NES TRANS

Annual Report
2005

Working Together to Deliver a Modern Transport System for North East Scotland

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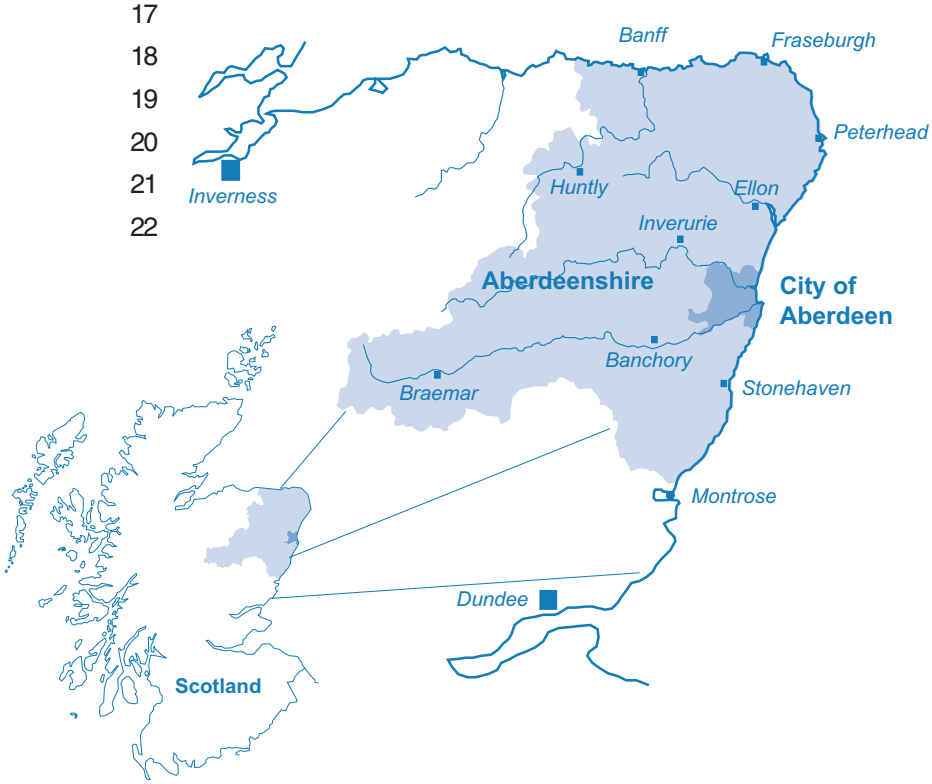


Foreword

Over the last 4 years NESTRANS has provided the focus for representatives of the public and private sectors to work together to promote, develop and oversee the delivery of strategic transport improvements for the north east of Scotland. Much has been achieved in raising the profile of north east transport needs, in developing a regional transport strategy, and in driving forward key strategic transport projects. Much still needs to be done.

The endorsement by the Scottish Executive in 2003 of our regional transport strategy for the north east for 2011, the Modern Transport System or MTS provided the context and impetus to progress a range of key projects to implement that strategy. This Annual Report summarises what has already been achieved and what is planned through the various project strands to implement the MTS strategy.

The MTS encompasses a wide range of projects from major new infrastructure such as the Western Peripheral Route, Park and Ride sites and Aberdeen Crossrail, to working with operators to improve the north east's links beyond its boundaries, and promoting better travel awareness and more sustainable transport. The MTS for 2011 requires each of these project strands to be implemented and appropriately integrated.

The coming year is likely to be the last for NESTRANS as a voluntary Regional Transport Partnership. The very success of NESTRANS and similar organisations in other parts of Scotland has led to legislation, currently passing through Parliament, to put Regional Transport Partnerships on a statutory footing. NESTRANS greatly welcomes this and will work to ensure a smooth transition to its successor statutory Regional Transport Partnership for the north east. The first task of that successor body will be to develop a longer term transport strategy for the region, working with others to build on the MTS and set out a long-term vision for the future of transport in the north east.

Developing this longer term transport strategy is vitally important, but so too is ensuring that the projects comprising the 2011 MTS are developed, funded and implemented on time and in an integrated manner. NESTRANS will seek to maintain this momentum over the year ahead.

May 2005

Councillor Kate Dean
Leader
Aberdeen City Council

Councillor Alison McInnes
Chair
Infrastructure Services
Committee
Aberdeenshire Council

Jennifer F Craw
Chief Executive
Scottish Enterprise Grampian

Geoff Runcie
Chief Executive
Aberdeen and Grampian
Chamber of Commerce

NESTRANS : Role and Organisation

Concerns about transport shortcomings in the north east led representatives of the public and private sectors to come together in the late 1990s to shape and help deliver a regional transport strategy to meet the future needs of the region. The partnership between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce developed into a more formal relationship and with the active support of the Scottish Executive was constituted in summer 2001 as the North East Scotland Transport Partnership - NESTRANS.

Although NESTRANS developed as a local initiative similar voluntary Regional Transport Partnerships now cover most of Scotland - through WESTRANS, HITRANS and SESTRAN. All seek to ensure co-ordinated transport planning in their travel to work areas, and each has prepared a regional transport strategy. They provide a strategic dimension to transport in their regions and integrate with the detailed local transport planning and delivery undertaken by constituent councils.

In terms of organisation, NESTRANS operates through a *Board* comprising leading representatives from its four partner organisations chaired by the Leader of Aberdeen City Council, Councillor Kate Dean. The Board in turn reports to a joint committee of both Councils, the North East Strategic Planning Committee and to the North East Scotland Economic Forum. Technical work is co-ordinated through a *Management Team* of transport officials from the partners chaired by Aberdeenshire Council's Director of Transportation and Infrastructure, Iain Gabriel. Since March 2002 technical work has been facilitated through a small NESTRANS office managed by the *NESTRANS Co-ordinator*, Peter Cockhead.

NESTRANS currently has an annual operational budget of £750,000 primarily allocated to project development. Funding is provided by the two Councils matched by the Scottish Executive, together with a contribution from Scottish Enterprise Grampian. The budget and activities of NESTRANS accord with a detailed *Delivery Plan* approved each year by the Board. The *Delivery Plan for 2005/2006* is summarised later in this report.

Although operating as a small and tightly focused organisation NESTRANS endeavours to engage with the wide range of transport stakeholders in the north east. A key part of this engagement is through the *North East Transport Consultative Forum*, a forum of c100 stakeholders meeting two or three times a year. The Forum enables debate about strategic transport issues and guides NESTRANS in setting future work and strategic priorities. NESTRANS has also established periodic briefings of north east MSPs and MPs.

Achievements Over the Last Year

By comparison to recent years the achievements of NESTRANS over the last 12 months may not appear so dramatic. Nonetheless they represent major advances in the delivery of our strategy. In 2002 NESTRANS helped to raise national awareness of north east transport needs and secured Scottish Executive commitment to 'Fixing Aberdeen's Congestion'. In 2003 the Scottish Executive endorsed NESTRANS' regional transport strategy (the MTS) and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (WPR) as its key facilitating project. In 2004 NESTRANS progressed a wide range of projects and initiatives and sought to implement these in an integrated manner. A year of consolidation and delivery.

