

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	City Growth and Resources
DATE	28 th October 2020
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Aberdeen to Westhill Transport Corridor Study
REPORT NUMBER	COM/20/174
DIRECTOR	N/A
CHIEF OFFICER	Gale Beattie
REPORT AUTHOR	Gregor Whyte
TERMS OF REFERENCE	3.2 and 3.3

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the outcomes of a study into options for improved transport connections (particularly active travel and public transport connections) between Aberdeen city centre and Westhill and to seek approval to proceed to the development of the Outline Business Case for the recommended interventions.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Agree the findings of the recently completed study into options for improved transport connections between Westhill and Aberdeen and the incremental approach to the delivery of active and sustainable travel improvements in the study area;
- 2.2 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to develop a programme for the delivery of the Low Delivery Package measures, subject to available funding, as detailed in the Action Plan at Appendix 1 and report these back to City Growth and Resources committee for approval;
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to develop the Outline Business Case for the Medium / High Delivery Package measures as detailed in the Action Plan at Appendix 1, subject to available funding;
- 2.4 Note the High / Gold Delivery Package of measures as detailed in the Action plan at Appendix 1 for future consideration; and
- 2.5 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to continue to work with partners to maximise external funding to assist with the delivery of these active and sustainable travel measures.
- 2.6 Notes that these active travel proposals help to support the Councils ambitious Net Zero carbon plans for Aberdeen:-

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Completion of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) / Balmedie to Tippetty (B-T) in 2019 has substantially altered the road network of Aberdeen and, as a result, people's travel patterns, with a significant proportion of through- and strategic traffic now moving to the new route. The benefits of the AWPR B-T can now be 'locked-in' by implementing various improvements to the road network and principal routes in and out the City as part of the new North East Scotland Roads Hierarchy.
- 3.2 The City Growth and Resources Committee agreed to the implementation of a revised North East Scotland Roads Hierarchy in June 2019. Members were advised that the next steps in terms of delivering the hierarchy would include a series of multimodal corridor studies on priority and secondary routes to, from and around the city. The corridors should function efficiently for all modes of transport, however a particular emphasis was put on improving conditions for active travel and public transport.
- 3.3 The A944 / A9119 (formerly B9119) western approach between Aberdeen and Westhill was identified as the first corridor to be taken forward for study in the context of the revised hierarchy. This was on the basis of it being identified as a priority corridor by the North East Bus Alliance, as well as in response to numerous calls for walking and cycling improvements to the corridor in recent years. The corridor is a vital connection between businesses and communities in a large part of the north-east rural hinterland and Aberdeen city.
- 3.4 In Autumn 2019, a team comprising Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans commissioned transport consultants Stantec to undertake a STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance)-based study into various options for the corridor. Stantec have now delivered a report which is a key milestone in identifying possible improvements on the A944 / A9119 corridor. This study has considered the route in substantial detail through detailed audit and interrogation using a breadth of knowledge of similar route corridors resulting in a choice of broad outlined costings and timescales of possible improvements. The study also considers parallel work on active travel between Westhill and Kingswells being undertaken by Nestrans.
- 3.5 Recommended measures seek to improve conditions for all users but particular focus is given to active travel and public transport, as stated above. The study is mindful that central government funding will likely be required for any measures proposed.
- 3.6 Stantec derived a long list of possible options which were subject to sifting and appraisal. This determined a shortlist of feasible and deliverable options or measures which performed well against the appraisal criteria and predicted active travel and public transport benefits. These have been informed by public and stakeholder engagement at key stages.
- 3.7 It should be noted that the study commenced prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but has fully acknowledged and considered possible effects of COVID-19, with all study outputs recognising the high levels of uncertainty and risk experienced

recently and going forward. Also recognised is the significant increase in walking and cycling as a result of the restrictions that have been put in place to address this health pandemic and that this should be nurtured and encouraged through improvements to the active travel network. Similarly, while proposals for temporary active travel infrastructure to support physical distancing between Hazlehead and Aberdeen have been developed independently of this study, the outcomes of the study complement this work.

