

ABERDEEN CITY REGION DEAL:

Powering Tomorrow's World

Report Name	Scottish Government Additional Investment for Transport Update
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Governance	Additional Investment MOU & Transport Working Group

1: Purpose of the Report

To update the City Region Deal joint Committee on the progress of projects being taken forward through the additional Scottish Government investment announced alongside the Aberdeen City Region Deal.

This report covers progress on the Laurencekirk junction improvements work and the investment in the rail network to improve services between Aberdeen and the Central Belt.

2: Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the Aberdeen City Region Deal Joint Committee: -

(a) Note the Scottish Government Additional Investment for Transport Update

3: Summary of Key Information

Background

The transport related investment which the Scottish Government announced in addition to the Aberdeen CRD commitments included £24 million for the design and construction of a new grade-separated junction at Laurencekirk and £200 million to help improve journey times and increase capacity on key rail links between Aberdeen and the Central Belt.

Laurencekirk

Transport Scotland appointed design consultants (AMEY) for the A90 Laurencekirk Junction Improvement scheme in September 2016. This allows

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progress of the design development phases of the junction upgrade and thereafter through the relevant statutory procedures.

Since appointing design consultants, Transport Scotland has been working hard to identify and undertake initial assessment of options (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 2 assessment).

The emerging options from the DMRB Stage 2 assessment process were presented to the public at an exhibition in October 2017 for vital feedback. Transport Scotland has since completed significant work on refining the options and undertook public exhibitions in July and August 2018 to present the preferred option. This consists of a south grade-separated junction with a full diamond layout and bridge over the A90 together with retention of the existing central reserve gaps at the Centre (B9120) and North (A937) junctions.

A DMRB Stage 3 assessment involving the development and detailed assessment of the preferred option is now being taken forward which will culminate in publication of the draft Orders in 2019 for formal comment. Thereafter progress will be dependent on the public reaction to the draft Orders and whether a Public Local Inquiry is required. Construction of the scheme itself can only commence if the scheme is approved under the relevant statutory procedures and thereafter a timetable for its progress can be set.

A Partnership Group with Aberdeenshire and Angus Councils, along with NESTRANS has been set up to support this project by providing a cohesive policy and investment approach which will help to maximise the benefits of the investment. Consultation has been maintained throughout the design development stages, with the group last consulted over a series of individual meetings on the week prior to the public exhibition events in summer 2018 to discuss the preferred option. The next group meeting is scheduled to be held in early November 2018.

Aberdeen to Central Belt Rail Investment

The Aberdeen to Central Belt Reference Group last met on 27 February 2018, with the next meeting planned in mid-November around the availability of the ARUP report. The Reference Group is led by Transport Scotland and includes Train and Freight Operating Companies, Network Rail and ScotRail, Terms of Reference for the Group were agreed on 22 November 2017.

The group is taking forward two strands of work:

- identifying rail freight needs and how they might be addressed, which includes identifying and promoting freight initiatives that exploit the potential of the line for the benefit of communities, local business, and stakeholders;
- identifying all options to improve journey times, capacity and connectivity within the available funding envelope (including

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consideration of the value of double tracking Usan Junction and the South Esk viaduct).

Transport Scotland is pleased that an effective working group with wide rail industry and stakeholder engagement has been charged with driving this work forward.

A whole rail system analysis has already been completed by Network Rail to identify a number of critical constraints on the line and identify potential opportunities to address these. Further work packages are now underway using both NR and contractor resources to expedite progress.

The initial analysis has identified signalling capacity constraints immediately south of Aberdeen as an early opportunity. Work is already underway to install new Intermediate Block signals between Newtonhill and Craiginches. This will deliver four passenger and one freight path per hour between Aberdeen and Stonehaven by March 2019. Contracts have been awarded and detailed design continues as per programme. De-vegetation, material drops and civil engineering preparation work has commenced ahead of the main implementation (and associated possessions) works which are due to progress early in 2019.

Early in Control Period 6 (from April 2019) Network Rail will commission a new trailing crossover at Craiginches to allow southbound freight trains to depart direct without having to run round at Aberdeen station. This increases capacity for passenger and freight trains and also reduces journey times and improves the competitive position for rail freight. In addition, Newtonhill signal box will be modernised and re-controlled to Aberdeen to improve operational control and efficiency in December 2019.

Consultants, ARUP were appointed to undertake a comprehensive pre-appraisal of the route which is expected to identify the optimum package of interventions that will secure the best possible return from the £200 million investment. Arup has been analysing track data, track geometry and line speeds, before conducting a multi-disciplinary review of the entire route. This work will identify a list of options for consideration going forward.

Building on initial stakeholder engagement which was used to inform the Revolution in Rail timetable, the Group facilitated further engagement with Network Rail and ScotRail, in June and with the Regional Transport Partnerships in July and August.

Arup has recently submitted a first draft of the report to Transport Scotland for consideration and sharing with Network Rail and ScotRail for a review of technical accuracy. Following completion of this initial checking process an updated draft report will be issued to the Regional Transport Partnerships for consideration before being reviewed at the next meeting of the Reference Group planned for mid-November.

3: Summary of Key Information

Following consideration of any comments from the Reference Group the report will be finalised and the executive summary is expected to be published on the Transport Scotland website.

Following a meeting between the council Leaders and the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity it has been agreed that Transport Scotland's Director of Rail, Bill Reeve, will attend a meeting with the Members of the CRD Joint Committee and Nestrans when the finalised study options are available. Final arrangements for the meeting to be confirmed on the basis that the reference group meeting is scheduled for mid-November.

The levels of financial support that the Scottish Government has committed for rail infrastructure and services along this corridor underlines our determination to enhance connection of our communities and support sustainable economic growth and jobs across the country.

The introduction of the first of the High Speed Trains on the Aberdeen to central belt line is a key milestone and a sign of things to come. Further changes to rolling stock, infrastructure and timetables from December 2018 onward will bring journey time savings and capacity benefits on intercity routes and will also see a step change in the provision of local services in and around Aberdeen City and Shire. Further details of these will be shared by Transport Scotland and ScotRail in due course.