative to major road investment.
- (g) Despite the fundamental limitations of the terms of reference of the M74 corridor study, the Final Report published in May 2002 served a very useful public interest purpose in highlighting the fact that the combined effect of the new road and the overall background trend of traffic growth would be to create in 2010 "*a [road] network which is more congested (even with the additional capacity provided by the M74) than in 2000. As well as severe queuing at a number of points, there will be a decrease in overall traffic speed.*"
- (h) This independent and authoritative analysis by experienced traffic consultants therefore — albeit perhaps unintentionally — supports the key criticism that the M74 Northern Extension will not solve traffic congestion problems, but rather will contribute to a worsening of the situation by providing additional road capacity for the considerable latent demand for car use.
- (i) Economic development grounds have been instrumental in forcing the case for the M74 Northern Extension — in particular in the economic benefit claims made by the M74 Complete to Compete road lobby group — yet the Scottish Executive has failed to follow its own guidance which states that for a transport project to be justified on economic development grounds "*it needs to be demonstrated that devoting resources to the transport project would represent a more cost-effective means of developing the local economy than the use of other existing policy instruments*" (Scottish Executive Guidance on Local Transport Strategies, 2000).
- (j) There are a range of alternative transport infrastructure and traffic management interventions which could be considered for the M74 Northern Extension. Examples of these have been suggested by JAM74 for a number of years but have still to be evaluated by the road s promoters as a package (or components of a package) of alternatives to road construction. These are summarised in the following paragraphs.
- (k) Peak-hour congestion on the M8 Kingston Bridge, which delays commuter buses and lorries carrying exports from Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire, (and

has been a key argument for the new motorway) is primarily caused by cars. The most obvious early solution to congestion on the M8 is to introduce lanes giving priority to lorries and buses rather than single-person occupant cars.

- (l) At present there are no cross-Glasgow rail services from Edinburgh or Lanarkshire to Renfrewshire, Inverclyde or Ayrshire — one of the key traffic flows that the motorway would carry. The Glasgow Crossrail scheme is a practical alternative to the M74 Northern Extension.
- (m) The electrification of the Glasgow Central-Livingston-Edinburgh rail line (which at its western end parallels the proposed M74 Northern Extension alignment) would further transform the speed and quality of train links from the west of Scotland to the east of the country, providing a high-quality alternative to the road
- (n) Glasgow Airport is the largest in Britain (and one of the largest in Europe) without a passenger rail link. Passenger trains direct from Edinburgh, Lanarkshire and Glasgow would remove one of the main arguments for the new motorway.
- (o) Feeder rail freight services from Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire to the Scottish freight hubs at Coatbridge and Mossend would allow export containers to bypass completely the Kingston Bridge and M8 congestion, and bring environmental benefits to both Glasgow and Lanarkshire.
- (p) Contrary to the conventional wisdom derived from stereotypical representations on TV and film, urban USA is no longer necessarily dominated by car culture in its approach to transport infrastructure investment. In 2000 I was part of a professional study tour of smart growth cities of Northern California and the Pacific North West which witnessed the dramatic economic, social and environmental impact of the deconstruction, ie demolition, of existing urban motorways similar in scale to the M74 Northern Extension, and their replacement by more sustainable forms of transport.
- (q) The pier head district of downtown San Francisco was formerly a depressed economic area, physically dominated by an elevated motorway which cut the city off from its seafront and was home to poverty and crime. During the 1990s the people of San Francisco voted for the demolition of the motorway, which had been damaged during an earlier earthquake. The corridor formerly blighted by the motorway has been replaced by a wide boulevard carrying tram and bus services, facilities for walkers and cyclists, and a transformed environment for working and living. The area is now characterised by economic regeneration, and a second stretch of motorway further inland within the city was subsequently demolished with similar positive outcomes.
- (r) Over recent decades Portland in Oregon has consciously followed a planning and development policy which seeks to regenerate the inner city and avoid the damage caused by unrestricted out-of-town shopping and office developments. During the 1990s a central city motorway was demolished, and Portland has instead focused investment on new streetcar, light rail and heavy rail developments which permit city growth in a sustainable manner. The inner city of Portland has been transformed from a depressed area losing jobs into a thriving centre, well served by high-quality public transport.
- (s) Despite the clear success of these models of transport and development, the promoters of the M74 Northern Extension have not evaluated how such lessons could be applied to Glasgow.
- (t) The Scottish Executive has an established target to stabilise road traffic levels at 2001 levels by 2021. Attainment of this target will necessarily involve traffic *reduction*, since growth in traffic has occurred since 2001 and can be expected to continue to grow in the absence of suitable restraint measures. In the case of Glasgow, 40%

growth in road traffic has been forecast for the same period, exacerbated by the substantial local road building programme. Should Glasgow fail to stabilise road traffic levels, and instead experiences the 40% growth forecast, then a disproportionately large burden will be placed on other Local Authorities in Scotland in order to meet the Executive's target.

