

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Net Zero, Environment and Transport
DATE	9 May 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen Rapid Transit Options Appraisal
REPORT NUMBER	COM/23/131
DIRECTOR	Gale Beattie
CHIEF OFFICER	David Dunne
REPORT AUTHOR	Will Hekelaar
TERMS OF REFERENCE	7, 8

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the outcomes of a recent report to the Nestrans Board on the Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) Options Appraisal and next steps towards Outline Business Case (OBC).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the decision of the Nestrans Board in relation to the content of the ART Detailed Options Appraisal report and agree that it be submitted to Transport Scotland as part of the Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) Gateway Review process; and
- 2.2 Endorse the Nestrans Board's decision to progress Options 3A and 5 to Outline Business Case (OBC) and the associated funding request to Transport Scotland, and instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to continue to work with Nestrans Officers as this OBC develops.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 As Members will be aware, the Scottish Government has committed to investing £500m via the BPF to deliver bus priority measures to reduce the impacts of congestion on bus services and address the decline in bus patronage. The North-East Bus Alliance partners (Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, First Group, Stagecoach Bluebird and Nestrans) have been awarded £12 million to date across a range of projects, including an appraisal of options for Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART).
- 3.2 The vision for ART was established in the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS), [Nestrans 2040](#), and is of a high-quality bus-based transit system with dedicated lanes, and fast, frequent and high capacity services across the city on key corridors and linking key destinations, anchored by Park and Ride facilities. ART has the potential to support long-term sustainable growth and address

local priorities and challenges including: reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, improving accessibility and connectivity, increasing active travel, and supporting healthy lifestyles. It has been identified as a national priority in Transport Scotland's second [Strategic Transport Projects Review \(STPR2\)](#) and the Scottish Government's [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#).

3.3 Transport consultants Stantec were commissioned by Nestrans to undertake a Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) based appraisal of ART options, with the Detailed Options Appraisal completed in March 2023. In April 2023, the outcomes were reported to the Nestrans Board, who agreed to:

- Note the contents of the ART Detailed Options Appraisal and agree that this be submitted to Transport Scotland as part of the BPF Gateway Review process, subject to agreement by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils;
- Work with partners of the North East Bus Alliance to continue to develop a Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) agreement, as per current BPF requirements, that could be adapted to support the delivery of Option 3A and explore with bus operators what could be achieved through this mechanism;
- In parallel to the above, further explore the costs and risks associated with both a BSIP and a franchise approach in order to fully understand the likely financial implications (both in terms of set up and ongoing revenue costs) and report this back to future meetings of the Nestrans Board and the two Councils for their consideration;
- Agree to progress the study to OBC on the above basis and to request funding from Transport Scotland, through the BPF, for the following next key stages as part of that process:
 - a) Further consideration of desired routeing and interchange points for the ART corridors and services in order to inform the OBC;
 - b) Progression to OBC of Options 3A and 5 (respectively a BSIP approach and a franchise approach), based on an agreed desired network;
 - c) Further testing of options 3A and 5 under the preferred network and services;
 - d) Further investigation and quantification of the wider economic and social benefits that ART may bring to the region;
 - e) More detailed financial analysis of operating costs and revenues to firm up on the level of commercial viability and risk associated with both a BSIP and franchising approach;
 - f) Recruitment of a BSIP / franchise manager in order to ensure the resources and expertise are available to progress these options within the timescales set out in the ART Vision document and BPF bid; and
 - g) Continued funding for engagement, marketing and communications workstreams as an integral part of delivering ART; and
- Refer this report to the two Councils for their consideration.

The Nestrans Board Report is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.4 An Executive Summary of the Detailed Options Appraisal Report is available as Appendix 2, with the full report available [here](#).

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 It is anticipated that work to progress to OBC will continue to be led by Nestrans and funded by the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Fund which is managed by Transport Scotland.

4.2 The OBC will explore the roles and responsibilities of partner organisations involved with the establishment and delivery of ART, including any associated financial implications. These will be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

5.2 There may be legal implications around the establishment of ART but these will be further explored as part of the OBC and communicated in future reports to this Committee.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 As Environment is one of the STAG criteria, all ART options have been appraised against environmental impacts as part of the STAG process.

