NORTH EAST SCOTLAND TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP – 21 August 2015

Strategy -

3a Director's report on liaison between RTPs, and with the Scottish Government and Others

o Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Board on liaison with other RTPs and with the Scottish Government and other organisations.

o Background

This report details meetings with other RTPs across Scotland, Transport Scotland and other national transport bodies highlighting issues of interest across Scotland. It also notes meetings of the Health and Transport Steering Group and the Local Authority Bus Operators Forum.

o Recent Developments

The last Board meeting was held on 17 June 2015, since which the following updates are available from meetings:

- **Transport Scotland re Laurencekirk, Video conference, 29 June 2015**

This meeting was attended by Derick Murray and Ewan Wallace, Aberdeenshire Council. The meeting discussed the Laurencekirk report, its findings and how to progress matters. The report is being reported to Aberdeenshire Council's Infrastructure Services Committee on 20th August 2015.

Following consideration by Aberdeenshire Council and the Minister for Transport further discussion will take place to progress matters.

Colleagues within Aberdeenshire council, Angus Council and the Strategic Development Planning Authority are having discussions regarding the findings of the report.

- **Holyrood Garden Party, Edinburgh, 01 July 2015**

Nestrans was represented at this function by Eddie Anderson and Tricia Howden.

- **Transport Scotland re Tunnels at Aberdeen Station, Video conference, 03 July 2015**

This meeting was held to discuss Network Rail's finding that they do not need to dual the track through the tunnels just north of Aberdeen Station to meet their objectives. These objectives have been set by Transport Scotland and are to permit an hourly service between Aberdeen and Inverness and a half hourly service to Inverurie. The meeting was called to try and determine if this objective was wide enough to meet the north east's aspirations for a local rail service.

Transport Scotland confirmed their instructions are to meet the Ministers requirements as set out above. From the rail point of view Transport Scotland are content that their instructions are being met by Network Rail. Should there be a desire for further amendments to those instructions then further discussion would be required recognising that this could be brought about by a City Region Deal agreement.

Following this meeting a further telephone conversation was held with Transport Scotland's team dealing with the City Region Deal. There was agreement in this conversation that a further meeting should be held with Nestrans, Transport Scotland, Network Rail and Abellio Scotrail to determine what was required to be done to conclude whether the single track through the tunnels could accommodate any future local rail service or whether the objectives set for Network Rail needed to be re-defined.

❖ **Transport Scotland re rail matters, Glasgow, 04 August 2015**

This meeting was attended by Derick Murray and Rab Dickson along with representatives from Transport Scotland and Network Rail. The meeting discussed:

- Action Points from the previous meeting
    - Edinburgh to Glasgow Improvement Project is progressing on schedule therefore the expected 20 week closure of Queen Street tunnels is on schedule for 2016
    - Aberdeenshire Council, Nestrans and Network Rail are to meet on 24 August to further progress on the Kintore and Inverurie station proposals.
    - The freight study into improvement at the south side of Aberdeen station is progressing with a GRIP 4 stage report expected by summer 2016.
    - Noted Dyce station bus turning circle is now complete.
- Aberdeen City Region Deal and City Centre Master Plan
    - There was a discussion regarding the context within which transport in the north east should be considered with particular reference to the City Region Deal and its impact on timetables for proposed projects and the impact that the City Centre Master Plan will have on public transport in general including train journeys. The emphasis in discussion was on the importance of additional train passengers, on an already over congested train system, to achieving the aspirations of the City Centre Plan.
- Franchise progress
    - Scotrail:
        - Transport Scotland are not aware at this time of any delay to the delivery of the refurbished trains from the Great Western line upgrade.
        - Abellio Scotrail proposals and Nestrans aspirations for cycling at various north east stations was discussed
        - Developments at Aberdeen station and car parking at Dyce and Stonehaven were discussed
    - Sleeper:
        - The franchise transfer has been smooth. The operator is monitoring passenger numbers which show a small dip in Aberdeen numbers. The operator is working closely with Visit Scotland to promote the service.
    - East Coast:
        - No update to report