During the last year NESTRANS has sought to maintain the national profile of north east transport needs and has co-ordinated the implementation of key projects forming part of the MTS. Apart from seeking to ensure that the WPR is progressing to schedule, key priorities for NESTRANS over the last year have been aviation, rail and travel awareness.

Probably the most evident impact of NESTRANS initiatives has been in the dramatic turn around in the fortunes of Aberdeen Airport with new routes, record passenger growth, major terminal investment and the removal of planning restrictions on the airport's operational hours. An example of NESTRANS working in partnership with a transport operator and other stakeholders to promote and facilitate new developments.

Whilst implementation of rail enhancement projects has yet to be achieved, considerable work has been undertaken in progressing NESTRANS' four immediate rail aspirations - Aberdeen-Inverness enhancements, Aberdeen Crossrail, reopening of Laurencekirk station and rail freight gauge enhancement, with updated costings and outline business cases now prepared for each.

The third major area of activity has been in developing travel awareness initiatives with the business community, including the launching of a NESTRANS car share scheme, the establishment of a NESTRANS Sustainable Travel Grants Scheme and the incorporation of a Transport Management Organisation of companies in the Dyce area.

During the course of the last year NESTRANS has also been instrumental in securing funding for various transport improvements. NESTRANS itself was allocated £1.9 million by the Scottish Executive to be spent in support of public transport enhancements in 2004/2005, this being used on a variety of projects including the Foresterhill Hospital Busport, new low floor buses in Aberdeenshire, real time bus information displays and improvements to cycling facilities.

National Context

Government policy, funding and guidance inevitably heavily influence the activities of NESTRANS. With the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999 most government transport responsibilities were devolved to Holyrood, though Westminster reserved most powers for aviation, maritime and rail. The UK Railways Act 2005 enables greater devolution of rail powers to Holyrood.

The Scottish Executive has accorded a high priority to transport and has made a commitment to invest £3 billion over the next 10 years. This is welcome, and necessary if real improvements in transport are to be achieved. Along with increased national funding for transport the Scottish Executive are presently taking steps to build the organisational capacity to ensure that the increased funding is effectively focussed and delivered.

Building organisational capacity has two main strands, a new *National Transport Agency* to be operational by end 2005, and a network of *statutory Regional Transport Partnerships* to come into operation in April 2006. Provisions for the establishment and powers of the Regional Transport Partnerships form the major part of the current Transport (Scotland) Bill. The initial task of the new Partnerships will be the preparation of a Regional Transport Strategy, which once approved by Ministers will carry statutory backing. Those Strategies will need to be prepared in accordance with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and to include Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

NESTRANS welcomes these developments and the proposal for the new north east Regional Transport Partnership to build on NESTRANS' work and cover the same area.

In recent years NESTRANS has lobbied hard to ensure that north east needs are appropriately reflected in Scottish transport priorities. Following intense lobbying in 2001/2002 the Scottish Executive's "top ten" priorities listed in their March 2002 *Transport Delivery Report* included "Fixing Aberdeen's Congestion", and Aberdeen Crossrail. Those priorities along with the commitment to the Western Peripheral Route were reconfirmed in the *Partnership Agreement* of the new Labour/Liberal Democrat administration following the May 2003 elections, and are also reflected in the June 2004 Transport White Paper *Scotland's transport future*. NESTRANS will seek to ensure that these continue to carry high priority in the forthcoming National Transport Strategy and that the long term Strategy gives due recognition to north east transport needs and priorities.

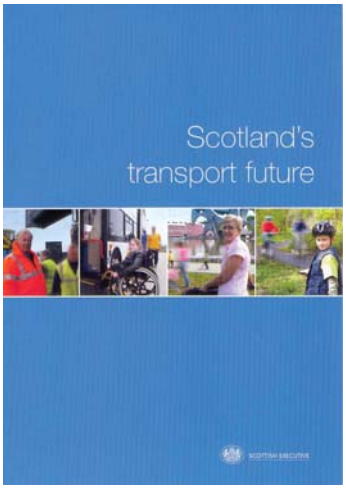
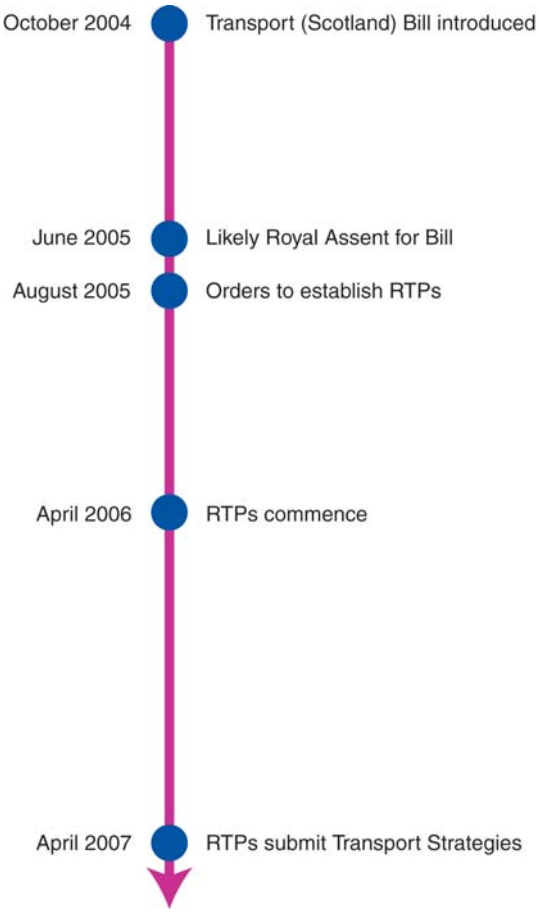


FIGURE 1
Timeline for new Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs)



