



REPORT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE – 9 May 2013

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT UPDATE

1 Recommendations

The Committee is asked to:

- 1.1 **Endorse the progress and developments taken through NESTRANS and acknowledge the activities and developments being taken forward by external agencies and stakeholders as outlined in the report ;**
- 1.2 **Agree to accept further updates on strategic transport issues ;**
- 1.3 **Consider and agree a response to the key changes to the Regional Transport Strategy Re-refresh as set out at Appendix 1 ;**
- 1.4 **Endorse the response to Scottish Government's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's call for views on how to improve community transport as set out in Appendix 2 and ;**
- 1.5 **Approve member and officer attendance at the Scottish Transport Awards Ceremony in Glasgow on 20 June 2013 ;**

2 Discussion

North East Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRANS)

- 2.1 Since the last report to this Committee, the NESTRANS Board met on 17 April 2013 and the NESTRANS related matters set out in this report address issues considered at that meeting. the approved minutes of the previous Board meeting of 20th February 2013 can be accessed at <http://www.nestrans.org.uk/48/board-meetings.html>
The next meeting of the NESTRANS Board is scheduled for 12th June 2013.
- 2.2 Members were updated on a meeting of the **Health and Transport Action Plan Steering Group**, held in Aberdeen on 8 March 2013. The minutes of this meeting are available in the NESTRANS Director's Report at: http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/File/Board_Meeting_17_April_2013/3a_Directors_report.doc.

- 2.3 Board members were presented with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) which have been carried out as part of the **re-refresh of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS)**. The full SEA is available from: <http://www.nestrans.org.uk/strategic-environmental-assessment-1.html>. The full EIA is available from: <http://www.nestrans.org.uk/equalities-impact-assessment.html>.
- 2.4 Having received approval of the NESTRANS Board on the 17th April, the Councils have been provided with the formal opportunity to comment on the proposed final **RTS re-refresh** document and both the SEA and EIA reports. The consultation started on the 23rd April and runs until the 31st May 2013 and the full refreshed Regional Transport Strategy can be found on www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/docs/MIR_Revised_following_consultation_Jan_2013.doc.
- 2.4.1 Members will recall that they previously considered a formal response to the earlier versions of the RTS at their meeting of 29th November 2012 (Branch 9 refers). Aberdeenshire officers have considered the details set out within the re-refreshed RTS and a summary of the proposed new or significantly amended actions can be found at Appendix 1. The matters raised in the response approved at 29th November 2012 and the formal request made at the meeting of this Committee of 24th January 2013 (Branch 10 refers) regarding long term aspirations for rail links to Ellon, Peterhead and Fraserburgh are allowed for in the refreshed document and it is proposed that officers prepare a response to the consultation that reflects member discussion at the Committee meeting of 9th May.
- 2.5 Board members were updated on the formal response in support of the proposed **Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (SDP)**, highlighting the strong link between the RTS and SDP. The plan will be the area's first official strategic development plan; the document retains a clear link with the current structure plan which was approved by Scottish Ministers in 2009.
- 2.6 Board members were provided with information on patronage levels for the **Service 80 shuttle bus** between Dyce Station, Aberdeen International Airport and Kirkhill Industrial Estate, which is currently subsidised by NESTRANS. Total passenger numbers since its introduction are now over 22,000 with an average monthly usage of around 5,000. This equates to approximately 250 daily journeys.
- 2.6.1 The board was informed on **changes to the contract** which will no longer be subsidised but operated as a **commercial service**. Any decisions on timetables, fare structures or, routes are in the discretion of the operator. Following on from public consultation, the operator is responding to difficulties with timings, particularly in the evening peak when traffic impacts most on the operation, by taking out one trip in the evening peak. This ensures a more reliable timetable while still meeting as many trains as possible.
- 2.6.2 Objections have been received on the **planning application** for a **bus turning circle** on the south side of Dyce station to allow more direct links to the airport. They will now be considered by the Development Management

Sub-Committee of Aberdeen City Council. The associated **Traffic Regulation Order (TRO)** will be advertised as to restrict access to buses and bicycles, seeking to minimise the impact of parked cars or taxis on the free flow of buses.

