

ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

COMMITTEE	Aberdeen City Region Deal (ACRD) Joint Committee
DATE	15 November 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Strategic Transport Appraisal – Update
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1:	Purpose of the Report
1.1	To seek approval from the Joint Committee for progression of a cumulative transport appraisal within the Strategic Transport Appraisal (STA) to support the Councils' Local Development Plan processes, and otherwise note progression of work within the STA suite of projects.

2:	Recommendations for Action
	It is recommended that the Joint Committee:
2.1	Approve the proposals for the progression of a regional Cumulative Transport Appraisal, linked to both Councils' development plan process, as part of the Aberdeen Sub-Area Model (ASAM) project line.
2.2	Note that the Director of Nestrans has committed to report back on the completion of the business cases, and at other relevant milestones in their development.

3:	Summary of Key Information
	Governance
3.1	The STA element of the Deal is focussing on the progression of Business Cases for regional transport projects, with a view to subsequent implementation when future funding opportunities arise. A total of £7m has been allocated to the project, £5m from the two governments, and £1m each from the two local authorities. The outline

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	<p>business case for this programme was agreed by the Joint Committee in November 2017.</p>
3.2	<p>Seven areas of work are currently being undertaken in the current FY24/25 Financial Year, as detailed to the Joint Committee in February 2024.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Completion and application of the Aberdeen Sub-Area Model (ASAM) strategic transport model to inform the Council's Local Development Plan process; b) A90/A952 Ellon-Peterhead-Fraserburgh Corridor Appraisal; c) A965 Wellington Road Junction Appraisals and Design; d) Rail Freight Terminals Review; e) Regional Hydrogen Refuellers; f) Mobility Hub Development; and g) Aberdeen Rapid Transit proposals.
3.3	<p>These themes of work were identified by overlaying outcomes of the following strategic policy documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Second National Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2); b) Regional Transport Strategy and associated supporting evidence; and c) Key transport opportunities identified in the Regional Economic Strategy.
	<p>Progress to Date</p>
3.4	<p>Updates are provided in the quarterly update dashboard reports considered during each Joint Committee meeting, but a summary position is provided below.</p>
	<p><i>ASAM Transport Model and Strategic Testing</i></p>
3.5	<p>The model is now completed, and being used for a range of projects across the region to assist with baseline and future year forecasts for appraisals. It is currently being used as an input to "evidence reports" for each Local Authority's Development Plan. The evidence report is now available on the Strategic Transport Appraisal section of the Nestrans website:</p> <p>https://www.nestrans.org.uk/about-nestrans/organisation/documents-crd-sta/</p>
3.6	<p>Following the adoption of Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), it has been highlighted to our Planning Authorities that there will be a requirement to assess the transport impacts of their emerging Local Development Plans on the strategic transport network,</p>

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	<p>including consideration of mitigation options. Due to the inter-relationship of the strategic transport network between both the local authorities, it is proposed to undertake this work on a regional basis, funded from the Strategic Transport Appraisal ASAM strategic testing allocation. The business case for the STA notes that it will look at the long-term strategic view of the transport implications of regional investment across modes including road and rail, and is therefore considered to be fully within the scope of the STA.</p>
3.7	<p>Work is now ongoing with both planning authorities and Nestrans to scope up this work, which can be completed within the previously stated milestone for ASAM Strategic Testing. Additional funding would be required to support this work, (current project estimate £160k), requiring virement of £100k from other budget lines within the STA programme. It is proposed to vire £50k each from budget lines associated with Mobility Hubs and Hydrogen Refuellers to fund this from the anticipated FY25/26 STA budget lines. This proposal has been supported by the Transport Working Group, and Programme Board.</p>
3.8	<p>The required additional funding for ASAM from the Mobility Hubs and Hydrogen Refuellers STA workstreams will not impact the completion of the respective project milestones. The allocation of these funds has been carefully planned to ensure that all project timelines and deliverables remain on track. This strategic approach allows to address the financial needs of the ASAM workstream while maintaining the commitment to achieve the established milestones for both the Mobility Hubs and Hydrogen Refuellers projects.</p>
	<p><i>A90/A952 (Ellon, Peterhead, Fraserburgh) Appraisal</i></p>
3.9	<p>Work on the Detailed Options Appraisal of short to medium term proposals is now progressing, following reporting and approval of the Preliminary Options Appraisal in June 2024 by the Nestrans Board. (Available at https://www.nestrans.org.uk/projects/studies/). Alongside other interventions, the appraisal includes emerging proposals for Toll of Birness junction (A90/A952), and this continues to be a focus for discussion linked to the North East Investment Zone, housing development opportunities in Mintlaw, and wider safety/network reliability issues. Whilst recent traffic surveys have been undertaken to inform the appraisal, specific Specialised Goods Vehicle Counts have also been commissioned to support the work. It is currently planned for the detailed appraisal to be completed in Q4 of financial year 2024/25.</p>