MTS Strategy - Summary

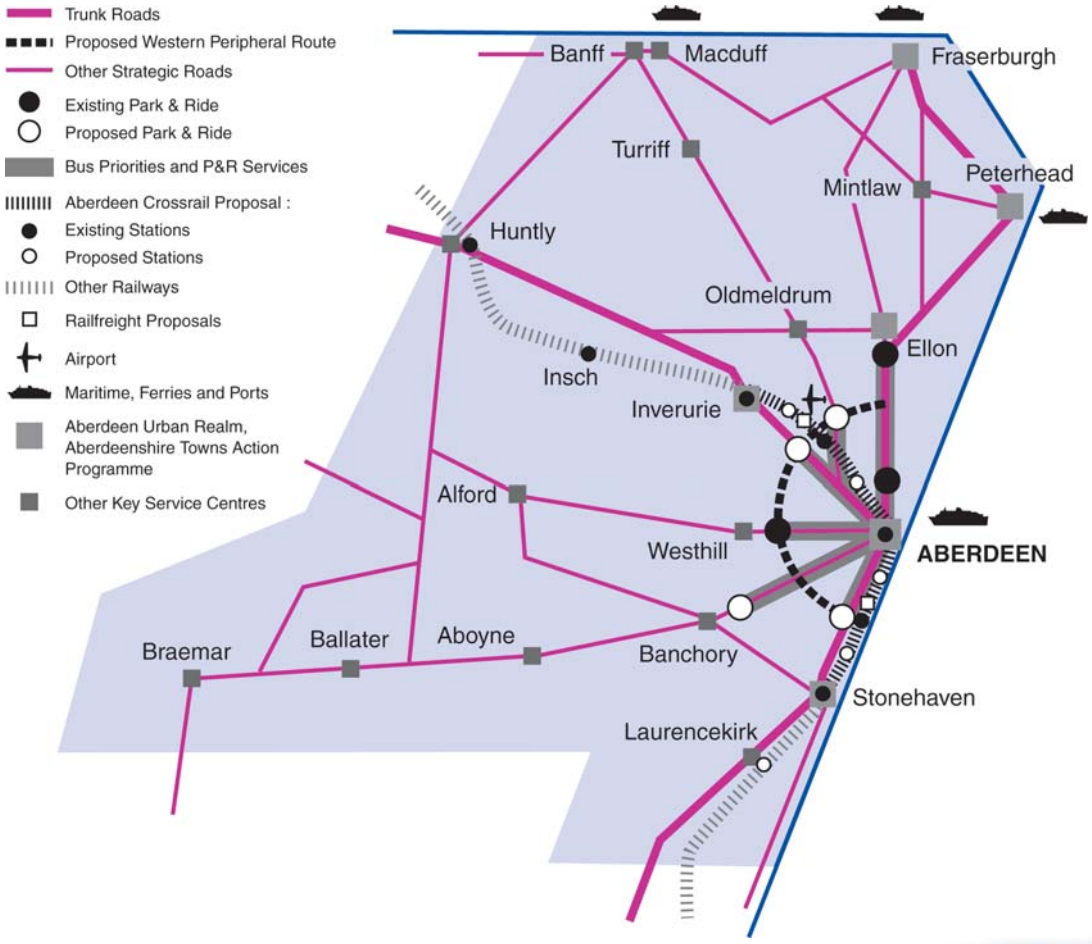
NESTRANS' transport strategy for the north east – the Modern Transport System, or MTS – is an integrated package of transport measures to 2011 to improve the economy, accessibility and environment of the north east. It was developed and appraised through the Scottish Executive's Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and draws heavily on the Local Transport Strategies developed by both Councils in 2000. The MTS strategy was endorsed by the Scottish Executive in January 2003 and now forms the basis for the activities of NESTRANS and its constituent Councils.

Implementation of the MTS is being progressed through a range of projects and actions - new infrastructure, supporting private sector developments and influencing travel patterns. While the Western Peripheral Route forms an important part of the strategy, the MTS is equally concerned with improving public transport. By removing traffic from the centre of Aberdeen and linking with a network of park and rides, the WPR will play a key role in facilitating better public transport, improving the urban environment of Aberdeen and contributing to improved accessibility throughout the region. The MTS requires investment in north east transport of some £500 million by 2011.

This report goes on to detail what has been achieved under the 14 strands of the MTS, and what is still to do.

- **Western Peripheral Route**
- **Strategic Roads**
- **Park & Ride**
- **Buses**
- **Aberdeen Crossrail**
- **Strategic Rail**
- **Rail Freight**
- **Freight**
- **Airport/Access to Airport**
- **Ports/Maritime Transport**
- **Transport Interchanges**
- **Cycling, Walking and Safety**
- **Maintenance of Existing Network,**
- **Travel Plans/Travel Awareness**

FIGURE 2
Key Diagram



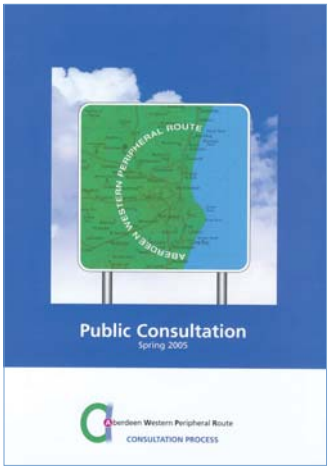
Western Peripheral Route

PROPOSALS

When completed the WPR will form part of the A90 trunk road connecting the current A90 south of Aberdeen with the A96 trunk road west of the City and the current A90 to the north of Aberdeen. Following the recent public consultation Scottish Ministers will take a decision on the proposed route in the summer and subsequently publish the draft road orders. A public local inquiry is likely to follow. The timetable for completion depends on the route chosen. Construction of the current preferred route (the Murtle option) would be complete in 2010, with the other four route options completing in 2011.

COST

The out-turn cost on completion depends on the route chosen. The cost of the Murtle route ranges from £210 to £280 million. The most expensive route option is the Peterculter/Stonehaven corridor at a range of £295-405 million. The Scottish Executive will meet 81% of the cost of the road with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils each contributing 9.5%.



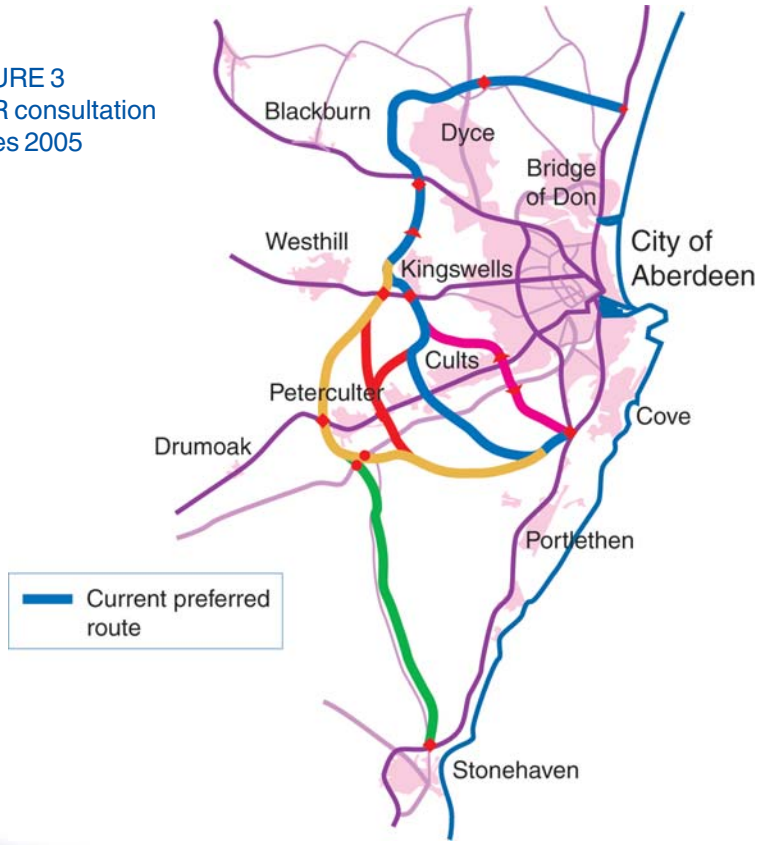
The Western Peripheral Route (WPR) is central to the Modern Transport System (MTS) and has a key role in enabling other elements of the strategy to be delivered.

The WPR will improve travel across Aberdeen by better connecting existing trunk roads to the north, south and west of the city, as well as linking to strategic local roads. By taking through traffic away from the city, it will reduce journey times and relieve congestion both in the city and on rural roads. The benefits will be felt across the north east as the WPR will provide better connections between housing and employment areas and will dramatically improve freight movements to and from towns to the north and west of Aberdeen. The WPR will also link to existing and new Park and Ride sites, which will further reduce the need for car traffic to enter the city centre, helping to facilitate more pedestrianisation and bus priority measures.