- (u) A recent study of European best practice in transport policy delivery for the Scottish Executive found that *“what the money is spent on will influence the achievement of objectives – spending more on roads will, perhaps unsurprisingly, make it less likely that objectives relating to the reduction in car use are achieved. That is, an investment programme should match objectives and not work against them.”* (Transferability of Best Practice in Transport Policy Delivery; Colin Buchanan and Partners, 2003)
- (v) Given that the Scottish Executive now has a £1 billion road-building programme, of which around half will be spent on the M74 Northern Extension, it is entirely unclear how this large new urban motorway, and the new traffic flows which it will generate, is expected to contribute to the achievement of the Executive's national traffic stabilisation / reduction target.
- (w) The promoters of the M74 Northern Extension have ignored clear and explicit policy guidelines, and international best practice, in pressing ahead with the road scheme without first comparing its costs and benefits against alternative transport solutions.
- (x) The Line Orders and CPOs should therefore be rejected and the promoters required to commission a comprehensive multi-modal appraisal of alternative transport solutions.

## **Precognition of David Spaven:**

### **Introduction:**

1. My name is David Spaven, and I am the Chair of TRANSform Scotland, the campaign for sustainable transport. I have been involved in campaigning against the M74 Northern Extension since the early 1990s when I lived in Glasgow, and spoke as an objector at the 1995 hearing held by Glasgow District Council. From 1997 to 2002 I lived within one mile of the proposed line of the motorway within Glasgow, and I have walked the length of the proposed route between Shields Road in Glasgow and the River Clyde near Cambuslang. In my professional life I am a transportation consultant specialising in rail and freight issues.
2. I wish to address four aspects in particular of the incompatibility of the M74 Northern Extension with Government policy and international best practice in transport policy, namely:
  - (i) The absence of genuine multi-modal appraisal of the M74 NE corridor, in contrast to that undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Executive for the A8 and A80 road corridors, where alternative transport solutions have been evaluated.
  - (ii) The failure of the Scottish Executive to comply with its own guidance on economic development grounds for road-building, despite wider economic benefit claims being instrumental in forcing the case for the road.
  - (iii) The failure of the road s promoters to consider sustainable investment in alternative transport infrastructure, traffic management interventions and wider transport policy measures, instead of the M74 Northern Extension.
  - (iv) The failure of the road s promoters to consider international best practice in urban motorway policy, in particular the experience of smart growth cities in the USA such as San Francisco and Portland (Oregon).

### **Absence of multi-modal appraisal:**

3. Following the election of the Labour Government in 1997, a wide range of government policy documents were issued at the UK and Scotland level setting out the core transport policy principle that before new roads are built alternative solutions (such as investment in public transport) should be properly evaluated. Quoted examples of particular relevance to Scotland include:
  - (i) *"We want to see new roads built only where it makes sense to do so: that is, after a thorough appraisal of the costs and benefits associated with any proposed scheme and any possible alternative modes which might serve the same route."*  
(Donald Dewar, Scottish Transport White Paper, 1998)
  - (ii) *"Before including major new [road] schemes in their strategy, local authorities should be able to demonstrate that they have looked at alternative or complementary solutions such as public transport improvements and traffic management measures, and that the road scheme is consistent with an integrated transport strategy."*  
(Scottish Office Preliminary Guidance on Local Transport Strategies, 1999)
  - (iii) *"Before including major new [road] schemes in their strategy, local authorities should be able to demonstrate that they have looked at alternative or complementary solutions, such as public transport improvements and traffic*

*management measures, and that the road scheme is consistent with an integrated transport strategy."*

(Scottish Executive Guidance on Local Transport Strategies, 2000).

