
4a Access to Aberdeen from the South Progress Update

- Purpose of Report

This report advises Board members on the latest progress in bringing forward projects identified within the Access to Aberdeen from the South Study.

- Background

The Nestrans Board approved the principle of the findings within the draft Access to Aberdeen from the South Study in February 2008 and remitted the final study to Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils for consideration. Progress in bringing forward the findings of the study was last reported to Board in April 2010 and brief updates on individual projects being funded through the 2010/11 budget have since been noted in the progress report. It is considered however an appropriate time to again report in full on the latest progress.

- Short Term Measures

The Board approved a sum of £75,000 in the 2010/11 Capital Budget to undertake the detailed design and construction of a segregated left turn lane from King George VI Bridge to West Tullos Road. Works were completed and the new lane became operational on 28 October. A new lighting column to cover the widened area of road is now in place and the adjacent shared use path has been widened, with a new pedestrian railing erected alongside it to replace the previous one which had to be removed. Anecdotal observations are that the slip lane is operating well, with southbound vehicles no longer queuing back over King George VI Bridge from this junction in the AM peak period. The transfer to the slip lane of around 200 vehicles that were previously recorded to turn from the offside lane on King George VI Bridge through 450° in the AM peak and thus cut across all four arms of the junction has also helped to reduce delays on the other approaches.

- Medium Term Measures

The Access to Aberdeen from the South Study identified the potential for traffic signals to more evenly distribute the capacity at the junctions of Southerhead Road and Hareness Road with Wellington Road. The Board previously approved a sum of £100,000 in the 2010/11 Capital Budget to continue the preliminary design work to replace these roundabouts. Officers at Aberdeen City Council have developed three options at the Southerhead junction as shown in Appendix 1.

The concept behind the proposed alternatives was to separate some of the connecting roads by providing a new staggered junction layout with additional controlled pedestrian crossing facilities and greater safety for cyclists. A consultation to obtain views on the options was held between 12 July and 3 August, with plans available to view on Aberdeen City Council's website. A public event was held at Altens Community Centre on Wednesday 28 July. The proposed layout for a traffic signal controlled junction with full pedestrian crossing facilities at the junction of Hareness Road and Wellington Road is shown in Appendix 2.

Latest predicted future year traffic microsimulation models have been created for the Access from the South modelled network now that the scale and distribution of development levels contained within the Structure Plan are being defined through the Proposed Local Development Plans. The models are being used to undertake an economic benefit analysis for each option. The results will be reported to Aberdeen City Council as Roads Authority through the Enterprise, Planning & Environment Committee to approve a preferred layout for progression to planning application stage. It is unlikely that the full allocated budget will be spent by the end of this financial year as

the preliminary design is expected to continue into May 2011 and proposals to vire the predicted underspend are contained within the separate budget monitoring report.

The Minister for Transport has indicated that the construction of the A90(S) and A96 Park & Choose sites could be considered for inclusion within a contract for the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, but this would require planning permission and any necessary land acquisitions to be in place in advance of the contract being tendered. An allocation of £100,000 was therefore approved within the 2010/11 Capital Budget to progress the design of the A90(S) Park & Choose and submit a planning application. Preliminary design has been completed, but despite ongoing negotiations, the landowner has to date refused access for a geotechnical survey. It is proposed therefore to submit an application for planning approval in principle and the 12 week pre-planning application process commenced on 15 November. Proposals to reallocate the funding for the site surveys and further design are also contained within the separate budget monitoring report.

• Long Term Measures

The Access to Aberdeen from the South Study identified the need for additional capacity over the River Dee in the longer term. Although a number of studies have been carried out on this issue at various times in the past, the assumptions underlying each of these studies have changed over time. A sum of £150,000 has been approved within the 2010/11 Revenue Budget to investigate transport improvements in the area. This study will reference previous work for background understanding, but will establish an appropriate present day starting point. It will be carried out using the methodologies set out in Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) and will include full engagement with stakeholders throughout the process.

Jacobs Engineering UK Ltd has been commissioned and a programme developed that aims to complete the pre-appraisal process defined within STAG and partially complete the DMRB Stage 1. This will provide an agreed set of options for consideration by the end of the financial year. The proposed programme consists of the following four phases:

- Inception - to identify existing data, review relevant policies and strategies and agree minimum and reference case traffic modelling scenarios and predict traffic volumes and journey times within these scenarios.
- Problem and Opportunity Analysis – to identify the problems and opportunities that exist.
- Objective Setting – to develop a set of project specific SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timed) objectives for the study.
- Option Generation, Sifting and Development – to generate and sift options in response to the identified problems and opportunities and the project specific objectives, then develop the remaining options to a level of detail necessary for this initial assessment. This will include initial consideration of alignment, junction, earthworks, structures and drainage design, together with the development of initial cost estimates for each of the options to be taken forward for further assessment.

The inception phase has been completed and a stakeholder workshop was held on 29 November to enable all parties to contribute to an assessment of the problems and opportunities that exist and the setting of the project specific objectives for this study. The stakeholder workshops on option generation and option sifting will be held on 11 and 26 January 2011 respectively.

• Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board note the progress with projects identified within the Access to Aberdeen from the South Study.

JA/15 November 2010