In 2003 NESTRANS was instrumental in gaining endorsement of the WPR from the Scottish Executive and their subsequent agreement to promote the road as a trunk road and fund the majority of the costs. The Scottish Executive and the Managing Agent team in Aberdeen are now in the lead, but NESTRANS works closely with them to ensure the timely implementation of the WPR as a fully integrated part of the Modern Transport System.

The proposed corridor for the WPR was established by the Councils following public consultation, in 1996 for the southern section, and in 2003 for the northern section. Consultation on the proposed routing within the corridor took place in March/April 2005, including alternative options for the southern section.

FIGURE 3
WPR consultation routes 2005



Strategic Roads

The strategic road network provides the principal transport links within the north east and connects the region to the rest of Scotland. These roads are important routes, not just for car drivers, but also for bus services and freight. NESTRANS has, and will continue to, champion the transport and economic case for improvements to these strategic roads.

The trunk roads through the north east, the A90 and the A96, are managed and maintained by the Scottish Executive. Ensuring these roads are maintained and improved to meet the needs of the north east is a key element of the MTS.

Other major routes in the NESTRANS area are the responsibility of the 2 local authorities, with the A93, A944 and A947 providing key routes into the City, acting as corridors for vital bus services and connecting towns and villages within the region.

Within Aberdeen the principal through route is the A90 trunk road, which is constrained by heavily congested junctions at the Haudagain roundabout and Bridge of Dee. In Aberdeenshire the single-carriageway stretch of the A90 between Balmedie and Tipperty acts as a bottleneck and the single-carriageway A96 west of Inverurie suffers similar problems in places – particularly at the Inveramsay Bridge.

Over the past year NESTRANS has worked with the Scottish Executive to commission studies to identify possible solutions to the congestion problems at the Haudagain and Bridge of Dee junctions. A study into improvements between Balmedie and Tipperty has recently been completed for the Executive following a request from NESTRANS. NESTRANS, in partnership with HITRANS, is also keen to see improvements on the corridor between Aberdeen and Inverness. In Aberdeen, plans for upgrading key radial routes into the city are being taken forward by the City Council, including a new crossing of the River Don.

PROPOSALS

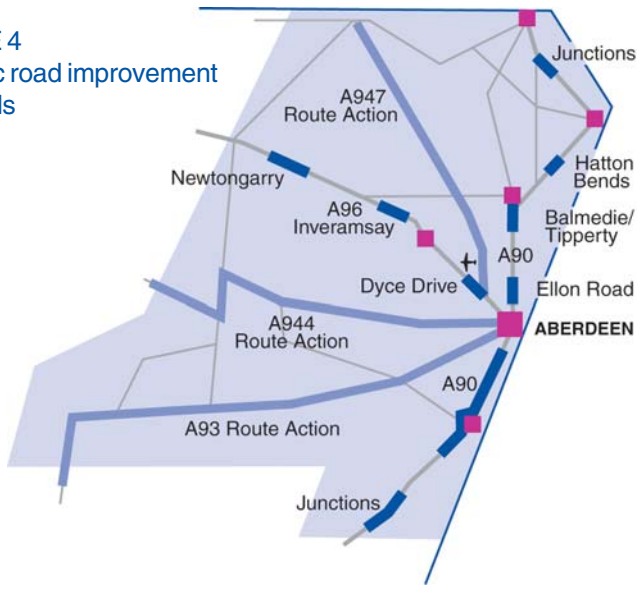
NESTRANS is working with the Executive to develop proposals for improving traffic flow at two major trunk road junctions in Aberdeen – at the Bridge of Dee and Haudagain roundabout. Studies to identify improvement options will report in mid 2005. Options for improvements to the A90 between Balmedie and Tipperty have recently been developed for the Executive and NESTRANS will press for early implementation of an appropriate solution here and at other locations, such as Hatton Bends on the A90, where improvements are planned.

Local authorities are also proposing improvements to their road network, including a new crossing of the Don in Aberdeen.

COST

The cost of these improvements depends on the results of studies under way and the options chosen to be implemented. Previous estimates suggested a cost of £30 million to 2011, of which £3 million would be expected in developer contributions.

FIGURE 4
Strategic road improvement proposals



Park & Ride

PROPOSALS

In addition to the 3 existing bus Park and Ride sites, construction of a further 4 sites is hoped to commence during 2005-06. These will be at strategic locations, with 3 close to proposed junctions with the Western Peripheral Route, on the A96 at Chapelbrae and A947 to the north-west of the city, on the A90 south of Aberdeen, and a further site on the A93 by Banchory. Together these will provide an additional 2,650 parking spaces and will link to improved bus services and passenger facilities. Park and Ride facilities are also being expanded at Inverurie rail station.

COST

The cost of the proposed expansion in bus Park and Ride is £10.4 million over the period to 2011. This is in addition to £3 million of investment since 1999.

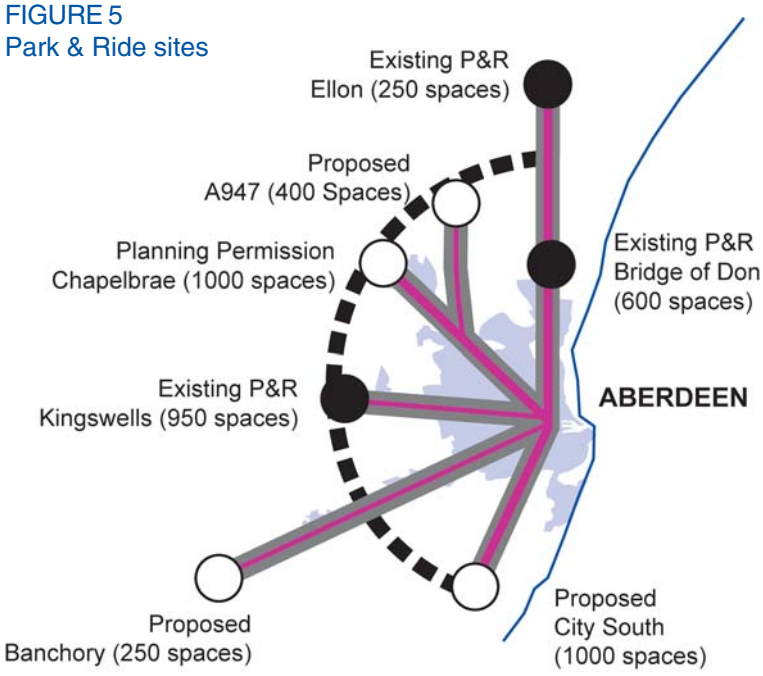
The north east has led the way in the development of bus-based Park and Rides in Scotland. The first Park and Ride site in the region opened in 1994 at Bridge of Don and has since been joined by sites at Kingswells and Ellon.

Park and Ride enables people to combine car and bus journeys, letting the bus take them the final leg of their journey, with no need to worry about city centre car parking. This has obvious benefits in terms of reducing congestion, improving air quality and providing wider transport choices. Park and Ride is most effective when combined with bus priority measures, high-quality buses and secure car parking. Park and Ride is currently removing around 600 daily car journeys from the city's roads. Rail Park and Ride facilities at Stonehaven and Inverurie railway stations are also well-used.