- Aberdeen to Inverness Upgrade
    - Tunnels:
        - The issue of whether a single track through the tunnels north of Aberdeen station was sufficient to meet the north east aspirations for a local service was discussed. This was discussed further at the Network Rail meeting below.
    - Rolling stock:
        - Nestrans asked about the strategy for released rolling stock following completion of EGIP and delivery of the refurbished fleet for interurban journeys. This was particularly in relation to the possible requirement for some rolling stock to deliver a local rail service in the north east. Transport Scotland undertook to pass this to the appropriate team considering the issue of released rolling stock.
- Aberdeen to Central belt journey reduction times
    - Transport Scotland are in discussion with Network Rail regarding possible improvements during Control periods 5 & 6 (2014 – 2019 and 2019 – 2024) At this time it was not anticipated that that a step change (the 20 min reduction noted in the Strategic Transport Projects Review) could be achieved within CP5 although some improvements may be possible. Discussions regarding CP6 would be part of the determination for that period currently underway.
- Overcrowding and service enhancements:
    - Nestrans requested that the timetabling conferences previously held by the last franchisee are continued. Transport Scotland undertook to check the requirements in the franchise agreement.
    - Overcrowding on certain peak time trains was discussed. Transport Scotland advised that there was a threshold within the franchise agreement where the operator was obliged to put forward proposals to reduce overcrowding. They undertook to check this limit with respect to the overcrowding recorded in the last Nestrans survey (2013) There may be a need to update this survey.
- Stations:
    - Transport Scotland confirmed that discussions were ongoing with the land owner at Insch station regarding the DDA compliance upgrades.
- Other:
    - Other issues discussed included:
        - An update on the Fraserburgh and Peterhead to Aberdeen corridor study
        - An update on theCross City connections study
        - Aberdeen City Council proposals for a pedestrian/ cycle bridge over the railway as part of the Berryden upgrade proposal
        - Community Rail

❖ **Network Rail re Scotland Route Study update, Glasgow, 04 August 2015**

This meeting was attended by Derick Murray and Rab Dickson along with Network Rail representatives. Network Rail provided a presentation on their progress to date on developing the Scotland Route Study, the successor to the Rail Utilisation Study.

As has previously been reported and discussed the past study had underestimated rail passenger growth in the north east of Scotland. Network Rail had previously agreed to

include the Aberdeen region as a separate conurbation (along with Edinburgh and Glasgow) to try and address this issue and to discuss the future forecasting and demand modelling as it develops to ensure that future growth anticipated by the north east was captured in the Network Rail modelling.

As such this meeting was a positive opportunity for Network Rail to show their progress to date and initial findings for demand and growth and for this to be discussed to ensure that the findings were properly interpreted and understood. It provides the opportunity for Nestrans and the north east to supply further information to supplement the models interpretation locally of nationally derived statistics.

In a positive development there was a discussion on the findings so far extracted from the nationally derived model. The model to date requires further refinement to ensure it adequately reflects the circumstances local to the north east. Network Rail are keen to work with Nestrans and others to ensure the model reflects anticipated growth.

There was some discussions on the technical aspects of modelling which could account for some of the discrepancy. Further issues surrounding employment, population, city centre masterplan, Strategic Development Plan implications etc. were discussed. Nestrans agreed to supply further information to try and increase the understanding of the local issues which might impact on the modelling. We will be discussing this further with Council colleagues to ensure that all the necessary information is provided to Network Rail.

As described earlier there was further discussion on the tunnels north of Aberdeen station issue. Network Rail have an issue that any change to the specification could impact upon their ability to deliver the Aberdeen to Inverness phase 1 upgrade to time and budget.

It has been agreed however that the initial need is to determine how a local service can be delivered and what impact that would have on the infrastructure requirement. It has therefore been agreed that a meeting (outwith the scope of the Scotland Route Study) should be convened to discuss how to gather the necessary information to determine the infrastructure need. Nestrans are therefore organising a meeting to include:

- Transport Scotland (City Region Deal Team)
- Transport Scotland (Rail team)
- Network Rail
- Abellio Scotrail

❖ **HTAP Steering Group, Aberdeen, 11 August 2015**

Derick Murray and Rab Dickson attended this meeting. A verbal update can be provided. Minutes of the meeting will be distributed at a future Board meeting.

❖ **East Coast Mainline Association, Communications and Economy sub group, York, 14 August 2015**

Derick Murray is attending this meeting. A verbal update can be given at the Board meeting.

❖ **RTP Lead Officers, Inverness, 19 August 2015**

Derick Murray is attending this meeting. A verbal update can be given at the Board meeting.

o Future Programme of Meetings

- **Network Rail & Transport Scotland re Inverurie & Kintore stations, Inverurie, 24 August 2015**
- **LABOF Steering Group, Aberdeen, 27 August 2015**
- **Aberdeen Airport Consultative Committee, Aberdeen, 04 September 2015**

Eddie Anderson is attending this meeting.

- **RTP Chairs meeting, Perth, 16 September 2015**
- **Minister for Transport, Edinburgh, 16 September 2015**

Recommendation

The Board is recommended to note progress on liaison arrangements with other RTPs, the Scottish Government and others and arrangements for future meetings.

RGM 11 August 2015