- 2.6.3 Those changes to the traffic management set up tie in with the **station improvements** as at present **Dyce Station** neither complies with Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) guidelines nor is it staffed. A contract has now been awarded to proceed the construction of a DDA compliant overbridge. Work is due to commence shortly with completion expected by the end of 2013.
- 2..7 The Board was informed about a call for views on community transport. Under the heading of **how community transport systems can be improved**, Scottish Government's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee has asked for both community transport providers and users to share their views.
- 2..8 The deadline for responses was 19 April 2013 and given the key role that Community Transport plays across Aberdeenshire officers and providers met with representatives of the Committee on 15th April. A response from Aberdeenshire Council was submitted by 19th April and members are asked to endorse that submission as attached at Appendix 2.
- 2..9 Board members were informed on initial discussions about the potential for advancing a private members **Bill to strengthen regulation in the Scottish bus industry** in response to the ongoing trend of declining passenger numbers and, indeed, bus miles across Scotland.
- 2..9.1 The initial outline proposal for those discussions sets out aims to re-regulate local bus services and to give local authorities the basis to protect and specify local services by bundling profitable and non-profitable routes together for tendering. It also seeks to gather views on how legislation could encourage greater consideration of service modernisation, such as available free wifi, real-time electronic timetables, integrated ticketing etc.
- 2.9.2 Board members were informed that it is anticipated that a 12 week consultation period will be launched in April with the intention to take a draft Bill proposal to Parliamentary Committee after the 2013 summer recess. Once this process formally begins a formal stand alone paper will be brought to this Committee.
- 2.10 An initiative by York Council has seen initial steps to create an **East Coast Mainline Association (ECMA)**, intending to increase local input into the East Coast rail franchising process.

- 2.10.1 Edinburgh City Council has taken a lead in trying to co-ordinate a Scottish participation in the ECMA. Initial meetings have identified some concerns across Scotland, including a lack of clarity whether the franchise is to be kept with a focus on long distance services under the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland or, if the franchise is to include more local services and the responsibilities are subsequently devolved on a regional level.
- 2.10.2 The Board was informed that in line with the Rail Action Plan, NESTRANS and both local authorities are of the view that the East Coast Main Line should focus on long distance operations. HITRANS and TACTRAN support this view.
- 2.10.3 The Board was informed that a request was made to the other partners on ECMA to extend the Scottish representations to two members rather than one. This has been accepted by the ECMA secretariat (York Council) and the HITRANS rail advisor has attended initial technical discussions on behalf of NESTRANS, HITRANS and TACTRAN.
- 2.11 As part of the Freight Action Plan in support of the Regional Transport Strategy, (RTS) the **North East Freight Forum** met in Aberdeen on 18 March 2013, ensuring the dialogue on issues relating to freight in the region is ongoing.
- 2.12 At the Forum, which also hosted the **Scottish Government Rail to Freight Seminar**, delegates were updated on the study linked to the development of the **Aberdeen Freight Distribution Strategy** and were also provided with an update on the development of the **GreCor Freight Action Plan** which is now available to members from the NESTRANS website. The Action Plan is intended to be developed into a revised Freight Action Plan in support of the refreshed RTS. NESTRANS and Aberdeenshire Council are jointly funding participation in this European project on green freight corridors. A summary of the meeting is available at:
http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/File/Board_Meeting_17_April_2013/5a_Freight.doc
- 2.13 Board members were informed that Transport Scotland were about to hold two public exhibitions to promote the publication of the draft Statutory Orders and Environmental Statement for the **A96 Inveramsay Bridge** Improvement on 18th and 19th April 2013 in Huntly and Inverurie respectively. Representatives from Transport Scotland and their consulting Engineers, URS, were in attendance to answer any questions with good levels of attendance at each location.

- 2.14 Chief officers from NESTRANS and Aberdeenshire Council presented the case for a **grade separated junction at Laurencekirk** (A937 and A90) at the meeting of the Scottish Government's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee on 20th March 2013, highlighting that there is both a safety and capacity issue at the junction with traffic flows being three times higher than anticipated. The transcript from the session can be accessed at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=8057&mode=pdf>
- 2.14.1 Following on from the hearing, Transport Scotland have been in contact with NESTRANS and Aberdeenshire Council seeking a meeting to further discuss the issues raised during the evidence hearing.