NESTRANS' plans for expanding the network of Park and Ride sites are closely integrated with the proposals for the Western Peripheral Route and Aberdeen Crossrail. New sites are proposed for strategic points along the route, with their design closely linked to the plans for junctions off the WPR. This will provide easy access from the WPR to Park and Ride sites, making it an attractive alternative to driving into the city centre, and is an example of how the WPR will facilitate other elements of the MTS.

During 2004 NESTRANS was successful in securing funding from the Scottish Executive for a new inter-urban Park and Ride on the edge of Banchory and the development of improved parking and bus interchange facilities at Inverurie railway station.

FIGURE 5
Park & Ride sites



Buses

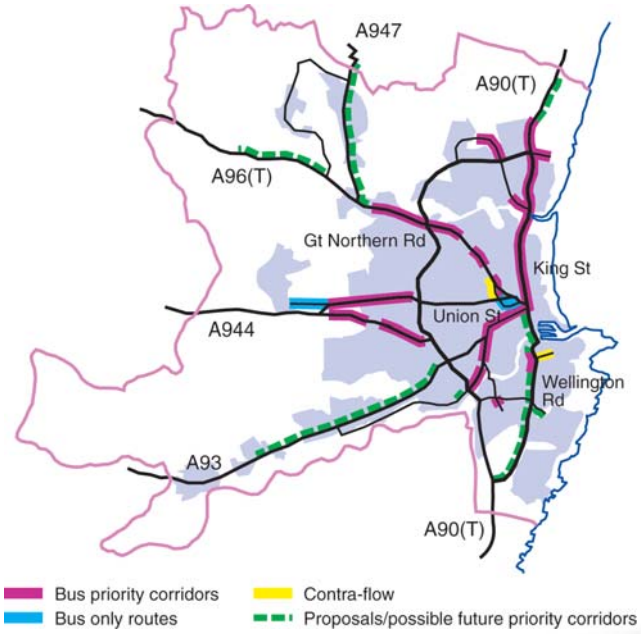
Buses are the most commonly used form of public transport and provide a vital service for people living in both urban and rural areas. By reducing congestion, linking people with jobs and services and providing important inter-urban connections, buses play a significant role in supporting the north east economy.

NESTRANS, through its constituent local authorities, has worked closely with the bus operators to improve bus infrastructure and services. The Quality Partnership between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, First Aberdeen and Stagecoach Bluebird entered into in 1998 will be re-launched during 2005.

Bus priority measures have been steadily introduced on major routes into Aberdeen – improving journey times by bus and linking with Park and Ride sites. With grant from the Scottish Executive, NESTRANS has funded new bus shelters throughout Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire – proving enhanced waiting facilities. At the Foresterhill hospital complex, more buses from the city and wider region are now routed through the site and will call at a dedicated busport – providing a quality waiting environment and easy access to the hospitals. Low-floor buses and raised kerbs – which improve accessibility for older and disabled people and parents – have been steadily introduced. In Aberdeen, real time information continues to be rolled out at bus stops and public buildings. In Aberdeenshire, funding from the Scottish Executive through NESTRANS is enabling the Council and bus operators to jointly fund 9 new low-floor buses and to increase service frequency.

An award from the Executive's Bus Route Development Scheme will increase frequency between Stonehaven and Aberdeen, reinstate a direct Montrose-Aberdeen service and provide new buses. The Executive is also providing pilot funding for a new demand responsive service in Aberdeen City. In Aberdeenshire, 5 new 'A2B Dial-a-bus' services have been introduced, building on existing rural and community transport.

FIGURE 6
Bus priorities in Aberdeen



PROPOSALS

Proposals for improving bus travel in the north east encompass bus priority measures, better buses and infrastructure and information improvements.

Investment in bus lanes will continue on major routes into the City, in conjunction with new Park and Ride facilities, enforced where appropriate using cameras. Measures to provide buses with priority at traffic lights will also be extended to key locations in the region. Passengers will see the benefits of new low-floor buses, which are being introduced on more routes and improved waiting and interchange facilities, often coupled with real-time information.

COST

Improvements to bus travel in the north east between 2004 and 2011 are estimated to cost £27 million.

Aberdeen Crossrail

PROPOSALS

NESTRANS propose an incremental approach to delivering Crossrail.

In the short term, the number of trains serving Inverurie would be increased by extending existing services from the south that currently terminate at Dyce. In the medium term, a half-hourly service between Inverurie – Aberdeen – Stonehaven would be achieved through improved frequency on the Inverness-Aberdeen services and their extension to Stonehaven with further extensions of trains from the south to Inverurie. A new station would open at Kintore. Major rail infrastructure improvements between Aberdeen and Inverness would also be required. The longer-term ambition is for a dedicated quarter-hourly local service between Inverurie – Aberdeen – Stonehaven, serving new stations north and south of the city centre. This would require additional rolling stock and infrastructure improvements.

COST

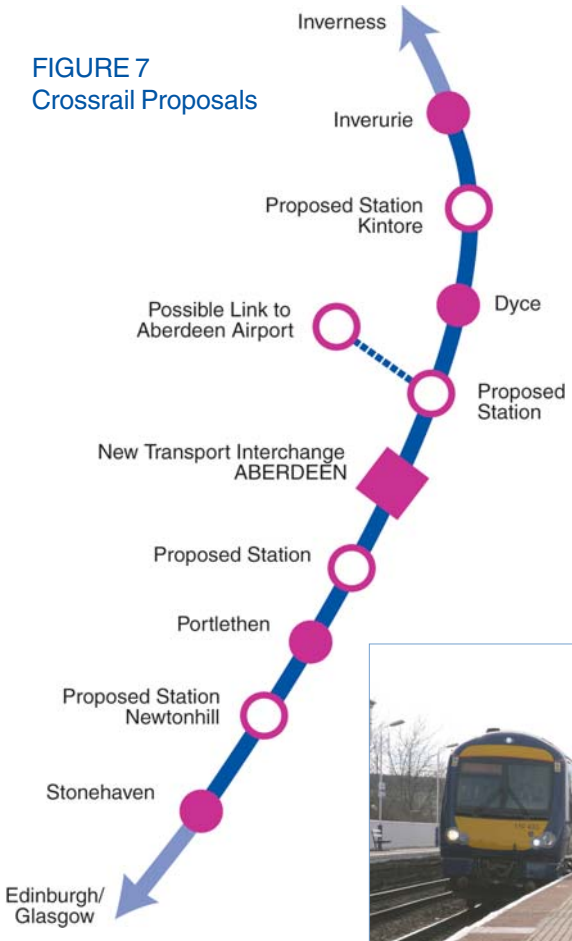
The short term proposal could be achieved by timetabling changes but might carry annual revenue costs of c£0.5 million. The capital cost of the medium term proposal is estimated at £45 million and the longer-term proposals an additional £90 million, although this is unlikely to be achievable until post-2011.

Aberdeen Crossrail is a major element of the MTS and has been the focus of much activity during the past year. Crossrail is intended to provide a regular rail service between Inverurie, Aberdeen and Stonehaven – enabling more frequent services, a direct cross-city link and, over time, the opening of new stations to serve existing and growing residential and business locations.

