

5a Rail Matters

o Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Board members on rail matters, particularly to note progress on a number of proposed rail schemes.

o Background

The Regional Transport Strategy identifies the need for more detailed sub-strategies, one of which is for rail. A Rail Action Plan was agreed by the Nestrans Board in 2009 and is available on the Nestrans' website at:

(http://www.nestrans.org.uk/db_docs/docs/RAP%20second%20draft%20sept%202010.pdf)

o Dyce station

The proposed bus turning circle to the west of Dyce station, which will access the northbound platform, has been awarded but work has not yet started. Details are being progressed by Aberdeen City Council's Estates and Legal teams, with the Airport's solicitors. A number of planning conditions also require to be satisfied, after which it will be possible to instruct the contractor to start on site and it should still be possible to complete the work before the end of the year.

Further to discussion at the last Board meeting, a meeting has been held with the City Council's planning department and roads officials and a brief is being prepared to develop a business case and preliminary design for an extension to the car park at Dyce station. This can then be fed into the City Local Development Plan in support of Nestrans' request that an area of land be allocated for a station car park extension.

o Aberdeen-Inverness enhancement project

Members will be aware of the proposals announced in March 2014 to upgrade the Aberdeen-Inverness railway line, the first phase of which is estimated to cost £170 million. On 23 September 2014, Transport Scotland published a summary of the GRIP 3 report which provides some further details on the proposals, improvements including a new alignment and replacement station at Forres, new loops and signalling improvements, as well as re-doubling of most of the track between Aberdeen and Inverurie to enable a frequency of two trains per hour in each direction over this section. Platform extensions at Inch and Elgin to enable longer trains of up to six carriages are proposed, to address the overcrowding problems previously raised by Nestrans. This work is all scheduled for implementation in the period 2014-2019.

The summary of the GRIP 3 work is available on the Transport Scotland website at:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/aberdeen-inverness-rail-improvements>

The proposals also allow for the development of new stations at Dalcross near Inverness Airport and at Kintore, although the delivery of the stations themselves are not included in the funding announcement.

A further phase to be implemented in the period 2019-2024 is intended to enable end-to-end journey times of less than two hours and a regular hourly through service in each direction. Further work is now being undertaken including timetable development and Nestrans have been involved in discussions with both Transport Scotland and Network Rail regarding this issue.

o **East Coast Main Line Authorities**

The East Coast Main Line Authorities (ECMA) consortium, a grouping of local authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships working in partnership to promote the case for investment in the line to enable economic growth.

Following the publication of the manifesto “Keeping the Economy on Track” in July, it has been agreed that the ECMA should continue and will press the case for further investment in the East Coast line through to the General Election and beyond. At a group meeting in York on 15 September, it was agreed that member authorities and RTPs should be asked to provide funding for a further year.

Scottish RTPs are to be invited to contribute a total of £40,000 between the four areas (Nestrans, Hitrans, Tactran and Sestran), which can be divided between constituent local authorities or contributed from the RTP. In the case of Nestrans, it is suggested that as the strategic transport body representing the two local authorities, it is appropriate for Nestrans to make the funding contribution.

It is therefore recommended that Nestrans consider the request for a contribution of £10,000 to ECMA when setting the revenue budget for 2014/15.

o **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Note the contents of this report and agree to consider the request for a contribution of £10,000 to East Coast Mainline Authorities consortium when setting the budget for 2014/15.

RD/24 September 2014