Local Transport Strategy Initiatives

- 2.15 Introduced in 2005, monitoring progress of **Aberdeenshire Council's Travel Plan** is important to help the Council monitor the impact of measures. The 2013 annual staff travel survey has been launched on 15 April 2013 and runs until 17 May 2013.
- 2.16 The survey results will help the Transport Strategy Unit to assess what initiatives have worked well and been most cost effective, and what has worked less well, to help the Council plan future travel plan activity. The survey is available at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Aberdeenshire-Staff-Travel-2013>.
- 2.17 Following significant reductions in the numbers of Road Safety Officers within the new Scottish Police Service as compared to the numbers previously employed by Grampian Police to cover the Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray Council areas, discussions have taken place between Cycling Scotland and Aberdeenshire Council Officers from Transportation and Education to identify options to ensure **Bikeability cycle training** continues to be delivered in schools across Aberdeenshire. Once these proposals are fully developed they will be reported to the appropriate Committee(s).
- 2.18 As part of the **Peterhead Cycle Demonstration Town (CDT)** project, the infrastructure schemes are progressing on time and budget as outlined in the last report to Committee and as part of the seasonal advertising, the **Spring into Cycling** campaign has been launched in March. The campaign runs until June and focuses on outdoor media.
- 2.19 The postponed **Aden Bike Challenge** will now take place on 2 June 2013 along the Formartine and Buchan Way.

2.20 In February, Aberdeenshire Council submitted six award submissions towards the **2013 National Scottish Transport Awards**. Aberdeenshire Council has now been shortlisted for the awards in the following categories:

Category 1: Scottish Transport Local Authority of the Year.

Category 6: Achievements in Cycling: Peterhead CDT

Category 12: Excellence in Technology and Innovation: Smart phones and Smart timetabling

2.21 Following on from success in previous years, including winning the Transport Authority of the Year title in 2008, 2009 and 2012, this represents another excellent achievement by the teams delivering the services. All submissions can be viewed on the Council website at www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/scottishtransportawards

2.22 The Scottish Transport Awards Ceremony is to be held in Glasgow on Thursday 20 June 2013. It is proposed that the Chair of Infrastructure Services Committee and one other Councillor attend along with up to two officers. In line with previous years it is likely that a table will be shared with colleagues from Nestrans and Aberdeen City Council both of whom have been shortlisted in a number of categories.

2.23 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer with Corporate Services have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

3 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

3.1 An equality assessment is not required because as there will be no differential impact, as a result of this report, on people with protected characteristics. All of the specific interventions, strategies, projects and policies referred to in the report will be separately assessed against the relevant legislation.

3.2 Costs of elected Member attendance, of around £165 per delegate, plus travel and subsistence, will be met from the approved Revenue Budget provision for Members' Expenses (page 126, lines 6 and 11 refer).

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Claudia Stuerck/Mark Skilling
24 April 2013
09 05 2013_ISC Strategic Update Report

APPENDIX 1

NESTRANS
REGIONAL TRANSPORT STRATEGY – Re-fresh

A summary of the proposed new or significantly amended actions can be found below :

External connections	
EC2	Inclusion of proposals to dual the A96, as included in the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan
EC4	Continue dialogue with Scottish Government and the Northern Isles ferry operator to ensure continuation of service.
Internal connections	
IC1	Removal of the term Crossrail, although this does not change the meaning or direction of the action as the elements that made up Crossrail will be delivered incrementally as individual projects rather than an overall package.
	Investigate the potential for further stations in the context of upgrades to the existing rail lines enabled by through running of trains across Aberdeen and assessing future demand for local rail services.
IC2	New locations for strategic road capacity and safety improvements, including Laurencekirk junctions
	Road capacity improvements to mitigate the cumulative impact of development through the Strategic Transport Fund including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Parkway, Persley Bridge and Parkhill junction and capacity improvements ~ A96 corridor capacity improvements ~ Upgrade AWPR Kingswells north junction ~ A944 junction and capacity improvements ~ A93 limited safety and capacity improvements ~ A956/A90 junction and capacity improvements ~ River Dee link
IC3	Explore the potential for park and ride mini-hubs
	Public transport improvements to mitigate the cumulative impact of development through the Strategic Transport Fund: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Bus priority improvements ~ Bus frequency improvements including links between development sites and key employment destinations
IC5	Addition of smart ticketing for public transport, alongside existing proposals for multi-operator ticketing.

