



Aberdeenshire Council Local Transport Strategy Review Consultation Response

Introduction

Aberdeenshire Council is currently seeking views on the Consultative Draft of the 2006-2009 LTS, in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Scottish Executive, and has launched a 12-week official consultation which runs to 1 September 2006. In line with its role as Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) and its Strategic Guidance to Review of North East Local Transport Strategies, NESTRANS would make the following comments and observations on the consultative draft.

Background

Aberdeenshire Council's Draft Local Transport Strategy (LTS) 2006-2009 aims to build on the Council's previous LTS, published in 2000, and sets out the Transport Vision and Objectives of the Council and provides a three-year Action Plan for meeting local challenges and needs. It also sets out how the Council's own transport strategy seeks to contribute to, address and influence national and regional transport objectives and priorities.

The consultation document sets out a clear vision statement:

"To develop an integrated transportation system for Aberdeenshire which contributes to the development of an inclusive and safe society, a sustainable economy and which reduces environmental damage caused by transport".

Aberdeenshire Council's Local Transport Strategy Review views the context in which this LTS is being produced as one of 'tough realities and tough choices'; recognising the challenge of transport's ever increasing contribution to carbon dioxide emissions and in turn to climate change. The draft LTS seeks to start to meet this challenge.

The Council's preferred approach to meeting this challenge focuses on adopting 'best practice' to travel behaviour change, whilst seeking to minimise additional growth in traffic, and supporting technological shifts to a low-carbon economy. The consultation document recognises a requirement for 'immediacy of action' with Aberdeenshire working to become a leading authority in this field through a 'robust and forward thinking' LTS.

Aberdeenshire Council's Local Transport Strategy Review is wide ranging detailing a number of key objectives, an Action Plan for achieving those objectives and listing 22 consultation questions. Detailed responses to these questions have been produced by the NESTRANS Executive team and discussed with and provided to Aberdeenshire Council Officers.

Consultation Response

NESTRANS welcomes the publication of the draft LTS and its efforts to reflect the process and approach to Local Transport Strategies set down in the Scottish Executive Guidance published in March 2005, and the related guidance which NESTRANS issued, also in March 2005.

NESTRANS also acknowledges the tough choices that will increasingly need to be made in transport policy in balancing economic, environmental, social and safety considerations. Aberdeenshire's attempt to focus on these in their draft LTS is commended.

NESTRANS would wish to see Aberdeenshire Council continue to work closely with Aberdeen City Council and NESTRANS to ensure the co-ordinated planning and delivery of transport services. NESTRANS would encourage both Councils to work collaboratively in moving toward finalisation of their respective Local Transport Strategies, adopting, where possible, commonality in approach.

More specifically NESTRANS would wish to see the Local Transport Strategies reflecting the balance and integration of measures proposed in the MTS strategy, and making appropriate provision and support to the key strategic projects to implement the MTS strategy by 2011.

Whilst difficult in advance of the publication of the new 2021 Regional Transport Strategy, NESTRANS would request that the LTS gives due acknowledgment to the role and status of the statutory Regional Transport Strategy once approved by Ministers in spring/summer 2007 and the future relationship between LTSs and RTSs.

It is also important that the Local Transport Strategies show how Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council intend to deliver on national objectives at the local level, and provide an action plan for meeting national objectives such as the reduction in road traffic, in line with the Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997.

NESTRANS welcomes Aberdeenshire Council's efforts to ensure consultation on the development of the LTS in line with Scottish Executive Guidance. It would encourage the Council to ensure continued consultation with all appropriate stakeholders, both directly and through the community planning process, and in liaison with Aberdeen City Council and NESTRANS, using groups such as the North East Transport Consultative Forum to ensure, where possible, the adoption of a commonality in approach.

ME/PC 23 August 2006