4. Despite this clear policy position applicable to both central and local government, the alternative options to building a motorway along the M74 Northern Extension have never been evaluated by the Scottish Office, the Scottish Executive, Glasgow City Council, and South Lanarkshire Council, nor by any agencies working on their behalf.
5. In November 1999, the Scottish Executive Transport Minister Sarah Boyack, in association with the publication of her Strategic Roads Review, explicitly rejected the M74 Northern Extension as a trunk road project because of concerns that it would be primarily a car commuter road serving local demand. She instructed Glasgow City Council to review its proposal for the M74 because of the "*substantial volumes of car commuting*" that would be carried on the road, and stated that the City Council should "*review alternative transport solutions for the area.*" For a time, therefore, it was expected that a proper multi-modal study of alternatives to the road would be undertaken, in line with government policy at Scottish and UK level.
6. The Strategic Roads Review did specifically propose two major planned road schemes — the M8 Baillieston-Newhouse and M80 Stepps-Haggs — for further consideration within multi-modal transport corridor studies, with the intention that these consider road investment alongside other transport improvements and policy interventions such as traffic restraint.
7. In September 2000, after sustained lobbying by business groups, the local authorities and sections of the Labour Party, the Transport Minister reversed her previous view, accepting in principle the need for the M74 Northern Extension and including this corridor in the multi-modal studies programme. However, unlike the M8 and M80 appraisals — where no presumptions were made about the outcome of the studies in terms of the relative roles of different transport modes — the M74 corridor study was based on "*accepting the M74 Completion Scheme as a starting point*". (Central Scotland Transport Corridor Studies — M74 Corridor; MVA, May 2002)
8. The Scottish Executive had therefore contradicted the letter and spirit of established public policy positions and formal guidance to Local Authorities by deliberately preventing the costs and benefits of the M74 Northern Extension scheme from proper scrutiny and comparison with alternative transport solutions along the corridor instead of the road scheme. Given that the key traffic flows along the M74 Northern Extension would traverse one of the highest density population corridors in Scotland, there is a prima facie case for viewing this corridor as one of the best prospects for improved public transport (as well as traffic restraint and traffic management) being a realistic alternative to major road investment.
9. In January 2001 the Executive agreed to pay £214 million towards the road's then estimated cost of £245m, despite the fact that little more than a year earlier the Transport Minister had explicitly rejected the M74 as a trunk road project because of concerns that it would be primarily a car commuter road serving local demand. In 2003, it emerged that the motorway would in fact cost anywhere between £375 and £500 million, making it Scotland's largest single transport project.
10. Despite the fundamental limitations of the terms of reference of the M74 corridor study, the Final Report published in May 2002 served a very useful public interest purpose in highlighting the fact that the combined effect of the new road and the overall background trend of traffic growth would be to create in 2010 "*a [road] network which is more congested (even with the additional capacity provided by the M74) than in 2000. As well as severe queuing at a number of points, there will be a decrease in overall traffic speed.*"

11. This independent and authoritative analysis by experienced traffic consultants therefore — albeit perhaps unintentionally — supports the key criticism that the M74 Northern Extension will not solve traffic congestion problems, but rather will contribute to a worsening of the situation by providing additional road capacity for the considerable latent demand for car use.

**Failure to comply with guidance on economic development justification:**

12. Economic development grounds have been instrumental in forcing the case for the M74 Northern Extension — in particular in the economic benefit claims made by the M74 Complete to Compete road lobby group — yet the Scottish Executive has failed to follow its own guidance which states that for a transport project to be justified on economic development grounds *“it needs to be demonstrated that devoting resources to the transport project would represent a more cost-effective means of developing the local economy than the use of other existing policy instruments”* (Scottish Executive Guidance on Local Transport Strategies, 2000).
13. No analysis has been presented by the Scottish Executive showing evaluation of the economic benefits of the road scheme against existing policy instruments such as direct grants to industry for training, marketing, or investment in re-equipment, local environmental upgrades, tax concessions, etc. Nor have the claimed economic benefit outcomes of the M74 Northern Extension been compared against the economic benefit outcomes of alternative transport solutions along the corridor.
14. The Government economic development agency Scottish Enterprise has at various times been heavily involved in backing the M74 Northern Extension, and like the Scottish Executive (to which it reports) has also failed to consider alternative transport and economic development solutions. The 1998 Scottish Enterprise Network M74 Economic Impact Assessment report was heavily promoted by the M74 Complete to Compete road lobby group to argue that up to 6,000 jobs in the West of Scotland would be at risk if the M74 Northern Extension were not built.
15. However, the assumptions and methodology of the report were seriously flawed. The key failing was that it made no comparison of how the claimed outcome would compare with the economic benefits of spending the then £177 million involved on other transport infrastructure or on a targeted economic regeneration programme.

**Failure to consider alternative transport solutions:**

16. In the absence of multi-modal appraisal, the road s promoters have failed to consider sustainable investment in alternative transport infrastructure, traffic management interventions and wider transport policy measures, instead of the M74 Northern Extension. Wider measures could include direct subsidy to reduce public transport fare levels throughout West Central Scotland, associated with integrated ticketing encompassing all bus and rail services, to maximise the attractiveness of public transport to car users.
17. There are a range of alternative transport infrastructure and traffic management interventions which could be considered for the M74 Northern Extension. Examples of these have been suggested by JAM74 for a number of years but have still to be evaluated by the road s promoters as a package (or components of a package) of alternatives to road construction. These are summarised in the following paragraphs.
18. Peak-hour congestion on the M8 Kingston Bridge, which delays commuter buses and lorries carrying exports from Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire, (and has been a key argument for the new motorway) is primarily caused by cars. The most obvious early solution to congestion on the M8 is to introduce lanes giving priority to lorries and buses rather than single-person occupant cars.

