

4a Statutory Quality Partnership for Buses

o Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to request that £60,000 of underspend from the 2014/15 budget is allocated to projects to progress the development of a Statutory Quality Partnership (sQP) for buses on the Queens Road and A944 corridor from Aberdeen to Westhill. The funding request is also covered under item 7a budget matters report.

o Background

A statutory Quality Partnership (sQP) is a flexible policy tool which can be used to address a range of issues, including bus journey times, reliability, patronage growth, modal shift, air quality, service quality, vehicle improvement and improved customer service. In doing so, sQPs can create a more certain and stable environment within which operators and transport authorities can invest scarce resources and continuously improve local bus services.

An sQP is a scheme declared by one or more transport authorities which defines a geographic area in which the authority(ies) invest in improved facilities and infrastructure. Operators who then wish to use these facilities undertake to provide services of a particular standard agreed with the transport authority(ies).

The Local Authority and Bus Operator Forum (LABOF) Steering Group has agreed to progress an sQP agreement on the Queens Road and A944 corridor from Aberdeen to Westhill and instructed the Executive group to explore actions that can be taken forward as part of this agreement.

Two of the actions being considered require further modelling work to better understand the benefits that could be achieved for buses and the potential impacts on other road users. Each of these has an associated cost, as outlined below.

o Modelling work to develop sQP actions

The two options that it is proposed are investigated further at this stage are:

1. **Queens Road: Springfield Road to Groats Road** - it has been identified that this section of the route could benefit from a significant review to better understand the progression of traffic along this section. This would require a modelling exercise to ascertain what benefits could be achieved and the likely impacts on other road users. There would likely be a significant cost to this exercise and it is estimated that this will be in the region of £50,000 to carry out surveys, modelling, identification of options and testing of solutions.

2. **Holburn Junction** – opportunities to improve the flow of buses through the Holburn junction between Union Street and Alford Place have been identified. The first step to exploring this option will be to test on TRANSYT software to identify the potential benefits for buses of such a measure. This is estimated to cost up to £10k. If there are benefits to be gained, then further tests would be required on Paramics to fully assess the impact on all traffic and would then also need to be tied into the Scoot traffic signal control system. It is emphasised that consideration would also need to be given to the impact of any proposed works on Broad Street as the signals along the length of Union Street are all linked.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board approve funding of £60,000 to progress these studies this financial year as also set out in item 7a Budget Matters.

KC/29 September 2014