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3.10	<p>In order to enable a seamless transition between scheme appraisal, and detailed design, preparations are now in place with Aberdeenshire Council to commence procurement for professional services to progress the design works (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Stages 2 and 3) and Outline Business Case for the next stages of the project.</p>
	<p><i>A956 Wellington Road Junctions</i></p>
3.11	<p>Design work on Hareness and Souterhead junctions and adjoining road sections (including active travel, controlled road crossings, and public transport/freight priority) has progressed to the end of the DMRB Stage 2 (Route Option Assessment). This was reported to Aberdeen City Council's Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee on 12 November 2024.</p>
3.12	<p>The work recognises the linkages with the External Transportation Linkages to Aberdeen South Harbour project, Aberdeen Rapid Transit proposals, and the wider connectivity of the Energy Transition Zone / North East Investment Zone proposals. Details of the study work are published as part of the Committee Agenda, Agenda item - Wellington Road Junction Improvements (WRJI) – Progress Report - CR&E/24/299.</p>
3.13	<p>The preferred option arising from the DMRB Stage 2 work includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Additional signalised pedestrian crossings on Hareness Roundabout; b) Improved signalised crossing facilities on Souterhead Roundabout; c) Carriageway widening to accommodate a dedicated bus and freight lane between Charleston Road North to Souterhead Roundabout; d) Two-way segregated cycle track on the west side of the corridor from Charleston Road North to Hareness Roundabout; e) Reallocation of carriageway space to create a dedicated bus and freight lane between Souterhead Roundabout to Hareness Roundabout; f) Two-way segregated cycle track on the east side of the corridor from Hareness Roundabout to Craigshaw Drive; and g) No change to existing carriageway between Hareness Roundabout to Craigshaw Drive.
3.14	<p>The factors that have influenced the selection of the preferred option, relative to other options, are as follows:-</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prioritising facilities for sustainable transport modes along the corridor; b) Provision of improved, safer, more inclusive active travel facilities; c) Recognition of the strategic importance of freight on the corridor; d) Less disruption to traffic and the existing carriageway through the construction phase; e) Having the potential for a relatively lower impact on utilities; and f) Providing a cost-effective solution.
3.15	<p>Subject to ACC Committee approval, the next stages of the project would be to advance the DMRB Stage 3 Scheme Assessment, including public and stakeholder engagement on the preferred option, and continued development of the Outline Business Case. This would be commenced in the current financial year, with the STA funding of £500k allocated across FY 25/26 until the end of Q2 in FY 26/27.</p>
	<p><i>Rail Freight Terminals Review</i></p>
3.16	<p>The current stage of study work was completed in November 2023. There is no immediate requirement for further options development, and any further work is pending outcome of other workstreams, such as progression of the Aberdeen to Central Belt Rail Enhancements projects, and any further work on East Tullos master-planning. However, freight counts undertaken at A90/A952 at Toll of Birness, and additional sites at A96 Inverurie and A956 Loriston Loch, provide key baseline information on freight flows and commodities which can inform future assessment of options, and will be used to facilitate continued discussion with key stakeholders on rail freight development opportunities.</p>
	<p><i>Regional Hydrogen Refuellers</i></p>
3.17	<p>Feasibility work has been completed and has been published on the Nestrans website, setting out the key factors for a stand-alone hydrogen vehicle refuelling site, land requirements, capital and revenue costs, and other key risk and deliverability considerations. (https://www.nestrans.org.uk/about-nestrans/organisation/documents-crd-sta/)</p>
3.18	<p>Overall, this study confirmed there are viable options for hydrogen refuelling stations that can be applied across the North East of Scotland. The standard footprint developed is both adaptable and modular to scale up to meet hydrogen requirements over time. Standardised footprint costs could be in the region of £7m to £10m capital and £500k-£900k</p>

