
Strategy – 3d Regional Transport Strategy update

- Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide members with information regarding the possibility of a review or refresh of the Regional Transport Strategy and proposals to align the timescales with those of the Structure Plan/Strategic Development Plan.

- Background

The Regional Transport Strategy was submitted to Scottish Ministers in March 2007 and approved in spring of the following year. Although the RTS had been prepared to cover the period 2008-2021, the original guidance from the Scottish Government was that a review be conducted after five years, which would necessitate starting work on it now. However, subsequent guidance from the Scottish Government has indicated that they will not be updating the National Transport Strategy and that they (and RTPs) should focus on delivery of the Strategic Transport Projects Review and RTS Delivery Plans respectively. They have, however, indicated that they are happy for RTPs and partner authorities to update or refresh their strategies if they so wish.

Nestrans and the SDPA held a joint workshop at the Town House in Aberdeen on 25 March, at which the question of the need for an RTS refresh was considered. Generally, there seemed to be a view that :

- focus should remain on delivery;
- that the general thrust of policy direction was unchanged since preparation of the existing RTS;
- that an update report should be prepared considering aspects that have changed since the existing RTS was agreed, including delays to the AWPR, different focus in Aberdeen City Centre, new Climate Change obligations and the difficulties with the global economy, impacting on expenditure, affordability of schemes and personal transport; and
- that the RTS should be better-aligned to the Structure Plan/Strategic Development Plan, both in terms of consistency of message and timeframe for planning.

- Strategic Development Plan timetable

The existing Structure Plan was submitted in February 2009 and approved in August of that year. Legislation now requires the SDPA to produce a Strategic Development Plan (SDP) and a Development Plan Scheme sets out a programme towards finalising a Proposed Plan in 2012.

The new SDP will cover a timeframe up to 2030/2035 and it is suggested that the RTS timeframe be expanded to coincide with this.

The SDPA has agreed to prepare a Main Issues Report for consideration in September of this year, which would then be the subject of formal consultation. Transportation will be among the issues discussed and it would be appropriate to align the development of the Main Issues Report with informal discussions on refreshing the Regional Transport Strategy. Nestrans and the SDPA staff will work closely together in respect of the transport elements of the plan and the consultation process will be used to garner views on strategic transport

issues. Initiatives and scheme options, such as greater emphasis on rail (which was raised at the members' seminar) will be able to be tested and assessed in consideration of the Main Issues Report and conducted through a formal consultation process. This will enable public and stakeholder input to the future consideration of the RTS, whilst enabling efficiencies by avoiding duplication of effort. It will further improve connectivity between the two statutory documents and ensure consistency of message.

Expanding the timeframe of the RTS to align with the SDP, covering the period to 2030/35 will provide an opportunity to retain the short- and medium-term focus on delivering the schemes contained in the approved RTS whilst considering further initiatives required for the longer-term timeframe.

- Joint working and cumulative impact study

Nestrans and the SDPA already work very closely together. A key example would be the joint working on the cumulative impact of the long-term development, which was commissioned by Nestrans and the SDPA in partnership with the local authorities and Transport Scotland. This enabled an assessment of the impacts on the transport network of the proposed development contained in the Structure Plan and Local Development Plans, taking account of the transport interventions contained in the RTS and was able to identify where further projects were required to ensure that the transport network can accommodate the proposed development.

Separate reports have been considered by both the Nestrans Board and SDPA considering how a fund can be established and managed to bring forward schemes required to support proposed developments and it would be appropriate to enshrine this approach in the new SDP and RTS. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared, but this should be fully referenced in the statutory documents.

- Recommendation

The Board is recommended to:

- Note the intention to better integrate the Regional Transport Strategy with the developing Strategic Development Plan; and
- Instruct further reports giving consideration to the development of the RTS to cover the period to 2030/2035 and taking account of changes which have occurred since the approval of the existing RTS.

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