

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Net Zero, Environment and Transport
DATE	27 March 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Bus Partnership Fund Update
REPORT NUMBER	COM/24/093
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CHIEF OFFICER	David Dunne
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TERMS OF REFERENCE	7, 8

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of developments with the Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) and associated projects.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 Note Transport Scotland's intention to pause funding of the Bus Partnership Fund programme in 2024/25;
- 2.2 Agree that positive progress has been achieved in the North East under the programme and that work should continue during 2024/25, with alternate methods of funding to be sought;
- 2.3 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to continue with the programme of work described in section 3 of this report, as funding permits;
- 2.4 Note that, subject to appropriate change control processes, the City Region Deal Joint Committee has agreed an allocation of £1,740,000 between 2024/25 and 2026/27 for progressing work on Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) and the associated corridor studies, as an element of the Strategic Transport Appraisal workstream, and instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to pursue all other relevant external funding opportunities to support continued progression of the Bus Partnership Fund programme;
- 2.5 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to continue to engage with Transport Scotland on future plans for the Bus Partnership Fund;
- 2.6 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to, as funding permits, undertake public and stakeholder consultation on the options established through the Inverurie to Aberdeen (A96) corridor study options appraisal, and

to report the preferred option or options relevant to Aberdeen City Council back to this Committee once completed;

- 2.7 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to proceed with public and stakeholder consultation on the options established through the Dyce to Bucksburn (A947) corridor study options appraisal, and to report the preferred option or options relevant to Aberdeen City Council back to this Committee once completed;
- 2.8 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to proceed with public and stakeholder consultation on the options established through the Banchory to Aberdeen (A93) corridor study options appraisal, and to report the preferred option or options relevant to Aberdeen City Council back to this Committee once completed;
- 2.9 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to report the outcomes of the ART routeing analysis to this Committee in June 2024;
- 2.10 Note that funding from Nestrans has been established to progress active travel connections between Westhill and Aberdeen city centre, and instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to work with Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans to progress with public and stakeholder engagement on a preferred option and report the preferred option or options relevant to Aberdeen City Council to this Committee in September 2024;
- 2.11 Note the report provided to the Nestrans Board in February 2024 on progress on the Laurencekirk to Aberdeen study and the decision of the Nestrans Board to proceed with Detailed Options Appraisal; and
- 2.12 Instruct the Chief Officer – Strategic Place Planning to continue to provide quarterly Service Updates on Bus Partnership Fund progress.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In 2021 the North East Bus Alliance was awarded over £12 million from Transport Scotland's Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) for development, design and implementation of projects that deliver significant bus priority in the North East Region. To date, the BPF has supported:
 - Delivery of the South College Street Junction Improvements Project Phase 1 and associated City Centre Masterplan bus priority measures;
 - Aberdeen Rapid Transit (ART) STAG (Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance) appraisal and business case development;
 - Appraisal and business case development for the following transport corridors:
 - Ellon to Garthdee (A90/A92 North);
 - Inverurie to Aberdeen (A96);
 - Westhill to Aberdeen (A944/A9119);
 - Anderson Drive and The Parkway (A92);
 - Laurencekirk to Aberdeen (A90/A92 South);
 - Communications and Engagement; and

- Programme Management.

- 3.2 The corridor-level Business Cases seek to identify active travel and bus priority interventions along key routes to support Aberdeen Rapid Transit development. They focus on infrastructure interventions, with the Aberdeen Rapid Transit Business Case focusing on the bus service delivery model, servicing and the development of a Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) through the wider Bus Alliance. Aberdeen City Council (ACC) is leading on the majority of the Bus Partnership Fund strands, with the exception of the Aberdeen Rapid Transit Business Case, elements of the Laurencekirk to Aberdeen Business Case and Communications and Engagement activities, which are led by Nestrans. Recognising that the majority of studies have cross-boundary implications, however, ACC, Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans work closely together (with other Bus Alliance partners) on all of these projects. Aberdeenshire Council is leading on the development of a BSIP Plan on behalf of the wider Bus Alliance.
- 3.3 Although funded via Nestrans rather than Bus Partnership Fund, officers have also been progressing similar corridor studies on the remaining A-roads in the region, namely the A947 (Dyce to Bucksburn) and the A93 (Banchory to Aberdeen). A plan of the various corridors under review is provided in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.4 In December 2023, Transport Scotland announced a pause in the BPF programme during 2024/25. As North East partners see merit in continuing with the development of these projects, in February 2024 the City Region Deal Joint Committee approved an allocation of £1,740,000 between 2024/25 and 2026/27 for progressing work on Aberdeen Rapid Transit and the associated corridor studies. This will allow progress to continue despite the pause in funding nationally.
- 3.5 A summary of progress and anticipated next steps on each of these projects is provided in the table below. For completeness, this includes the complementary studies described in paragraph 3.3.