New stations and more frequent services will provide greater opportunities for rail commuting, including park and ride and will significantly improve public transport in the north east. Rail travel into Aberdeen is already popular, particularly with commuters, and Crossrail will enable further passenger growth.

Work on a proposal for Crossrail has been under way for some time. However much of this work was linked to proposed rail industry improvements to the line between Inverness and Aberdeen (the IOS scheme), which would facilitate Crossrail. The uncertainty over whether the rail industry would implement these improvements led NESTRANS to look at alternative Crossrail schemes. A revised proposal for delivering Crossrail over the short, medium and longer-term has now been developed and discussions will take place during 2005 with the Executive and rail industry to gain their support to the development and implementation of these proposals.

FIGURE 7
Crossrail Proposals



Strategic Rail

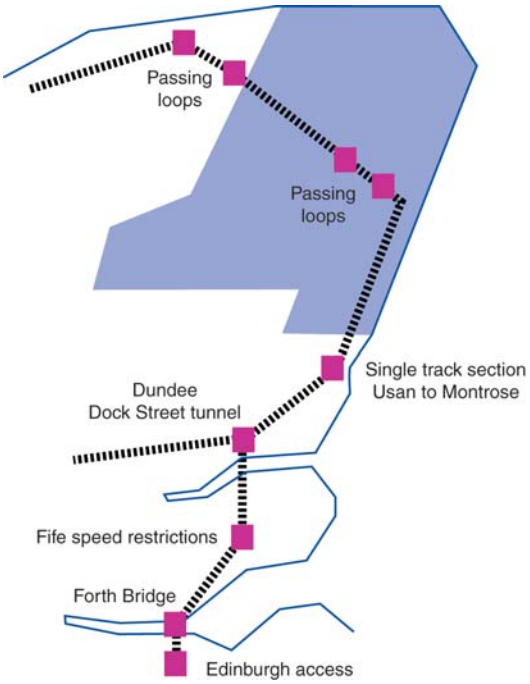
Rail links are crucial to the accessibility of the north east for passengers and freight. First ScotRail services connect Aberdeen with Edinburgh and Glasgow hourly, and Inverness around every 2 hours. A nightly Caledonian Sleeper service, and three direct GNER trains a day link Aberdeen and London. Virgin operate a daily service from Aberdeen to Birmingham.

NESTRANS has worked with HITRANS, the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) and the Scottish Executive over the past year to complete the business case for the SRA's previous Aberdeen-Inverness IOS scheme which would increase the regularity and speed of the Inverness and Aberdeen service. NESTRANS is also keen to see reduced journey times to Edinburgh, Glasgow and London through the upgrading of track at key locations on the East Coast mainline and the proposed upgrading of Edinburgh Waverley station

In addition to Aberdeen, there are six other rail stations in the NESTRANS area, some of which serve a predominantly local function, but others notably Stonehaven and Dyce, carry significant numbers of longer-distance travellers. The re-opening of Laurencekirk station has long been a local aspiration and this is now being progressed with the support of First ScotRail and the Executive.

A new Scottish passenger rail franchise, operated by First ScotRail, commenced in October 2004 and GNER's renewed East Coast franchise began on 1 May 2005. NESTRANS will work with the train operators to enhance rail services in and to the north east. NESTRANS also welcomes the passing of the Railways Act 2005, which enables greater devolution of rail powers to Scotland.

FIGURE 8
Strategic rail constraints



PROPOSALS

NESTRANS will continue to support improvements to the main lines serving the north east. Infrastructure improvements are required on the East Coast main line to improve journey times south and track capacity in Fife and Edinburgh Waverley station and on the line to Inverness. Despite the marginal outcome of the Aberdeen-Inverness business case NESTRANS will continue to explore with the SRA and Scottish Executive how these improvements could be delivered.

NESTRANS will also press for the early reopening of Laurencekirk Station. Initial studies have shown that a new station would provide value for money and, with funding from the Executive, detailed technical work is now under way, which will take the station a step closer to its anticipated reopening in 2007.

COST

The cost of reopening Laurencekirk station is estimated to be £3 million. The estimated cost of the range of other improvements to the strategic rail network is £60 million over the period to 2011. This figure is not included in the MTS costs as it is envisaged that this will be met in full by other parties as it falls outwith the NESTRANS area.

Rail Freight

PROPOSALS

The SRA endorsed the Freight Gauge Enhancement scheme in early 2004 and in April 2004 the Scottish Executive granted £500,000 for the final costing analyses required by Network Rail. This work is now complete and, once funding is secured, engineering work can commence, with a target completion date of April 2006.

Modern rail-to-road freight transfer facilities are required to provide for the anticipated growth in rail freight and to replace Aberdeen's Guild Street terminal, which is shortly to close. New facilities are planned at Raiths Farm and new terminals at Mains of Cairnrobin and south of Inverurie have also been proposed. Craiginches and Waterloo Quay in Aberdeen will take up some of the capacity currently provided by Guild Street.

COST

The cost of enhancements to the freight gauge is estimated at £3-4 million with the new freight transfer facilities estimated to be £12 million, which will be private investment.

The level of rail freight in the north east has increased over the past year, most notably with ASDA now transporting most supplies for their Aberdeen superstores by rail. Freight Facilities Grant funding from the Executive has also helped haulage companies invest in new equipment to make use of rail. Transfer from road to rail can help to bring about a reduction in long distance lorry miles and ease road congestion. However rail still accounts for a small proportion of freight transport and efficient integration with road transport is crucial to its success.

In respect of rail freight NESTRANS operates through and supports financially the North East Scotland Rail Freight Development Group (NESRFDG), which was established in 1999 to bring together local authorities, freight operators and hauliers to promote and develop the rail freight sector. The key project for the NESRFDG is the removal of loading gauge restrictions on the line between Elgin, Aberdeen and the Mossend terminal in Lanarkshire, which requires engineering interventions to 18 structures to enable the movement of standard 9' 6" high containers. Modern containers will then be able to travel direct from the north east to the south of England and on to continental Europe. This could lead to an additional 1.3 million tonnes of rail freight per year being transported to and from the north east.

To cater for increased rail freight, new terminals which enable fast and efficient transfer between road and rail are required and a number of new locations have been proposed.

FIGURE 9
Rail Freight Terminals

Freight

Getting goods to market efficiently and on time is crucial to the success of businesses in the north east. The transport system is therefore of vital importance to the movement of freight into and out of the region. Air, sea, road and rail are all important modes of freight transport, with most journeys involving a combination of two or more modes. Enabling efficient interchange is therefore an important element of the transport system.

The inter-relationship between different modes of freight transport led to the establishment of a north east Freight Quality Partnership (FQP), made up of the principal operators and infrastructure providers in the freight industry, along with local authorities and other stakeholders. The FQP provides a forum for discussion of freight issues.

NESTRANS has also supported the development of freight-specific groups, such as the North East Scotland Rail Freight Development Group (NESRFDG). The potential for greater integration and joint-working between different parts of the freight transport sector is being promoted by NESFR8, a short-life NESTRANS working group made up of key industry representatives.

While NESTRANS supports measures to encourage more freight to go by rail, air or sea, road transport will remain the dominant mode. Infrastructure improvements to both trunk and local roads are therefore important and improved access for freight traffic is a key objective of the Western Peripheral Route, which will also reduce heavy goods traffic on city and country roads. NESTRANS will ensure that the needs of the freight industry are taken into account in studies of the trunk and local road network.

