ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	City Growth and Resources
DATE	10 November 2021
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Wellington Road Multimodal Corridor Study STAG Part 2
REPORT NUMBER	COM/21/257
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TERMS OF REFERENCE	3.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To advise the Committee of the outcomes of the Wellington Road Multimodal Corridor Study Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) Part 2 Appraisal.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee:-

2.1 Note the outcomes of the Wellington Road STAG Part 2 Appraisal;

2.2 Approve the progression of the recommended hybrid package as detailed in section 3.10; and

2.3 Subject to agreement on recommendation 2.2, instruct the Chief Officers – Capital and Strategic Place Planning to progress outline design, route option assessment and Outline Business Case as soon as funding and resource is identified, and report the outcomes back to this Committee once completed.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Wellington Road Multimodal Corridor Study aims to identify and appraise options for improving conditions on the A956 Wellington Road, between the A92 / A956 Charleston Interchange and Queen Elizabeth Bridge, for all modes of transport. The objectives of the study are to:

- Provide greater priority to sustainable modes of transport on the corridor and facilitate locking in of the benefits of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR);
- Facilitate efficient movement of freight on the corridor, promoting access to Aberdeen South Harbour (ASH) and the proposed Energy Transition Zone (ETZ);

- Reduce and manage traffic demands at key pinch points on the corridor, taking cognisance of the framework provided by the Roads Hierarchy;
- Improve accessibility to employment and education areas on the corridor;
- Promote a transport corridor which is safe for all users; and
- Promote a transport corridor which supports air quality improvement strategies and improves public health.

At the meeting of this Committee in September 2018, Members agreed the outcomes of the STAG Part 1 Appraisal and instructed officers to proceed to Part 2 Appraisal, to further develop the options identified and subject these to detailed appraisal.

3.2 The Wellington Road STAG Part 2 Appraisal has been undertaken in parallel with the City Region Deal (CRD) funded External Transportation Links to Aberdeen South Harbour STAG Part 2 Appraisal, with the final stages of the former taking cognisance of the preferred options for the latter, agreed by this Committee in February 2021. Proposals for the ETZ have also come forward since the study commenced. Improvements on Wellington Road will therefore help frame the transport elements of future masterplanning work for the ETZ.

3.3 The North East Scotland Roads Hierarchy study has been completed since the Wellington Road appraisal began, and the outcomes of the study recognise the role of Wellington Road as a priority route in the revised hierarchy - a primary movement corridor between the AWPR and the City Centre, providing access to a range of industrial, employment, education, leisure and retail destinations, including access to ports and the proposed ETZ for freight and people, and one which should operate efficiently for all modes of transport, including active travel and public transport. A balance needs to be struck between the prioritisation of sustainable modes, and ensuring that the corridor functions efficiently in accordance with its role in the Hierarchy and prevents traffic re-routeing onto less appropriate routes.

3.4 The eight options recommended for further appraisal at the end of the Wellington Road STAG Part 1 were:

- Strategic Cycle Improvements;
- Shared Bus/Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Priority Lane;
- Souterhead Roundabout Improvements, including improved crossings;
- Hareness Roundabout Improvements, including improved crossings;
- Additional capacity between Souterhead and Hareness Roundabouts;
- Upgrade to dual carriageway at former HM Craiginches Prison Site;
- Wellington Road Bus Quality Package; and
- Wellington Road Corridor Right-turn/Traffic Signals Priorities Review package.

3.5 During the Part 2 appraisal, 16 individual concepts (based on the above Part 1 options) were subject to initial assessment using a bespoke Wellington Road Corridor Traffic Model, which was developed to model options for both the ASH and Wellington Road studies, to understand the impacts of the options on transport in the area:

1. Northbound Shared HGV/Bus Lane between Souterhead Roundabout and Queen Elizabeth Bridge (QEB);
2. Southbound Shared HGV/Bus Lane between QEB and Souterhead Roundabout;
3. Shared HGV/Bus Lane in Both Directions between Souterhead Roundabout and QEB;
4. Existing Northbound Bus Lane Converted to Shared HGV/Bus Lane;
5. Existing Souterhead Roundabout with New Pedestrian Crossings;
6. Souterhead Junction Improvement;
7. Hareness Junction Improvement;
8. Additional Lane between Charleston Road North and Hareness Roundabout (Northbound);
9. Dualling between Grampian Place and Polwarth Road (Southbound);
10. Extension to Existing Northbound Bus Lane;
11. New Southbound Bus Lane (Grampian Place to Kerloch Place);
12. Right-Turn Ban (Wellington Road to Abbotswell Road);
13. Right-Turn Ban (Wellington Road to Girdleness Road);
14. Right-Turn Ban (Wellington Road to Abbotswell Road and Wellington Road to Girdleness Road);
15. Two-Way Segregated Cycleway; and
16. With-flow Segregated Cycleway.