Project and Funder	Progress to Date	Next Steps
South College Street Junction Improvements Projects Phase 1 (Transport Scotland)	In July 2023 the majority of the project works were completed and roads reopened. The final section of the project, providing a second left turn lane from Palmerston Place onto North Esplanade West, was brought into use in February 2024, following the completion of utility works.	N /A
City Centre Bus Priority Measures	The bus priority and traffic management	Consultation on the ETRO has recently

<p>(Transport Scotland and Nestrans)</p>	<p>measures on Guild Street, Market Street and Bridge Street were delivered in summer 2023 under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), with further work undertaken in late 2024 / early 2025 to improve legibility of the measures.</p>	<p>closed and submissions are being analysed, with a view to report back to Committee once this exercise is completed.</p>
<p>Aberdeen Rapid Transit Appraisal and Business Case (Transport Scotland)</p>	<p>The Detailed Options Appraisal was reported to the Nestrans Board for approval in April 2023, with an update provided to this Committee in May 2023. The report was then submitted to Transport Scotland for a Gateway Review, resulting in agreement that the next stage should be to progress to a Strategic Business Case (SBC). A proposed scope for this has been submitted to Transport Scotland for comment and work is underway to progress elements of this before the end of the 2023/24 financial year, with completion in subsequent years as funding permits.</p> <p>In the meantime an appraisal of routeing options for ART is underway and the strategic transport model ASAM (Aberdeen Sub Area Model) is being used to test varying permutations of the high level ART vision to identify a preferred route network on which to base all further workstreams, including completion of</p>	<p>The Strategic Business Case will build on the STAG work undertaken to date but bring in further analysis, particularly to firm up on value for money (economic case) and affordability (financial case) as well as establishing preferred phasing, governance and delivery models (management and commercial cases) for ART.</p> <p>The ART routeing work will be completed by the end of the 2023/24 financial year, with the intention to then report back to Nestrans Board, ACC's Net Zero, Environment and Transport Committee and Aberdeenshire's Infrastructure Services Committee.</p>

	<p>the corridor studies Outline Business Cases (OBCs) and ongoing discussions with bus operators.</p> <p>A workshop for Elected Members of both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils was held on 8th March 2024 to discuss route options, with the outcomes feeding into a recommendation on a preferred route network.</p>	
Ellon to Garthdee (A90/A92 North) Appraisal and Business Case (Transport Scotland)	Preliminary appraisal outcomes were reported to the Council's City Growth and Resources Committee in February 2022 . Detailed Options Appraisal and an Outline Business Case for the preferred package of improvements is in development, currently awaiting the outcomes of the ART modelling exercise described above.	Funding permitting, it is anticipated that the Outline Business Case can be completed and reported to the relevant Committees in 2024/25.
Inverurie to Aberdeen (A96) Appraisal and Business Case (Transport Scotland)	Preliminary appraisal outcomes were reported to the City Growth and Resources Committee in June 2022 . Work is currently underway to further develop the options to Detailed Appraisal stage prior to formal commencement of the Outline Business Case.	It is anticipated that Detailed Appraisal will be completed prior to the end of March 2024, thereafter a period of public consultation is proposed on the options prior to commencement of the Outline Business Case, should funding permit.
Westhill to Aberdeen (A944/A9119) Appraisal and Business Case (Transport Scotland and Nestrans)	Preliminary Appraisal outcomes were reported to the City Growth and Resources Committee in October 2020 , and Detailed Appraisal was completed in summer 2022.	Funding permitting, it is anticipated that an Outline Business Case for the preferred package of bus improvements will be completed and reported to the relevant