6.2 There may be environmental benefits associated with ART in the form of reduced carbon emissions and improved air quality should the system encourage a significant shift from the private car to public transport. These will be further explored as work progresses.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Improving the quality and attractiveness of the public transport network supports a number of strategic priorities, particularly in terms of a sustainable economy, a	Continue to explore options for an ART system that helps meet strategic objectives.	L	Yes

	<p>sustainable transport system, the continued health and prosperity of our citizens, reductions in carbon emissions and a high-quality environment.</p> <p>Failure to deliver public transport improvements where there is evidence of their effectiveness could undermine the Council's ability to realise these aspirations.</p>			
Compliance	No risks identified at this stage. There may be risks associated with the establishment and operation of ART, and these will be fully explored as the Business Case develops.	Continue to define and assess risks as part of OBC development.	L	Yes
Operational	No risks identified at this stage. There may be risks associated with the operation of ART and these will be fully explored as the Business Case develops.	Continue to define and assess risks as part of OBC development.	L	Yes
Financial	There may be financial risks associated with the establishment and operation of ART and these will be fully explored as the Business Case develops.	Continue to define and assess risks as part of OBC development.	L	Yes
Reputational	There may be reputational risks	Continue to explore options	L	Yes

	associated with not continuing to explore options for an ART system that could support a number of strategic objectives, including the Place outcomes of the LOIP and Scotland's Climate Change Plan commitment to reduce car kilometres by 20% by 2030.	for an ART system that helps meet strategic objectives.		
Environment / Climate	Transport emissions are a significant contributor to climate change so failing to explore opportunities for modal shift to cleaner forms of transport could put at risk the Council's ability to achieve net zero emissions.	Continue to explore options for an ART system that helps meet environment and climate objectives.	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2022-2023</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following commitment within the policy statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Working with the Scottish Government and NESTRANS to improve the city's bus network, including considering options for an Aberdeen Rapid Transit network, with the support of the Scottish Bus Fund, and consider options for council-run services in the city.</i>
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2016-26</u>	
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 13 – <i>Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of</i>

	<p><i>our changing climate</i>, in that encouraging and enabling a shift to cleaner and less polluting forms of transport could result in a reduction in transport-related carbon emissions.</p>
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p>	<p>Delivering ART is a key strand of the RTS, particularly the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ART 1 - Develop the principle of an Aberdeen Rapid Transit scheme, through engagement with the Bus Alliance partners, with a view to an additional public transport option providing express service journey times, frequency and reliability to encourage a mode shift; and • ART 2 - Develop and deliver a bid to Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund to take forward feasibility and business case development for two ART cross city corridors connecting Park & Ride sites and the Airport with the City Centre. <p>ART will also help achieved the actions and outcomes identified in the '<i>Improving the region's bus network</i>' and '<i>Maximising the benefits of Park and ride</i>' strands of the RTS.</p> <p>The proposals support the 'Investment in Infrastructure' theme of the Regional Economic Strategy, particularly the action: <i>To develop infrastructure for commuter, visitor and freight transportation – nationally and internationally.</i></p> <p>They also support the vision, aims and outcomes of the Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy:</p> <p>Aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A transport system that enables the efficient movement of people and goods; • A safe and more secure transport system; • A cleaner, greener transport system; • An integrated, accessible and socially inclusive transport system; and • A transport system that facilitates healthy and sustainable living. <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased modal share for public transport and active travel; • Reduced the need to travel and reduced dependence on the private car; • Improved journey time reliability for all modes; • Improved road safety within the City; • Improved air quality and the environment; and • Improved accessibility to transport for all.

	<p>This option supports the Council's Net Zero Routemap, specifically the Mobility theme, with its key outcomes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in traffic across the city; • Reduction in proportion of journeys by car drivers to less than 50% by 2030; and • Reduced emissions from transport.
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9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Stage 1 Assessment complete.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	None.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Aberdeen Rapid Transit Nestrans Board Report (12/04/23)
Appendix 2 – Aberdeen Rapid Transit Options Appraisal Summary Report

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name	Will Hekelaar
Title	Senior Engineer (Transport Strategy and Programmes)
Email Address	WHekelaar@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel	01224 069599