19. At present there are no cross-Glasgow rail services from Edinburgh or Lanarkshire to Renfrewshire, Inverclyde or Ayrshire — one of the key traffic flows that the motorway would carry. The Glasgow Crossrail scheme is a practical alternative to the M74 Northern Extension.
20. The electrification of the Glasgow Central-Livingston-Edinburgh rail line (which at its western end parallels the proposed M74 Northern Extension alignment) would further transform the speed and quality of train links from the west of Scotland to the east of the country, providing a high-quality alternative to the road
21. Glasgow Airport is the largest in Britain (and one of the largest in Europe) without a passenger rail link. Passenger trains direct from Edinburgh, Lanarkshire and Glasgow would remove one of the main arguments for the new motorway.
22. Feeder rail freight services from Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and West Dunbartonshire to the Scottish freight hubs at Coatbridge and Mossend would allow export containers to bypass completely the Kingston Bridge and M8 congestion, and bring environmental benefits to both Glasgow and Lanarkshire.

**Failure to consider international best practice in urban motorway policy:**

23. Since the rapid growth in urban motorway building in the UK the 1960s and 1970s — to a large extent following the example of the USA several decades earlier — there has been increasing opposition to this traditional solution to congestion amongst policy makers, transport planners, community activists and environmental groups.
24. Contrary to the conventional wisdom derived from stereotypical representations on TV and film, urban USA is no longer necessarily dominated by car culture in its approach to transport infrastructure investment. In 2000 I was part of a professional study tour of smart growth cities of Northern California and the Pacific North West which witnessed the dramatic economic, social and environmental impact of the deconstruction, ie demolition, of existing urban motorways similar in scale to the M74 Northern Extension, and their replacement by more sustainable forms of transport.
25. The pier head district of downtown San Francisco was formerly a depressed economic area, physically dominated by an elevated motorway which cut the city off from its seafront and was home to poverty and crime. During the 1990s the people of San Francisco voted for the demolition of the motorway, which had been damaged during an earlier earthquake. The corridor formerly blighted by the motorway has been replaced by a wide boulevard carrying tram and bus services, facilities for walkers and cyclists, and a transformed environment for working and living. The area is now characterised by economic regeneration, and a second stretch of motorway further inland within the city was subsequently demolished with similar positive outcomes.
26. Over recent decades Portland in Oregon has consciously followed a planning and development policy which seeks to regenerate the inner city and avoid the damage caused by unrestricted out-of-town shopping and office developments. During the 1990s a central city motorway was demolished, and Portland has instead focused investment on new streetcar, light rail and heavy rail developments which permit city growth in a sustainable manner. The inner city of Portland has been transformed from a depressed area losing jobs into a thriving centre, well served by high-quality public transport.
27. Despite the clear success of these models of transport and development, the promoters of the M74 Northern Extension have not evaluated how such lessons could be applied to Glasgow.

28. The Scottish Executive has an established target to stabilise road traffic levels at 2001 levels by 2021. Attainment of this target will necessarily involve traffic *reduction*, since growth in traffic has occurred since 2001 and can be expected to continue to grow in the absence of suitable restraint measures. In the case of Glasgow, 40% growth in road traffic has been forecast for the same period, exacerbated by the substantial local road building programme. Should Glasgow fail to stabilise road traffic levels, and instead experiences the 40% growth forecast, then a disproportionately large burden will be placed on other Local Authorities in Scotland in order to meet the Executive s target.
29. A recent study of European best practice in transport policy delivery for the Scottish Executive found that *“what the money is spent on will influence the achievement of objectives – spending more on roads will, perhaps unsurprisingly, make it less likely that objectives relating to the reduction in car use are achieved. That is, an investment programme should match objectives and not work against them.”* (Transferability of Best Practice in Transport Policy Delivery; Colin Buchanan and Partners, 2003)
30. Given that the Scottish Executive now has a £1 billion road-building programme, of which around half will be spent on the M74 Northern Extension, it is entirely unclear how this large new urban motorway, and the new traffic flows which it will generate, is expected to contribute to the achievement of the Executive s national traffic stabilisation / reduction target.

**Conclusion:**

31. The promoters of the M74 Northern Extension have ignored clear and explicit policy guidelines, and international best practice, in pressing ahead with the road scheme without first comparing its costs and benefits against alternative transport solutions.
32. The Line Orders and CPOs should therefore be rejected and the promoters required to commission a comprehensive multi-modal appraisal of alternative transport solutions.

**David Spaven / 9 November 2003**