		<p>Committees in 2024/25. This will be dependent on the outcomes of the ART modelling exercise described above.</p> <p>With funding from Nestrans, a separate Business Case for active travel improvements on this corridor is in development. Identification of a preferred option is likewise dependent on the outcomes of the ART routeing analysis, therefore it is anticipated that, upon agreement of preferred ART routeing, public and stakeholder engagement on a preferred option for the active travel route will take place in summer 2024, and will be reported to this Committee in September 2024.</p>
<p>Anderson Drive and The Parkway (A92) Appraisal (Transport Scotland and Nestrans)</p>	<p>Preliminary Appraisal outcomes were reported to the City Growth and Resources Committee in September 2022. Following completion of the Detailed Appraisal in spring 2023, the outcomes were submitted to Transport Scotland for Gateway Review. In September 2023, officers were advised that Transport Scotland would not be able to fund this project to Outline Business Case stage given the limited bus</p>	<p>As the majority of interventions are active travel related, it is proposed to revisit this work once the outcomes of the Regional Aberdeen Active Travel Network Review are known.</p>

	priority interventions identified.	
Laurencekirk to Aberdeen (A90/A92 South) Appraisal and Business Case (Transport Scotland)	<p>Preliminary appraisal outcomes were reported to the Nestrans Board in February 2024. The Board approved the recommendations of the report, including the progression of the following packages to Detailed Appraisal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Strategic Active Travel Network Package; b) Mobility Hub Package; c) Bus Priority Package; d) New Railway Station in Newtonhill Package; and e) New Railway Station in Cove Package. <p>Work to date takes cognisance of the outcomes of the Wellington Road Multimodal Corridor Study, which was completed and reported to the City Growth and Resources Committee in November 2021.</p>	Detailed Appraisal is now underway. Funding permitting, it is anticipated that this will be completed and reported back to Nestrans Board during 2024/25.
Dyce to Bucksburn (A947) Appraisal and Business Case (Nestrans)	<p>Preliminary Appraisal outcomes were reported to the City Growth and Resources Committee in September 2022. Detailed Appraisal and Outline Business Case work is now underway.</p>	Following public and stakeholder engagement on options in spring 2024, it is anticipated that a preferred package of options will be reported to this Committee in June 2024.
Banchory to Aberdeen (A93) Appraisal and Business Case (Nestrans)	<p>Preliminary Appraisal outcomes were reported to this Committee in March 2023. Detailed Appraisal and Outline</p>	Following public and stakeholder engagement on options in spring/summer 2024, it is anticipated that a preferred package of

	Business Case work is now underway.	options will be reported to this Committee in September 2024.
BPF Communications and Engagement (Transport Scotland)	<p>Consultants Jacobs were appointed by Nestrans in April 2022 to provide marketing and communications support for the development of Aberdeen Rapid Transit, with the commission concluding in September 2023. Work undertaken during this time included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research into the potential benefits of ART and of local people’s attitudes and aspirations for the scheme; • Presentation of the benefits of ART through written materials (website, press releases, newsletter articles, etc.) and through virtual and face to face meetings; • Engagement with key decision makers, other stakeholders and members of the public; • Preparation of marketing material for future use (a brand for ART, website visuals, etc.); and • Marketing and communications advice to Nestrans and partners, both for the development of ART to date and for its progression to implementation. 	<p>The project has resulted in the development of a toolkit of materials that can be used for engagement activities going forward.</p> <p>Since the conclusion of this commission, communications and engagement work has focussed on supporting the Bus Alliance in its campaign to promote the city centre bus priority measures which will support the delivery of ART in the future.</p>

