

Bus Action Plan for North East Scotland

Executive Summary

Nestrans – The Transport Partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire

December 2009



Nestrans Bus Action Plan – Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

The Nestrans Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) outlines a series of measures to improve bus services across the region. The RTS also commits Nestrans to producing a Bus Action Plan which presents a detailed programme of actions needed to achieve the bus proposals set out in the strategy. MVA Consultancy was commissioned by Nestrans to produce this Action Plan, working with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Stagecoach Bluebird and First Aberdeen, which are the two principle operators involved in the existing Quality Partnership for Public Transport (QP). The Quality Partnership is a unique collaboration formed with the aim of improving bus services, and making public transport more attractive and accessible throughout the region. The partners signed an agreement in 1998 to work together to increase public transport use in line with policies and targets emerging (at that time) in the Local Transport Strategy. The agreement was refreshed and updated in October 2005 and includes a Passenger Charter and over 20 standards and targets that cover all aspects of bus travel. This Bus Action Plan will be adopted by the partners for delivery.

The Bus Action Plan is comprised of two volumes. Volume 1 sets out all the background data collection and analysis which underpinned the development of the Bus Action Plan. Volume 2 goes on to describe in more detail the proposed elements of the Action Plan and, more importantly, to identify specific locations where the proposals should be implemented.

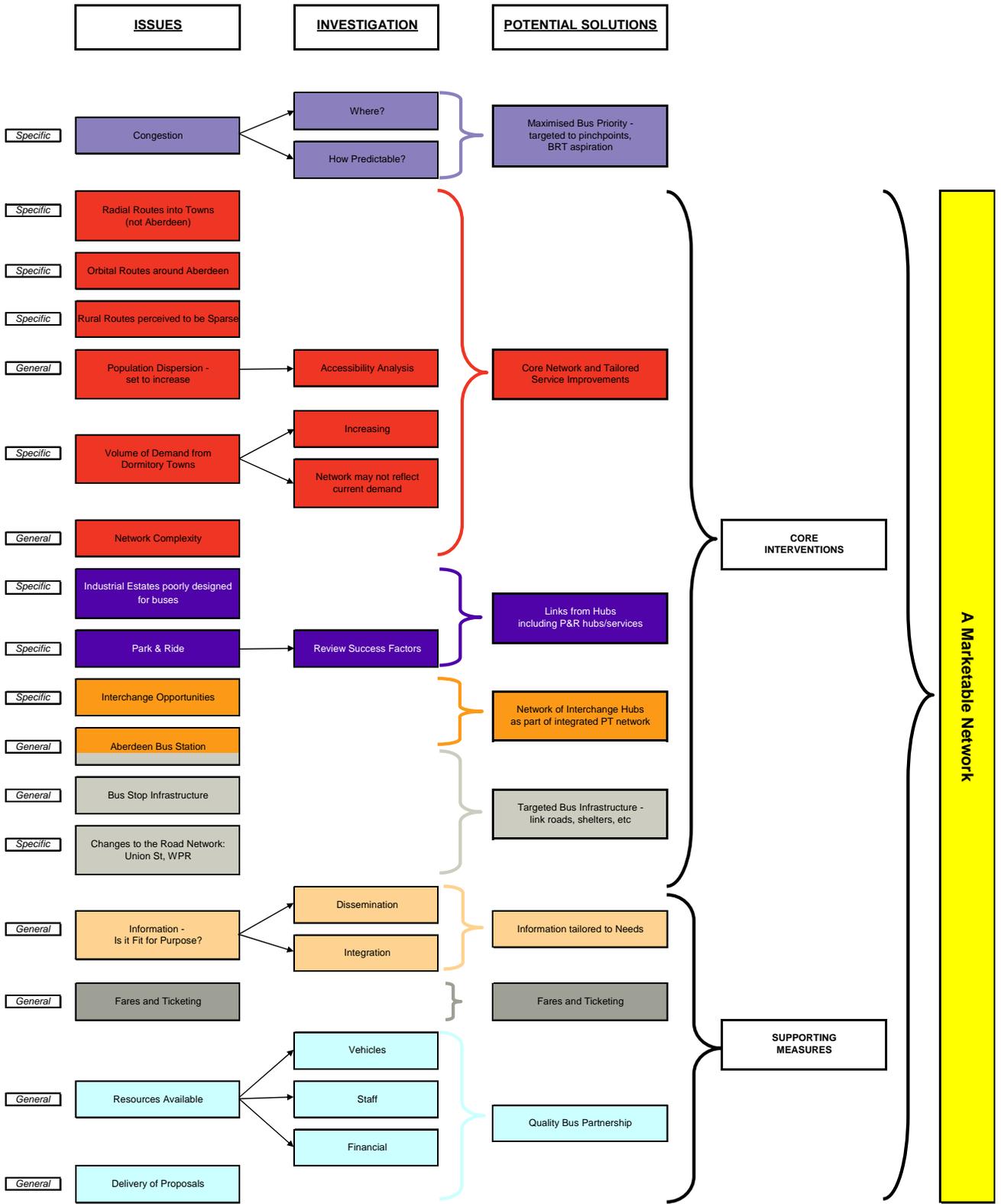
Towards a marketable bus network

Bus services in the 21st Century will not deliver the needs of their users unless they can be readily understood by their target market(s). This is essential, not only to capture new users from less sustainable modes, but also simply to preserve the existing market share for buses – which we already know to be challengingly low for the region when set in the overall Scottish context. Market share of buses in the North East must be understood in the context of high car ownership and travel to work patterns in which people commute considerable distances to access centres of employment such as Aberdeen city centre and Dyce.