IC6	Inclusion of a specific reference to pedestrianisation of Union Street as part of an existing action to improve the pedestrian environment.
	Greater emphasis on developing a connected and strategic cycle network.
IC7	A focus on improving surface access to Aberdeen Airport by all modes, rather than just bus.
	Improved access for public transport at Dyce railway station, including a bus turning circle.
	Removal of bus rapid transit in relation to access to the airport. It is proposed that this be changed to high quality transport links in general. Bus Rapid Transit remains in the strategy as a longer term action and may be an option for the airport however it is felt that opportunities for improving access to the airport should not be limited to this.
Strategic Policy Framework	
TB1	Removal of the reference to TMOs.
	Inclusion of car club schemes alongside carsharing initiatives.
	Continue to promote and strengthen the Getabout brand.
TB2	Develop an active travel action plan
	Specific reference to delivery of the Health & Transport Action Plan
IE2	Support measures to enforce the operation of bus lanes to ensure the efficient movement of buses and taxis.
CR1	Encourage the uptake of alternative fuels for public transport, private and public sector vehicles.
	Support the development and trial of technological advances, such as hydrogen fuel and electric vehicles.
	Demand management and other measures associated with Locking in the Benefits
E1	An active and inclusive approach to engagement and consultation with communities and stakeholders.

APPENDIX 2

Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee Inquiry Call for Views

How can community transport (CT) systems be improved?

Response on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council

1 CT in Aberdeenshire

- 1.1 Transport in general, and community transport specifically, is mentioned regularly at Community Planning Partnership meetings, and it is a theme that runs throughout Aberdeenshire's Single Outcome Agreement.
- 1.2 Within Aberdeenshire there are at least 20 community or voluntary transport groups. These groups range significantly in terms of: the level and type of service(s) offered; whether they provide transport for individuals or only for groups; the size of geographical area they cover; their number of volunteers and/or paid employees: how well established they are; what type of organisation they are, e.g. informal group, registered charity, etc; how widely they promote their services; whether or not they are members of the Community Transport Association (CTA); and their level of knowledge of legal matters and good practice.
- 1.3 Despite the number of groups operating it would be fair to say that CT coverage is patchy with some areas having no CT, and even where there is some voluntary transport it may be very limited, e.g. offering transport to the local medical practice on one or two afternoons per week when a volunteer is available.

2 Support for CT from Aberdeenshire Council

- 2.1 The Council, through its Public Transport Unit (PTU) provides support to community transport by providing advice and funding.
- 2.2 The Council established the Aberdeenshire Community Transport Forum (ACTF) in 2001 to improve communication between the Council and the CT sector and to provide a forum for the exchange of best practice. Meetings, which are held three times per year, are open to CT groups and anyone with an interest in community transport.
- 2.3 The Aberdeenshire Community Transport Initiative (ACTI) was established in April 2008, following the transfer of responsibilities for such funding from the Scottish Government to local authorities. Grants of up to 75% of project costs are awarded for the provision of community based rural passenger transport such as community buses, dial-a-trip services, and voluntary car schemes. ACTI provides grant funding to seven local groups who were previously funded by the Scottish Government. Initially 3-year funding was awarded, but

more recently only 1-year has been granted. The budget was reduced by 10% in 2012/13. ACTI funding has not been extended beyond the original 7 groups.

2.4 Funding allocations for financial year 2013/14 are:

Group	Scheme	2013/14
Ballater Royal Deeside Ltd	Community minibus	£6,560
Banffshire Partnership Ltd	Dial-a-bus Community minibuses MiDAS training	£123,441
Buchan dial-a-community bus	Dial-a-bus Volunteer car scheme Community minibuses MiDAS training (provided by social enterprise arm)	£125,940
Mearns Community Transport	Community minibus MiDAS training	£11,405
Mid Deeside Ltd (DCTG)	Supports local bus services Community minibuses	£65,200
Silver Circle	Dial-a-bus Volunteer car scheme.	£11,955
WRVS Aberdeenshire	Dial-a-bus Volunteer car scheme.	£24,594
Total		£369,095

2.5 For over a decade the Council has provided concessionary travel reimbursement to CT groups for scheduled dial-a-bus services. This enables the four groups who operate such services to offer free travel to older and disabled passengers.

2.6 Some financial support has been available for CT through other funds administered by the Council, for example Buchan dial-a-community bus has received funding from the Fairer Scotland Fund and Alford Car Transport has been awarded funding from the Change Fund.

2.7 In addition to supporting the groups mentioned above, the Council operates its own demand responsive transport (DRT) services (Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus) providing local door-to-door transport, mainly providing shopping trips for older and disabled residents. In doing so, the Council utilises 10 in-house vehicles providing over 38,000 passenger trips in 2012/13 and contracts in bus and taxi operators providing over 30,000 passenger trips. It also operates a travel despatch centre (TDC) utilising e-scheduling and despatch software, taking approximately 26,000 calls per annum, and this facility is available to any CT group should they wish to use it.