PROPOSALS

NESTRANS, in partnership with industry, will look at ways in which the freight transport system in the north east could further develop. This will include promoting the benefits of rail freight, encouraging closer working in the maritime sector, commissioning a study with BAA on realising opportunities for air freight at Aberdeen Airport and assisting in the preparation of a north east freight strategy.

COST

NESTRANS will fund the preparation of a north east freight development strategy, and will encourage and support private sector investment in inter-modal facilities, and council prioritisation for road freight on local roads in appropriate locations.

Airport/Access to Airport

PROPOSALS

NESTRANS will continue to work through the Airport Business Development Forum to support the role of the airport in the region, particularly to realise the opportunities presented by the removal of opening hour restrictions to expand passenger and freight operations through the airport.

The airport and the Dyce area generate business and jobs, but also traffic. NESTRANS is working with BAA Aberdeen to improve surface access to the airport, particularly by public transport. A study on transport in the wider Dyce area is nearing completion and NESTRANS will work with the new Dyce Transport Management Organisation (TMO) to consider its conclusions.

COST

The cost of delivering improvements to surface access at the airport has been estimated as being £6 million and another £20 million of investment by BAA Aberdeen is anticipated in the airport itself.

Aberdeen Airport is of vital importance to the north east economy, providing links to European and UK destinations and annually contributing £127 million to the regional economy. It supports the oil industry and is the world's busiest commercial heliport. Recent passenger growth rates have exceeded both Edinburgh and Glasgow airports with passenger numbers in 2004-05 increasing by 6.2% in to almost 2.7 million.

Over the past year, 11 new routes have commenced, including to Groningen, Bristol, Copenhagen, Oslo and Southampton, all assisted by the Scottish Executive's Route Development Fund. The existing connections to the hub airports of Heathrow, Gatwick, Paris and Amsterdam provide essential links for business and tourism.

NESTRANS is a key member of the Aberdeen Airport Business Development Forum, set up in 2003 to bring together stakeholders and support the airport's development. In partnership with BAA, NESTRANS commissioned a study on realising aviation opportunities at Aberdeen, which reported in February 2005 and helped assist new route development. Another study is to be commissioned on realising freight opportunities.

Development of new air routes and services will also be assisted by Aberdeen City Council's decision in March 2005 to remove restrictions on operating hours at the airport. This will mean that flights will no longer have to divert to other airports if delayed beyond 11.30pm, the operational flexibility making the airport more attractive to airlines. The condition of the airport terminal has also improved over the past year with investment in new check in, search and washroom facilities.

Ports/Maritime Transport

The north east's geography means that the transport of goods by sea is a major component in the transport system, with Peterhead and Aberdeen being the principal ports. The north east has a strategically important position in the northern Europe with strong historic links to Scandinavia and the Baltic.

North east ports contribute significantly to the prosperity of the area. In 2004 Aberdeen handled 4.7 million tonnes, an increase of 22% on 2003. Vessel arrivals were over 8,000 and turnover was £18.3 million. Aberdeen Harbour Board estimates that the value of services provided are worth about £100 million to the local economy. There are passenger ferries to the Northern isles and freight services to Norway and Holland, which have seen massive investment in recent years, notably in the two new vessels to serve Orkney and Shetland. Peterhead handles 1.3 million tonnes each year, most of which is again related to oil. It is also the premier white fish landing harbour in Europe, with Fraserburgh and Macduff also having significant fish landings. Peterhead bay is also increasingly a stopping point for international cruise ships, unlike Aberdeen being able to accommodate large cruise vessels.

The main transport-related benefits of the harbours are economic. They also help to reduce the perceived peripherality of the area and to integrate it into wider international connections. Enlargement of the European Union also creates an opportunity for Aberdeen to benefit from increased trade as a traditional point of access to the Baltic.

The North East is ideally placed, through its work with the North Sea Commission to benefit from European Commission projects building upon the £3 million, 3 year Northern Maritime Corridor project which aims to transfer goods from road to sea.

PROPOSALS

Aberdeen Harbour Board has a major development programme starting in 2005 with the construction of a £3 million Marine Operations Centre and the £4.5 million redevelopment at Albert Quay West to create additional deep water facilities. NESTRANS will work with the north east harbour authorities and main harbour users in similar fashion to the way it has with aviation, to realise new maritime related opportunities and address issues of surface access to the harbours. The Councils are also presently investigating the possibility of a successor to the Northern Maritime Corridor project linked to the European Commission Motorways of the Seas initiative.

COST

The NESTRANS partners will continue to promote and support projects to enhance the role of the north east's ports such as through the current European programmes. Investment in the major ports up to 2011 could reach £50 million.

Transport Interchanges

PROPOSALS

Transport interchange improvements are being progressed through Aberdeen City Council's Urban Realm Programme, which includes pedestrianisation of Union Street by 2010, and Aberdeenshire Council's Towns Interchanges Programme. The Union Square development in Aberdeen is led by the private sector, together with rail and bus operators.

NESTRANS will also promote and support new initiatives to enhance transport interchange through integrated ticketing and better travel information.

COST

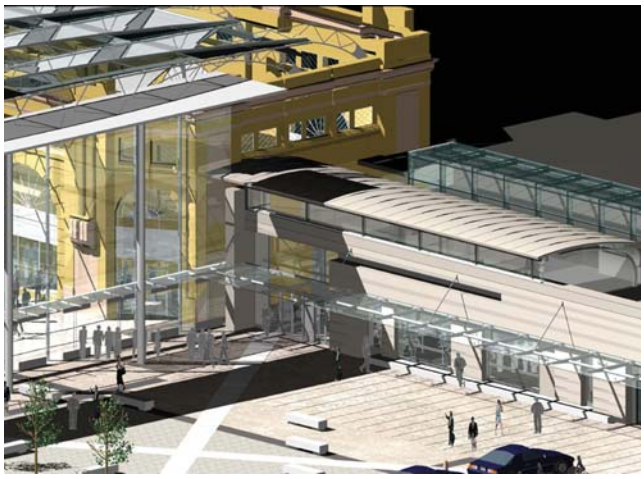
The cost of Aberdeen's urban realm proposals, including associated traffic management and road infrastructure, is estimated at £18 million between 2004 and 2011. The development of interchanges in the Aberdeenshire towns is costing £3.9 million, which is being funded by the Scottish Executive, Aberdeenshire Council and the private sector.

Interchange between different modes of transport and improvements to the urban environment are important elements in improving the attractiveness of public transport, walking and cycling. The quality of the urban environment also enhances the economic competitiveness of towns and cities.

Across the NESTRANS area there has been investment in improving transport interchanges. With funding awarded in June 2004 by the Scottish Executive, improved transport interchanges at Inverurie, Peterhead and Banchory, plus other locations across the area, are being developed by Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership. In Aberdeen, the City Council and Aberdeen City Centre Partnership are taking forward a major urban realm programme, which includes the partial pedestrianisation of Union Street and improved links with bus and rail stations. The private sector-led Union Square development on Guild Street, will remodel the bus station and station forecourt, providing better facilities and easier interchange between bus and rail.