The initial modelling results showed that few of the above had universal benefits across all modes. In some cases, individual options benefitted one transport mode to the detriment of another.

3.6 To facilitate the detailed appraisal, individual options were combined into three packages. Reflecting the Scottish Government's Sustainable Travel Hierarchy, these comprised an Active Travel Package, a Public Transport Package, and a Multimodal package.

3.7 These packages were subject to public and stakeholder consultation during April and May 2021. A total of 129 responses were received and indicated that:

- 53% supported the active travel package, with 26% disagreeing;
- 25% supported the public transport package, with 45% disagreeing; and
- 49% supported the multimodal package, with 25% disagreeing.

3.8 Parallel to the consultation, the option packages were tested within the traffic model. Each package was predicted to generally increase vehicle journey times and queuing for general traffic. Even within the individual packages, disbenefits were often observed for the very vehicle types that the packages aimed to prioritise. For example, an increase in southbound PM peak bus journey times was predicted even within the public transport and multimodal packages as a result of increased queueing elsewhere in the network. In other cases, the proposed changes only provided marginal journey time benefits compared to the Do Minimum scenario. A series of incremental adjustments were therefore undertaken to optimise the performance of each package.

3.9 The revised packages were then subject to detailed appraisal against the study objectives, the STAG Criteria (Environment, Safety, Economy, Integration and Accessibility & Social Inclusion), Feasibility, Affordability and Public

Acceptability. Based on the appraisal outcomes, it is considered appropriate, rather than delivering one of the packages in its entirety, to progress the most beneficial individual elements from different packages, providing benefits to the majority of users, while helping offset some of the potential negative impacts identified during the appraisal.

3.10 The elements of the proposed hybrid package are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Proposed Hybrid Package of Improvements

Intervention	Description	Rationale
Cycleways	• Delivery of with-flow cycleway between the tie-in with existing shared use facilities at Old Wellington Road and Hareness Roundabout. • Detailed design to determine optimum configuration between Hareness Roundabout and QEB.	• Provides a step-change in active travel provision via delivery of a safe and segregated cycle route for the length of the corridor, potentially encouraging modal shift to sustainable forms of transport. • To the south of Hareness Roundabout, with-flow segregated cycling infrastructure can be provided with limited impact on the road network. • To the north of Hareness Roundabout, there is no existing dedicated cycling infrastructure.
Souterhead Junction	• Undertake more detailed work on the potential reconfiguration of Souterhead Junction.	• Although, based on the modelled design, the appraisal indicated there could be significant disbenefits in reconfiguring the roundabout to signals, active travel users could see safety and accessibility improvements from a reconfiguration of the junction. Alternative design options will therefore be considered.
Hareness Junction	• Conversion of the roundabout to a signalised junction, with integrated pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities.	• The existing roundabout is uncontrolled, with two crossing points provided which are remote from the roundabout. • Reconfiguration of Hareness Roundabout would provide safety improvements for active travel users and provide more direct routes.
Northbound bus lanes	• Introduction of northbound bus lane between Craigshaw Drive and Abbotswell Road, avoiding the approach to and the junctions at Craigshaw Drive,	• Supports the efficient movement of buses along the corridor, bringing reliability and journey time benefits, therefore improving the attractiveness of this sustainable transport mode.

	Greenbank Road and Abbotswell Road, and a small extension to the existing bus lane towards QEB, subject to detailed design review.	• Considered to be low risk in terms of impacts on other traffic, including movements to ASH and the proposed ETZ. • Opportunity to "lock-in" the benefits of the AWPR by allocating road space for public transport where it can be accommodated.
Additional road capacity	• Undertake more detailed work on the potential for an additional northbound lane between Charleston Road North and Hareness Junction.	• Although the appraisal noted that providing additional space for vehicles is potentially counter to national transport and climate change policy, there may be economic benefits in providing efficiency improvements, especially for vehicles travelling to ASH and the proposed ETZ.