- 3.8 In the same way that the Roads Hierarchy was based on the delivery of incremental changes to the transport network, delivering improvements over time, reviewing at each stage before moving to the next level of intervention, it is considered from the outcomes of this study, that a similar approach might be appropriate. At the same time, there may be an opportunity for significant investment for bus infrastructure through the Bus Partnership Fund, as referenced in paragraph 4.2, as well as recent commitments to also significantly increase the funding available for active travel infrastructure, both from the Scottish Government. A step change in provision for these modes of travel is possible through successful funding applications.
- 3.9 In summary, there are a range of beneficial interventions that have been identified through engagement and appraisal and these have been packaged in terms of ease of deliverability over the coming years. The Low Delivery package is one which could be implemented reasonably quickly with the appropriate funding in place, complimenting ongoing work such as the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for the City Centre, marketing of Park and Ride services and the introduction of more variable message and other signage. The Medium (and some elements of the High) Delivery Package will require more detailed assessment through the development of an Outline Business Case to inform the detail of this next level of intervention and could form a core element of a bid to the forthcoming Bus Partnership Fund. Further elements of the High and Gold Delivery Packages could be considered in the future, informed by the performance of measures implemented to that point in time.
- 3.10 The proposed levels of intervention are included in the Action Plan which forms Appendix 1 to this report, with the Executive Summary and full study report included as Appendices 2 and 3 respectively.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There will be financial implications arising from the delivery of the recommended Action Plan, in terms of infrastructure and further feasibility and design work. While some small-scale works, such as the progression of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs), may be achievable within existing team budgets, it is anticipated that funding will have to be sought for the delivery of the majority of measures.
- 4.2 It is anticipated that external funding will be forthcoming for this work given the importance attached to sustainable transport in the second National Transport Strategy and the emerging Regional Transport Strategy, Nestrans 2040. Applications will therefore be made to traditional funding partners such as

Nestrans and Sustrans, as well as to the Scottish Government, who in their 2019/20 Programme for Government, announced that £500 million Bus Partnership Fund was to be made available for ambitious bus priority measures throughout Scotland. It is hoped that some of the more ambitious infrastructure proposals can be taken forward to design and delivery using this funding once it becomes available. Further details are provided in Appendix 1.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A number of actions will require TROs which may be subject to statutory objection. Land acquisition may also be necessary for some infrastructure measures.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	<p>Delivery of active travel and public transport measures supports a number of the Council's strategic priorities, particularly in terms of a sustainable economy, a 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 active travel and public transport improvements where there is evidence of their effectiveness could undermine the Council's ability to realise these aspirations.</p>	M	Take forward the recommendations of the report for delivery and / or further design work.
Compliance	Certain actions, such as the progression of TROs, may be subject to statutory objection.	M	Comply with statutory process.
Operational	There may be risks around the business cases and procurement of active travel and public transport	L	Compliance with Standing Orders and procurement legislation.

	measures proposed but these are not fully defined at this stage.		
Financial	<p>Continuing poor provision of active travel and public transport measures could see increasing societal costs arising from ill health and pollution.</p> <p>Care needs to be taken that any active travel and public transport measures ultimately recommended for implementation supports the economic vitality of the city region.</p>	M	Take forward the recommendations of the report for delivery and / or further design work.
Reputational	<p>Failure to implement adequate active travel and public transport measures when there is evidence of the health and travel benefits of doing so could result in reputational damage should ACC not take sufficient action to improve conditions for the health and wellbeing of our citizens and visitors.</p>	H	Take forward the recommendations of the report for delivery and / or further design work.
Environment / Climate	<p>If active travel and public transport measures are not delivered ACC would not provide conditions which could encourage more sustainable travel movements which are likely to bring environmental improvements to the city and region.</p> <p>There are risks that a lack of active travel and public travel measures will impact on travel options for residents and businesses within Aberdeen and immediate surrounding areas.</p> <p>ACC's net zero action plan for carbon reduction –</p>	M	Take forward the recommendations of the report for delivery and / or further design work.

	transport emissions are a significant contributor so increasing active and sustainable travel will be necessary to reduce this sector's required reduction		
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7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 11 in the LOIP: <i>Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026</i> . Active travel is known to improve a number of health conditions, potentially increasing life expectancy. Increased use of active travel and public transport produces less greenhouse gas emissions and leads to more sustainable travel habits.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 14 (<i>Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate</i>) in that most measures to increase active travel and public transport will also reduce carbon emissions. The proposals will also contribute towards the delivery of Stretch Outcome 15 (<i>38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026</i>) in that they aim to improve conditions for walking and cycling along the corridor.
Regional and City Strategies	The proposals in this report support the delivery of the Regional and Local Transport Strategies, both of which aim to deliver less miles travelled by private car and a cleaner transport system which results in fewer emissions. The measures also support delivery of the Air Quality Action Plan and improve air quality and safety and complement the City Centre Masterplan by contributing to the development of a cleaner and more welcoming city centre for residents and visitors.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	Delivery of active travel and public transport measures contributes towards the delivery of the Scottish National Transport Strategy (NTS2), Nestrans and ACC policies.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	The STAG process appraises impacts across a range of categories (Economy, Environment, Accessibility and Social Inclusion, Safety and Integration). Details can be found in the relevant reports.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Aberdeen to Westhill Corridor Action Plan (below)

