SERVICE UPDATE

Name of Function:	Commissioning
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Title of Update:	Strategic Active Travel Network Study
Report Author:	Will Hekelaar
Chief Officer:	David Dunne
Contact Details:	WHekelaaar@aberdeencity.gov.uk

UPDATE:

1 Active Travel Strategic Network Plan

1.1 At the meeting of the City Growth and Resources Committee in September 2022, Members instructed the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to *circulate a Service Update to members of the Committee which sets out the requirements and timescales required to prepare a Strategic Network Study to provide a city-wide active travel priority plan.*

1.2 Since the instruction was issued, officers have engaged with Nestrans and Sustrans and looked at best practice examples from other UK cities.

1.3 At the 2022 STAR (Scottish Transport Applications and Research) conference, a paper was presented by Glasgow City Council on their approach to multimodal network planning, which in turn takes its inspiration from the Amsterdam PlusNet approach. This involves:

- Step 1 - identifying the desired primary, secondary and local networks for each mode of travel and the desired 'level of service' at each location, with an example of the approach taken by Glasgow summarised in Table 3 below.

    ACC could adopt a similar approach to multimodal network planning, building upon (while not duplicating) the recent Roads Hierarchy review, which identified a revised network of priority, secondary and tertiary corridors for transport movements, and other previous and ongoing projects such as the Local Development Plan, multimodal corridor studies, and CIVITAS PORTIS Origin-Destination study.

    Given that the Roads Hierarchy was updated recently, and bus routes In Aberdeen are well-established and unlikely to change significantly in the short term (although engagement with bus operators will take place to understand any imminent plans), this step will mainly comprise the development of an optimum city-wide active travel network. It is anticipated that significant community engagement will be required at this stage, and this work could be informed by a new national active travel network planning tool, which is currently being developed by Sustrans.

Table 3: Example Network Planning Methodology

Walking Network	Level of Service	Potential Locations
Primary	Highest LOS: greater than minimum width, direct priority crossings	Areas of highest pedestrian demand (key high streets, busy public spaces, areas with highest concentrations of key services)
Secondary	High LOS: desirable minimum widths, controlled crossings	Areas of medium pedestrian demand (local attractions and services)
Local	High LOS: minimum widths	All other streets
Cycling Network	**Level of Service**	**Potential Locations**
Primary	Highest LOS: fully connected, protected, direct, desirable min width (for leisure and commuting purposes)	Sustainable travel corridors + network priority routes (Active Travel Strategy delivery plan)
Secondary	High LOS: fully connected, protected, potentially less direct or absolute min width	All other city cycle network routes
Local	Potentially mixed space with low speed traffic	All other streets
Bus Network	**Level of Service**	**Potential Locations**
Primary	Highest LOS: fully protected journey times and accessibility	Highest frequency routes: 7 or more buses / peak hour (10+min frequency)
Secondary	High LOS: reliable journey times but may mix with traffic, fully accessible	Between 4-6 buses / peak hour (10-30 min frequency)
Local	Fully accessible	All other bus routes (<2 buses / peak hour (<30 min frequency)

- Step 2 - Identifying where potential competition for space arises should each network be fully delivered, i.e. examining the network plans for each mode and noting where there may be conflicts in terms of deliverability. This could be, for example, noting locations where optimum bus and bicycle networks overlap, but where there is insufficient space to provide the desirable level of service for both modes (such as a bus lane and a segregated cycle lane). The ongoing multimodal corridor studies have already identified some instances of conflict and have considered ways of addressing this so some of this work is already underway.

- Step 3 – For streets where conflicts do arise, defining the street typology (i.e. the main function of each street) to aid in prioritising between modes. Much of this was already been done as part of the Roads Hierarchy review, providing a solid baseline.

- Step 4 - Devising a methodology for resolving such conflicts at the network level for each type of street, maximising the benefits of each modal network and reducing the need to overcome conflicts in the design of individual streets. This would likely consider, for example, the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy, the place vs. movement function of each street, frequency of bus services on the corridor, potential for modal shift, etc. and may involve re-aligning parts of each modal network, such as identifying alternative locations for cycle routes where the optimum cycle network also forms a busy bus corridor.

1.4 It is therefore proposed to undertake a city-wide active travel network review in the manner of the above, building upon various localised improvements that are currently being developed and/or delivered, to identify a coherent and holistic aspirational walking, wheeling and cycle network for Aberdeen. The outcomes will be used to develop a costed and prioritised Active Travel Network Plan, setting the strategic direction and establishing a 'pipeline' of projects for walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure delivery within ACC for the next 10-20 years.

1.5 The development and ultimate realisation of a city-wide network of safe, connected and coherent active travel routes suitable for all ages and abilities will encourage modal shift from the private car to more healthy and sustainable forms of travel, bringing a range of safety, accessibility, health and environmental benefits, thus contributing to many aims and outcomes of the Local Transport Strategy, Local Outcome Improvement Plan, Net Zero Vision, etc.

1.6 The outcomes of this exercise are therefore anticipated to be:
- the identification of a coherent and deliverable city-wide primary, secondary and local walking and wheeling network;
- the identification of a coherent and deliverable city-wide primary, secondary and local cycling network; and
- a costed and prioritised plan for the delivery of the identified network improvements, replacing the current Active Travel Action Plan and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, to inform future active travel project delivery within ACC.

1.7 Having a costed and prioritised Active Travel Network Plan will:
- Demonstrate ACC's commitment to improving active travel infrastructure, thus meeting a range of transport, health and environmental objectives;
- Establish a clear pipeline of active travel priorities, thus informing future work programming and resourcing; and
- Ensure ACC is in a strong position to take advantage of external funding opportunities for project delivery as they arise.

1.8 It is anticipated that consultancy support will be required, given the scale of tasks involved, particularly the volume of consultation and engagement anticipated. As Aberdeenshire Council is looking to undertake a similar exercise focussing on the main settlements in Aberdeenshire, and there is a role for Nestrans in supporting the two local authorities on the development of long-distance and / or cross-boundary routes, it is proposed that this support is commissioned by Nestrans on behalf of the three authorities. ACC will project manage the City elements of the study to our own requirements and specifications, and will support Nestrans and Aberdeenshire Council on the development of the regional and cross-boundary elements.

1.9 While costs and a programme of work will have to be agreed upon between the three authorities and upon appointment of a successful consultant, it is assumed, based on experience on comparable projects and evidence from other cities who have followed a similar approach, that the City element of the work will cost in the region of £150,000 - £200,000, with a high-level indicative programme outlined below:

- Appointment of consultancy support – March 2023;
- Collation and review of existing information – May 2023;
- Phase 1 engagement – June to September 2023;
- Identification of optimum modal networks – October to November 2023;
- Identification and resolution of conflicts – December 2023 to January 2024;
- Draft Network Plan and Phase 2 engagement – December 2023 to March 2024;
- Final Network Plan – May 2024.

1.10   At the moment, funding is being sought from Sustrans, Nestrans and the Bus Lane Enforcement (BLE) programme to commence this work. There are likely to be opportunities to attract external funding from the Scottish Government and / or Transport Scotland. All such opportunities will be pursued and, if successful, will reduce the requirement for regional and internal funding to be used.