Appendix 1 outlines the proposed interventions by section along the corridor and identifies further considerations that will be borne in mind as interventions progress to business case stage. The elements not proposed for progression as part of the hybrid package are identified in Table 2.

Table 2: Elements not forming part of the proposed package

Intervention	Rationale
Southbound bus lanes	The modelling results indicated that southbound bus lanes did not achieve benefits to bus journey times due to resulting queuing elsewhere on the network.
Shared bus/HGV lanes	The modelling results indicate that in the northbound direction, allowing HGVs to access the bus lanes proposed in the hybrid package provide limited benefits. Restricting proposals for northbound bus lanes only supports exclusivity of bus priority. In the southbound direction, the modelling results indicate that the most efficient solution for buses and HGVs is to maintain movements with general traffic.
Right-turn ban from Wellington Road onto Abbotswell Road	The implementation of a right-turn ban was not shown to generate any significant benefits or disbenefits against the majority of appraisal criteria. This intervention was developed in response to a queueing problem in this location, identified at the previous stage of the study. Since the opening of the AWPR, results of surveys undertaken to facilitate development of the traffic model indicated that queueing has dissipated and therefore it is not considered that this intervention is addressing an existing problem on the network (*please note that the other proposed right-turn bans were sifted out earlier on in the appraisal process and were not appraised as part of the option packages*).
Conversion of the existing bus lane north of Balnagask	Maintenance and extension of the existing bus lane towards QEB is considered low risk in terms of impacts on other traffic, including movements to ASH and the proposed ETZ. As noted above, it will be important to

Road to an all vehicle lane	encourage public transport with as much priority as is feasible and therefore, it is not considered appropriate to remove existing areas of bus priority provision.

3.11 The proposed hybrid package seeks to achieve an appropriate balance between respecting the sustainable travel hierarchy and the Council's air quality and net zero obligations, and recognising the economic importance of the corridor in terms of providing access to the harbours and the proposed ETZ, and supporting new employment opportunities in the future. It seeks to bring together the most effective elements of each of the packages, providing a step-change in active travel provision via the creation of safer segregated routes for people walking and cycling, and improving public transport reliability and hence attractiveness by increasing bus lane lengths by 100% from existing levels. General traffic and freight movements are supported by retaining existing road provision northbound to Hareness Roundabout and full southbound provision, and undertaking further assessment work on an additional northbound lane. All movements are supported by the proposed reconfigurations of Souterhead and Hareness Junctions to provide segregation and controlled priority of all users.

3.12 An Executive Summary of the STAG Part 2 report is provided as Appendix 2, with the full STAG Part 2 report included as Appendix 3.

3.13 Further work is now required to assess, design and develop the technical aspects of the interventions recommended as part of the hybrid package and this work will be progressed as soon as funding is identified (see section 4 below).

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Appraisal work has been funded by Nestrans and Developer Obligations.

4.2 There is currently no dedicated budget for the next stages of work, although it is considered likely that the majority of the elements would be eligible for external funding from a range of sources, including the City Region Deal (given that a number of options support the efficient movement of freight traffic to and from the new harbour), Nestrans (who have funded appraisal work to date) and, for the active travel elements, Sustrans and Cycling Walking and Safer Routes (CWSR). All external funding options will be explored prior to commencing further assessment and design work.

4.3 High-level costings for the various elements of each of the packages are provided within the STAG report. These delivery costs will be developed as proposals proceed through further assessment and design and towards Outline and Full Business Case.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Wellington Road is an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) therefore the Council has a legal obligation to ensure air quality remains at an acceptable

level. As transport is the main contributor to emissions, the Council's response must be in the form of transport improvements to encourage efficient vehicle usage and flow and modal shift from private to public, shared and active forms of transport, and supporting and encouraging all vehicle owners, businesses and transport providers to move to low / zero emissions based technology.

5.2 The recommended package requires: land purchase which will require negotiation with landowners and potentially Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO); the progression of Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO); and potentially Planning approval. All of these processes risk public objection and may result in an inquiry being called.