2.8 The Council has a fleet of vehicles for use on school transport, social work transport and DRT services. The majority of the minibuses (60 in total) are

made available to community groups for hire at weekends and during school holidays. In 2012/13 there were 316 hires to non-Council affiliated groups.

- 2.9 The PTU operates an Electronic Ticket Machine (ETM) back-office, providing hardware and software systems and support, on behalf of smaller operators of local bus services in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. This includes the bus company which operates local bus services on behalf of Mid Deeside Ltd. This service is available to any CT operators who may choose to operate registered local bus services in the future.
- 2.10 The Council is represented on the Steering Group of Nestrans' Health and Transport Action Plan. This group is seeking to improve access to healthcare and has recently established an information hub in Elgin which aims to provide transport information for individuals with hospital appointments in the Grampian area. Currently the information service is operating on a limited basis, serving a small number of clinics, but it is proposed to extend the service to cover all Grampian hospitals. To date the majority of those people who have been "signposted" to a transport operator have been referred to the WRVS in Moray.

3 How can CT systems be improved?

3.1 The main issues that tend to be raised at ACTF meetings are:

- recruitment and retention of volunteers;
- the recruitment of minibus drivers who have D1 on their driving license (or the costs, at approximately £1,000 per person, of training younger drivers)
- concerns regarding the expectation that CT should provide health-related transport in response to changes to Patient Transport Service eligibility criteria and the relocation of health facilities;
- concerns regarding actual or potential funding reductions and difficulty in securing funding for vehicle replacement
- requests that funding be provided for longer durations (e.g. 3 years), and concerns regarding the amount of time that co-ordinators need to spend in sourcing funding rather than providing services

3.2 From a Council perspective the following observations are worthy of note:

- in our experience some smaller groups don't want to make connections with the Council or other organisations, perhaps because they want to operate informally
- the Aberdeenshire Community Transport Forum (ACTF) has been a useful mechanism for networking – even if a group only sends a representative to a meeting on a single occasion it provides an opportunity to make contact with similar groups and exchange contact details
- changes to the BSOG system have been beneficial to groups operating eligible minibus services in Aberdeenshire
- the Council supports the provision of free concessionary travel for scheduled dial-a-bus services operated under Section 19 Permits and would welcome the introduction of a national scheme

- it is recognised that, where funding is provided, longer-term funding can provide groups with greater stability
- there is some evidence that changes to the application of eligibility criteria for the Scottish Ambulance Service's non-emergency patient transport is increasing demand and pressure for community transport
- there is some evidence that the relocation of medical services from Aberdeen to local hospitals is increasing demand and pressure for community transport because local hospitals are not served by the Scottish Ambulance Service's non-emergency patient transport service.
- in our experience CT groups do not wish to utilise a centralised TDC but prefer to retain local trip booking arrangements
- the Council values the contribution that CT makes to the overall mix of passenger transport services, particularly in addressing social inclusion.

3.3 It is considered that the ICI inquiry would benefit from considering the following:

- an increase in the number of CTA support officers in Scotland would be beneficial to provide local impartial advice and support to groups
- the availability of local training is important – e.g. for MiDAS, PATS, D1 driver licence
- for CT groups considering the operation of registered local bus services it is important that they have access to affordable electronic ticketing machines (ETM) back-offices
- the extension of concessionary travel, either free or discounted, to voluntary car schemes would address current inequalities in charges
- any proposals to extend free concessionary travel to voluntary car schemes could lead to significant increased demand for transport which could overburden some schemes who have limited numbers of volunteers, so further consultation with groups would be beneficial prior to the introduction of any such initiative
- the difficulty in “policing” the use of Section 19 Permits is a concern and the lack of progress by the DfT regarding a proposed Designated Bodies Charter and associated training is disappointing.
- CT groups find it difficult to access funding from the NHS for patient transport
- any expectations that the CT sector should become a main provider of non-emergency patient transport may be unrealistic and/or unfair.

Should additional information or clarification be required the Council would be happy to assist, in which case enquiries should be addressed to the officer named below.

Marion Mackay
Principal Officer (DRT, Fares & Ticketing)
Public Transport Unit
Aberdeenshire Council
Tel. 01224 664588
marion.mackay@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

19/04/13