Experience from the UK and elsewhere suggests that this marketable network requires a number of key components. Underpinning each component is the need for integrated public transport which appears as seamless as possible to the user. The Action Plan looks at the specific components required to deliver this Marketable Network in the North East and splits these into:

- **Core interventions** – major actions specifically targeted to tackle identified issues.
- **Supporting measures** – more general activity which helps delivery of the core interventions.

Figure 1 A marketable bus network for North East Scotland



The Bus Action Plan displays the key issues and proposed actions on a corridor by corridor basis, using a series of maps. Each action is cross referenced to a list of key issues and solutions as follows:

- Core Network;
- Network of hubs;
- Hub feeder services;
- Supporting infrastructure;
- Bus priority;
- Information, fares and ticketing; and
- Quality Bus Partnership.

The table below shows the actions in tabular form grouped under each of these headings. These groups of actions were subsequently prioritised on the basis of the estimated timescales for delivery, costs and the scale of the impact of each intervention.

The table on the following pages shows each category in order of its priority and summarises the actions of the Bus Action Plan under each.

Delivery of the plan

Partnership will be key to delivering the aspirations and actions of this plan and in keeping with the partnership concept, there will be a need to develop / demonstrate trust amongst all partners. A Quality Bus Partnership (QBP) already exists, and can be brought up to date in recognition of the partnership approach required for the Bus Action Plan, which offers benefits for all partners.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of actions is vital best practice as it ensures that interventions remain properly targeted and under control, and it allows future projects to benefit from the experience of their predecessors. The proposed monitoring and evaluation for the Bus Action Plan aligns with that planned for the RTS and the Single Outcome Agreements for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

Wherever possible, the contribution of each project against the agreed suite of RTS / SOA indicators will be identified giving clarity about the value of the Bus Action Plan, forming a key input to the evaluation process.

Summary of actions contained within the Bus Action Plan

Priority	Action
1	Quality Bus Partnership
a	Support and reinvigorate existing QBP
b	Consider the desirability of placing QBP on a statutory basis
c	Give particular focus to reliability through a specific punctuality improvement partnership
2	Information
a	Targeted roll out of improved information provision - based around Aberdeenshire's bus information strategy
	Undertake market research to identify the most beneficial ways of providing information - has this been done as part of development of the Aberdeenshire Information Strategy?
	Introduction of airport service specific travel information including booklets and RTS
	Work with ferry operator to improve information provision regarding options for bus / ferry interchange
b	Implementation of staff travel plans, starting with the workplaces of Nestrans, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils
3	Ticketing
a	Development of a regionally consistent range of fares and tickets, compliant with competition legislation
	Undertake analysis to determine where and to what extent fares are high and adopt a hierarchical range of ticket types. <i>Link to integrated ticketing measures</i>
	Work with bus operators to establish through ticketing to the airport
b	Continued support for investigation of smart card applications which may simplify the provision of seamless ticketing
3	Bus Infrastructure
a	Tailored according to an objective hierarchy of needs and requirements
	Undertake an audit of existing bus stop infrastructure provision and identify and adopt a hierarchical approach to provision.
	Reorganisation of bus stops along Union Street on a corridor by corridor basis, so all buses traveling in the same direction stop at the same bus stop (regardless of operator)

Priority	Action
5	Interchange Hubs
a	Aberdeen City - railway/bus station, Union St, Royal Infirmary, Bridge of Don P&R, Kingswells P&R, A96(S) P&R and Dyce (bus/rail)
b	Aberdeenshire - Ellon P&R, Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Huntly, Inverurie, Banchory and Stonehaven
	Identify scope for improving bus / rail interchange at stations
6	Feeder Buses to Hubs
a	Bus services to be focused on to these network hubs, with co-ordinated timetables and through ticketing
	Introduction of mini P&R sites / hubs along strategic routes in the region (see BAP for suggested corridors and locations)
	Identify scope for employment based transport hubs and explore opportunities for shuttle services to nearest interchange hub
	Scope for introducing feeder services to link small settlements into the main network. To be implemented in conjunction with mini P&R sites / interchange facility improvements
7	Develop Core Network
a	Maintain and develop the existing core network in Aberdeenshire
b	Identify and introduce a core network in Aberdeen City
	Preserve the existing core network in Aberdeenshire
	Undertake a root and branch streamlining of the city bus network
	Work with bus operators to establish Quality Partnership initiatives to serve the airport. Consider rationalising existing bus provision to make more 'user friendly'. Implementation of Quality measures e.g. branding, ticketing and bus stop infrastructure
8	Develop Supporting Bus Priority
a	Potential to signalise roundabouts on bus corridor providing bus priority e.g. Souterhead, Wellington Rd / Hareness Rd, Lang Stracht, Dyce Drive and Haudagain roundabouts
	Implement Haudagain roundabout junction improvements with inclusion of bus priority measures
b	Provision of bus or bus/HOV lanes on radial approaches to Aberdeen City
c	Extend existing bus lanes e.g. Lang Stracht, Bridge of Don

Priority	Action
	Implement measures to give buses further priority at Don crossing (as part of overall priority measures above)
	Local authorities to work with bus operators and key stakeholders to investigate measures to improve bus priority on roads north of Dyce (as part of overall priority measures above)
	Investigate possible bus / HOV lane with junction priority to connect with the existing provision on King Street - requires more detailed feasibility investigation (as part of overall priority measures above)
	Extend bus lane along A96 from Haudagain to the Dyce roundabout
	Additional bus priority on Victoria Street
	Rationalisation of roads used by buses to maximise use of priority measures
	Rationalise bus routes, sending buses along one street on the eastbound approach to the city centre. Implement bus priority to maximise benefits.
	Enforcement of traffic management in order to ensure current bus priority is maximised e.g. around Bon Accord centre. Implement bus priority measures to maximise benefits