5.3 Any external support required for future stages of work will be undertaken in line with the Council's Procurement Regulations.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Delivery of improved transport links on key strategic travel corridors 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 and other harmful emissions and a high-quality environment. Failure to deliver improvements where there is evidence of their effectiveness could undermine the Council's ability to realise these aspirations.	M	Appraisal is evidence-based, with the recommendations assessed against the STAG criteria of environment, safety, economy, integration, accessibility and social inclusion. Take forward the recommended package for further assessment and design.
Compliance	The delivery of the recommendations may be subject to	M	Continue to engage with the public and stakeholders to

	objection as we move through the design and delivery process. This may be a particular issue for land acquisition through the CPO process and any planning applications required.		understand and mitigate potential issues. Management of the project in accordance with internal procedures, scheme of governance, and other relevant governance requirements.
Operational	There may be risk around the continued operation of the existing route during any construction processes.	L	Identify and monitor risks, and identify mitigations as the project moves from feasibility towards design and delivery.
Financial	Continuing poor provision of active travel and public transport measures could see increasing societal costs arising from ill health and pollution. Care needs to be taken that measures recommended for implementation supports equality of opportunity for individual good health and the economic vitality of the city region.	M	Take forward the recommended package to further assessment and design.
Reputational	There is a reputational risk to the City if it does not invest in transport infrastructure that caters for the needs of a high performing international city economy. Failure to implement adequate active travel and public transport measures when there is evidence of the health and travel benefits of doing so	M	Appraisal is evidence-based, with the recommendations assessed against the STAG criteria of environment, safety, economy, integration, accessibility and social inclusion. Take forward the recommended package to further assessment and design.

	could result in reputational damage should ACC not take sufficient action to improve conditions for the health and wellbeing of our citizens and visitors.		
Environment / Climate	Risk of deteriorating air quality in the Wellington Road AQMA if improvements are not made. Risk of fines being imposed on the local authority if air quality further deteriorates at this location and the Council is perceived as not taking action to address this. Risk of not achieving net zero carbon aspirations if transport's contribution to emissions is not addressed via schemes to facilitate and encourage the use of alternative modes.	M	Impact on the Environment considered during STAG appraisal and has influenced recommendations. Further Environmental Impact Assessment, including any mitigations, as the project moves towards design and delivery.

7. OUTCOMES

COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Economy - Policy Statement 5, *Support the Aberdeen Harbour expansion and work collaboratively to maximise tourism opportunities, including attracting high value cruises*. The recommendations seek to complement the work being undertaken to improve transport connectivity between ASH and the strategic road network by improving transport efficiency along this key corridor

	which provides a link from the new Harbour to the City Centre to the north and the AWPR to the south.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 11: *Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is five years longer by 2026*. The proposals aim to result in cleaner transport choices within this AQMA which should have a beneficial impact in terms of reducing emissions which are harmful to human health. More walking and cycling can improve a number of health conditions, potentially increasing life expectancy.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Stretch Outcome 13 (*Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate*) in that measures to increase active travel and public transport will also reduce carbon emissions. The proposals will also contribute towards the delivery of Stretch Outcome 14 (*Increase Sustainable Travel: 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026)* 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 by seeking to reduce air pollution within the Wellington Road AQMA, and the Net Zero Vision by looking to reduce transport's contribution to climate change. The proposals also support delivery of the Local Development Plan, particularly in terms of improving accessibility of the proposed ETZ.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of the Scottish National Transport Strategy, in terms of improving infrastructure for active travel and public transport users and improving transport efficiency for all. They also support Cleaner Air for Scotland, the Scottish air quality strategy, by looking to reduce air pollution in the Wellington Road AQMA by facilitating more active travel and public transport use on Wellington Road.

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). An Integrated Impact Assessment has also been undertaken to accompany this report.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wellington Road Corridor Mutlimodal Transport Study Pre-Appraisal
Wellington Road Multimodal Corridor Study STAG Part 1 Appraisal

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Proposed Interventions

Appendix 2 – Wellington Road Multimodal Corridor Study STAG Part 2 Appraisal Executive Summary

Appendix 3 – Wellington Road Multimodal Corridor Study STAG Part 2 Appraisal Full Report

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