BPF Programme Management (Transport Scotland and Aberdeen City Council)	With funding from Bus Lane Enforcement (BLE) income, a Bus Partnership Fund Programme Manager commenced employment with the Council in March 2024.	
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4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Since 2021, the projects described in section 3 have been largely funded through the Bus Partnership Fund or other Transport Scotland funding streams, unless otherwise stated. In December 2023, Transport Scotland advised that there would be a pause in BPF funding for the 2024/25 financial year. Partners were advised that all relevant expenditure incurred prior to 31st March 2024, as per the current grant agreement, can still be claimed but no BPF funding would be available in 2024/25.
- 4.2 In February 2024, the City Region Deal Joint Committee agreed an allocation of £1,740,000 between 2024/25 and 2026/27 for progressing work on Aberdeen Rapid Transit and the associated corridor studies as an element of the Strategic Transport Appraisal workstream. Subject to appropriate change control processes, this will allow Bus Partnership Fund projects to continue despite the pause in national BPF funding.
- 4.3 During this time, officers will continue to engage with Transport Scotland to understand plans for the Bus Partnership Fund beyond 2024/25 and to seek any additional external funding opportunities that may be available.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 By the end of 2023/24 Aberdeen City Council and partners will have fulfilled all obligations relating to previous Transport Scotland BPF grant awards and conditions.
- 5.2 Funding available from 2024/25 will have its own governance requirements which staff will adhere to.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report. Delivery of the projects described in this report may have environmental implications, and these will be captured in future assessments and reported to Committee as projects move forward to Business Case stage.

7. RISK

- 7.1 The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council's Risk Appetite Statement.

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	Pausing or delaying the BPF programme risks undermining the Council's ability to achieve a range of transport, health, environmental and economic objectives associated with delivery of a safe, accessible and sustainable transport system.	Continue with the current BPF programme as funding permits.	Medium	Yes
Compliance	Risk of non-compliance with external funding grant conditions.	Ensure officers are aware of conditions, and deliver projects in accordance with these.	Low	Yes
Operational	No significant risks identified.	N/A	N/A	Yes
Financial	Risk that Transport Scotland does not resume the BPF programme.	Progress with alternative funding stream during 2024/25. Continue to engage with Transport Scotland to understand future plans and explore all potential funding opportunities.	Medium	Yes
Reputational	Work undertaken to date has introduced concepts and raised expectations – if the Council does not continue with this work it could be seen to be	Continue with the current BPF programme as funding permits.	Medium	Yes

	abandoning aspirations or principles, or seen to have wasted public money on work that is not being taken forward to fruition when there is no compelling evidence of a need to pause.			
Environment / Climate	Pausing or delaying the BPF programme risks undermining the Council's ability to achieve air quality and net zero targets, given that a modal shift to public transport and active travel is a key means of reducing emissions.	Continue with the current BPF programme as funding permits.	Low	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-2024</u>	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement <u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u>	Impact of Report The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of 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; and</i> <i>Improving cycle and active transport infrastructure, including by seeking to integrate safe, physically segregated cycle lanes in new road building projects and taking steps to ensure any proposal for resurfacing or other long-term investments consider options to improve cycle and active transport infrastructure.</i>
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>13 - Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our</i>

	<p><i>changing climate</i>, in that measures to encourage modal shift from private car to active travel and public transport will have a positive impact on emissions; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 - <i>Increase sustainable travel: 38% of people walking and 5% of people cycling as main mode of travel by 2026</i>, in that the projects look to support more people travelling by walking, cycling and public transport.
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The proposals in this report support delivery of the Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy, particularly the following elements: <i>Increasing the number of people travelling actively for health and the environment; Delivering Aberdeen Rapid Transit; Improving the region’s bus network; and Reducing emissions from transport.</i></p> <p>They contribute towards achieving the outcomes of the current Local Transport Strategy, particularly: <i>Increased modal share for public transport and active travel; Reduced the need to travel and reduced dependence on the private car; and Improved air quality and the environment.</i></p> <p>They also contribute towards achieving the following outcomes of the Net Zero Mobility Strategy: <i>Increased number of people taking public transport; Increased number of people walking and wheeling; and Reduced emissions from transport.</i></p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Other	N/A.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Linked throughout report

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 – Corridor Studies Plan

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