7-7-7 BUS LANE TRIAL

Written Deputation to CEC Transport and Environment Committee

Thursday 12 November 2026

transform scotland

Summary

Transform Scotland supports the 7-7-7 bus-lane trial and urges the Committee to allow it to proceed with effective monitoring and evaluation.

Our submission complements Edinburgh Bus Users Group's deputation by highlighting the wider benefits of bus priority and the importance of considering the needs of everyone who depends on the corridor.

Making bus journeys more reliable

Bus priority is central to making public transport a more attractive and dependable choice. Buses caught in congestion impose costs on passengers through longer journeys, uncertain arrival times and missed connections. These effects matter whether someone is travelling to work, attending a medical appointment, reaching education or making an everyday shopping trip.

Transform Scotland's 'Life in the Bus Lane' research gathered evidence from passengers and potential passengers across Scotland.[1] It identified slow journeys and unreliability as barriers to bus use, and found that longer-than-expected waits and journeys were associated with lower passenger satisfaction.

This research does not evaluate the Edinburgh trial. It does, however, demonstrate why improving journey times and reliability should be a priority, and why the trial deserves a fair opportunity to establish what extended bus-lane hours can achieve.

Assessing the full public benefit

The Committee should consider the cumulative benefits to passengers across all services using the corridor, including people travelling through the area. Small improvements to individual journeys can collectively represent substantial benefits when experienced by many passengers throughout the day.

More reliable journeys can also improve the efficiency of bus operations. Where delays are reduced, there may be opportunities to improve services or contain operating costs. The scale of those benefits should be explored with operators rather than assumed.

Making buses more competitive also supports the Council's wider ambitions to reduce car dependence. Reliable alternatives are essential if people are to have a practical choice about how they travel.

Accessibility and local businesses

We recognise the concerns raised about deliveries, collections, local businesses and access for elderly and disabled people. These deserve careful consideration and practical responses.

Accessibility must encompass people who arrive by bus as well as those who need to travel by car or accessible transport. Unreliable services, prolonged waits and uncertain journey times can themselves create significant barriers. Equally, some people require nearby vehicle access, and businesses need workable loading arrangements.

The evaluation should therefore examine how the scheme affects these different needs. Where specific problems are demonstrated, the Council should seek targeted adjustments that preserve effective bus priority while addressing essential access and loading requirements.

Local businesses also have an interest in customers and staff being able to reach them conveniently by public transport. Their circumstances should be assessed through evidence that considers access by all modes.

Learning from the trial

A trial provides an opportunity to test changes in practice. The strength of feeling expressed through a petition is relevant, but cannot by itself establish the balance of transport, accessibility and economic effects.

We recommend that the Council publish an evaluation covering:

- Bus journey times and reliability, compared with conditions before the trial.
- The number of passengers benefiting and, where possible, aggregate passenger time savings.
- Accessibility, including the experiences of disabled and older passengers.
- Loading, deliveries and essential vehicle access.
- Effects on local businesses, neighbouring streets and road safety.

The evaluation should explain the influence of roadworks, seasonal changes and other factors that could affect results. Passenger and business feedback should inform the assessment alongside operational data.

Our request

Transform Scotland asks the Committee to support continuation of the 7-7-7 trial, ensure that it is effectively monitored, and respond proportionately to evidenced problems.

Edinburgh needs sustained progress on bus priority. Allowing a properly evaluated trial to proceed will provide a stronger basis for decisions about this corridor and future improvements across the city.

[1] Transform Scotland 'Life In The Bus Lane': https://transform.scot/our-work/our-projects/life-in-the-bus-lane/

Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

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We campaign for walking, cycling and public transport to be the easiest and most affordable options for everyone. Our diverse membership brings together public, private and third sector organisations from across Scotland. We are a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).