3: Summary of Key Information

operational cost per annum depending on scale, based on 250kg/day demand (which is a longer-term demand projection). Alternative scales of demand and reduced specifications would reduce both capital and operating costs, potentially to £2m-£3m capital, and in the order of £100k to £200k operational cost. To progress, further work will be required to develop a business case, including establishing potential users, the necessary supply chain issues, and adaptations to suit physical site constraints.

- 3.19 It is recognised that the take-up of hydrogen vehicles in the private and public sector is taking place over a longer-term horizon than had been previously anticipated, despite recognition of its value as part of future energy mix for heavy goods vehicles. With a focus on the progression of low carbon haulage, complementary work on Battery Electric Vehicle freight recharging requirements / hubs would also be beneficial, in order to compare market status, risk and deliverability issues. It is proposed that this is also now explored as a next stage of project development.

Mobility Hubs

- 3.20 Feasibility work has been completed across a range of sites across the North East and has been published on the Nestrans website. One of the studied options, at Ballater, offers the potential to meet community, local authority, and other stakeholder ambitions, as confirmed following recent community and stakeholder consultation. The emerging proposals would assist with the management of local buses, tour buses, and facilitating wider sustainable transport choices. A steering group including Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans and Cairngorms National Park has been formed to procure detailed design and business case professional services for this option. Work continues to consider options for how mobility hubs in other urban areas in Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City might be deployed.

Aberdeen Rapid Transit

- 3.21 Work continues on the finalisation of the Strategic Business Case, due for the end of March 2025. A re-structure of the project was agreed by the Nestrans Board in September 2024. Following identification of preferred ART route alignments, the previously defined milestone for the individual corridors have now been wrapped up into milestones that relate to the whole ART project. Work also continues on ensuring a consistent level of outline design for each of the identified corridors and procurement of communications and engagement support for business case development.

3:	Summary of Key Information
<i>Risk Allocation for External Transportation Links to Aberdeen South Harbour</i>	
3.22	In February 2024, the ACRD Joint Committee also indicated support for the reallocation of £1.150m of funding from STA, from the two Local Authority contributions, to cover the medium to high-risk provision associated with the External Links to Aberdeen South Harbour project.
3.23	Initial discussions have commenced regarding the governance required to facilitate this. It is noted that this will be a material change, and a change to previously agreed business case, and would require sign off from the two local authority responsible committees in both Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, as well as approval from the two Governments. However, the proposal is being promoted with the aim of ensuring delivery of the key overall aims of the Deal, making best use of the committed funding.
3.24	Officers are now discussing with legal and committee officers the commencement of this governance and change process.

4:	Finance and Risk
4.1	The STA business case projects continue to progress within the overall financial allocations set for this phase of work, with the project ending in March 2027.
4.2	Realisation of the funding allocations continues to be contingent on any necessary committee and gateway approvals when moving from one stage to another. It is also highlighted that the during the process of working through early feasibility, design work, and assessment of costs and risks, some projects will not progress, whilst others may require review.