Appendix 2: Draft Appraisal Report – A944 / A9119 Aberdeen to Westhill STAG report Executive Summary

Appendix 3: Draft Appraisal Report – A944 / A9119 Aberdeen to Westhill STAG report

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Appendix 1: Aberdeen to Westhill Corridor Action Plan

Low Delivery Package – To be developed and reported back to committee.

Measure	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Review of pedestrian desire lines and installation of pedestrian friendly crossing facilities to suit	£0.2m (assumes installation of 2 toucan crossings, kerbing and tactile pavements)	Sustrans / Nestrans / Scottish Government – Cycling, Walking and Safer Routes (CWSR)
Development of Green Corridors (potentially within the city centre, on Albyn Place and Queens Road, and between development sites on the corridors)	£0.3m per corridor	Sustrans / Nestrans / CWSR
Identify and formalise a city centre network (to be realised by ongoing delivery of City Centre Masterplan, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, Roads Hierarchy, and Active Travel Action Plan projects)	Variable depending on nature and scale of the project. For example, £18,000 per 20mph zone	Sustrans / Nestrans / CWSR
Develop a cycle route along Old Lang Stracht	£0.55m	Sustrans / Nestrans
Changes to bus lane operational hours and enforcement	To be developed	CWSR / ACC – Bus Lane Enforcement (BLE)
Increased promotion of Kingswells Park and Ride	£0.2m	The Scottish Government – Smarter Choices Smarter Places (SCSP) / Nestrans
Advanced Variable Messaging Signs (VMS) on AWPR	To be developed	Transport Scotland
Make North West Street to Castle Street right turn for buses only	To be developed	ACC / BLE / CWSR
Improve wayfinding and signage along the corridors	£0.2m	Sustrans / Nestrans / CWSR

Medium / High Delivery Package – For Business Case Development

Measure	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Programme of pavement maintenance and decluttering – repairing and improving current pavement provision and provision of new footway in areas where there is inadequate or no provision	£2.2-2.5m (assumes resurfacing along Albyn Place, Queen's Road and West North Street and widening of	ACC / Nestrans / Sustrans / CWSR

	pavements along Lang Stracht)	
Replace and extend existing cycle lanes with mandatory or segregated lanes	£4.8m	Sustrans / Nestrans
Provide advance stop lines or cycle by-passes at all signalised junctions	£2.5m	Sustrans / Nestrans / CWSR
Establish a Bus Service Improvement Programme (BSIP) covering the A944 and A9119 corridors.	The Council's contribution will be via delivery of the actions below	
Continuous bus lane from Westhill to Aberdeen via the A944	£5.9m	Scottish Government
Continuous bus lane from Westhill to Aberdeen via the A9119	£5.4m	Scottish Government
Reconfigure roundabout junctions to signalised junctions, complete with bus and cycle pre-signals	£6m-£7m	Scottish Government / Sustrans / Nestrans / CWSR
Bus stop upgrade programme and stop rationalisation	£1.5m	BLE / Scottish Government
Bus prioritisation / pre-signals at all signalised junctions on the corridors	£0.02-0.03m per signal head and £70 per vehicle	Scottish Government
Reallocate all lay-by bus stops to on-street bus stops.	£0.4m	BLE / Scottish Government
Make Castle Street to Union terrace, bus, cycle and walk only	To be developed	ACC / Scottish Government / Sustrans / Nestrans
Develop Sustainable Transport Hubs through, for example, improving cycle parking and information provision at Kingswells Park and Ride and ARI.	£0.2m	SCSP / CWSR / Sustrans

High / Gold Delivery Package – For Future Consideration

Measure	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Make Castle Street to Holburn Street Junction, bus, cycle and walk only	To be developed	ACC / Sustrans / Nestrans / CWSR
Provision of a segregated 2-way cycle lane from Prime Four to Aberdeen City Centre along the A944	£16.5m	Sustrans / Nestrans
Provision of a segregated 2-way cycle lane from Union Street / Holburn junction to Prime Four via A9119	£11m	Sustrans / Nestrans
Bus Rapid Transit on the A944 Westhill – Aberdeen City Centre, via Kingswells Park and Ride	£64m-£76m	Scottish Government / Nestrans