These improvements are important in making Aberdeen city centre and the Aberdeenshire towns, more accessible and attractive, so supporting the local economy.

Other dimensions of transport interchange are integrated ticketing, such as Aberdeenshire Connect and the PlusBus scheme, helping people transfer between different operators and modes of transport and travel information systems such as Traveline, providing information on journeys and interchange between different forms of public transport.



Cycling, Walking and Safety

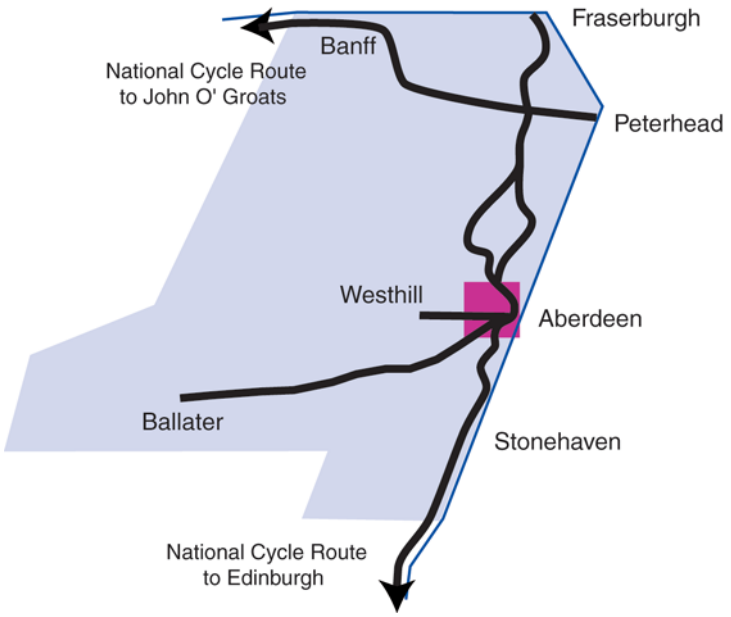
Most journeys begin or end with a walk – and for many short journeys it is a quick and simple way of getting around. Cycling is an efficient and healthy option, but depends on the provision of good, safe routes and facilities for cyclists. Scottish Household Survey data for travel to work trips in the north east revealed that 17% of people walk and 2% cycle. The percentages are higher in urban areas with up to 40% of people walking to work within Aberdeen City Centre.

The north east is served by the National Cycle Network Route 1, which links Stonehaven, Aberdeen, Turriff and Banff, and the North Sea Cycle Circuit. Routes such as the Formartine and Buchan Way and the Deeside Way, make use of former railway lines.

NESTRANS has supported improved facilities for cyclists, including dedicated cycle lanes, advanced stop lines at traffic lights and the provision of cycle racks at railway stations. These improve the safety and convenience of cycling. The recently completed bridges in Aberdeen fill in missing links in the Deeside Way, removing the need for cyclists and walkers to cross busy roads. Pedestrian improvements have included the installation of more pedestrian crossings and footpaths. These initiatives are complemented by the transport interchange and urban environment proposals.

With funding from the Scottish Executive, 20 mph school safety zones have been rolled out across the north east – reducing traffic speeds around schools. Home zones have also been introduced in residential areas to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. The Safer Routes to School programme has implemented measures including traffic calming and walking bus initiatives, to promote safe and sustainable travel to school.

FIGURE 10
Strategic Cycle Network



PROPOSALS

Improved facilities for cyclists will continue to be supported by NESTRANS and local authorities will ask developers, where appropriate, to provide cycle stands and lockers. A network of signed routes has been devised and will be implemented over time.

Scottish Executive funding allocations for Councils to implement 20 mph speed limits outside schools and for School Travel Plan development will support earlier work through the Safer Routes to Schools initiative.

COST

Local authorities currently spend around £2.5 million on cycling, walking and safety each year. The Modern Transport System proposes that this figure should double, indicating an estimated £20 million of additional spending by 2011.

Maintenance of Existing Network

PROPOSALS

Local authorities will continue to maintain the local road network, within budgetary constraints, in order to provide a safe and efficient network. Local authorities regularly meet with representatives of Bear Scotland and the Executive to discuss trunk road issues and NESTRANS will make the case for increased maintenance and improvements to the trunk road network where required. NESTRANS will also push for additional funding to local authorities to be spent on road maintenance.

COST

Local authorities in the north east currently spend around £5 million on planned maintenance per year. To address the current backlog of infrastructure repairs in the north east would require around £25 million per year over the next 10 years.

The transport infrastructure in the north east is a major asset, but one that must be properly maintained if it is to operate efficiently. There are 6,000 kilometres of roads in the north east, with the busiest carrying 50,000 vehicles a day. The two local authorities are responsible for the maintenance of most of the roads in the area. The Scottish Executive has responsibility for the area's trunk roads, the A90 and A96, which are managed and maintained under contract by Bear Scotland. Network Rail is responsible for maintenance of all rail infrastructure, including bridges and signalling, while First ScotRail manage the railway stations in the north east.

As local road maintenance budgets have gradually declined over time, this has led to progressive deterioration in the condition of carriageways, footways, bridges, street lighting etc. This has meant that necessary repairs have become increasingly expensive when they are completed. The Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS) have recently estimated the maintenance backlog to be £1.56 billion nationally, requiring around £390 million per annum over 10 years to fix, a doubling of the current level of funding. The Minister for Transport has announced additional funding of £60 million for local authorities from next year to be targeted at road infrastructure maintenance. In this north east this would amount to £6.1 million.

Scottish local authorities are increasingly gathering more detailed information on the condition of their networks and the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey is providing comparable data for all Councils in the country. Both local authorities develop annual programmes of works based on condition information to identify and prioritise work.

The Transport (Scotland) Bill proposes better coordination and tighter regulation of utility company roadworks through the establishment of a Scottish Roadworks Commissioner.

Travel Awareness

Improving transport choice and encouraging better awareness of transport costs and alternatives are important elements of the MTS. By enabling individuals and organisations to consider more sustainable transport options, congestion can be reduced.

This has been a major priority for NESTRANS over the past year, which has seen the appointment of a Travel Awareness Project Leader and the launch of NESTRANS' Travel Awareness Programme by the Minister for Transport in October 2004.

The aims of this programme include promoting better travel awareness, encouraging more sustainable transport and reducing the number of single person car journeys. To this end, NESTRANS has developed a Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme, which provides match funding to organisations investing in measures to promote more sustainable travel by their employees or customers. To help more people share car journeys, NESTRANS has also launched a car sharing website for the north east – www.nestranscarshare.com. This is based on a well-established model, providing a database of possible car share partners. It is open to anyone to use and acts as an umbrella site for other north east schemes.

In Dyce a number of major employers have come together, with the support of NESTRANS, to form a Transport Management Organisation (TMO). The Dyce TMO is the first of its kind in Europe and aims to identify and implement measures that will improve travel conditions for employees and the local community. The TMO has a full-time manager and its core costs are funded by the member companies. The TMO has developed a travel plan for the area and is now focusing on implementing its proposals.

NESTRANS' work is complemented by the national Stepchange initiative, which has involved pilots in Inverurie, Cults and Cove. Stepchange aims to raise awareness of travel costs and alternatives by working with communities and schools at a local level.

PROPOSALS

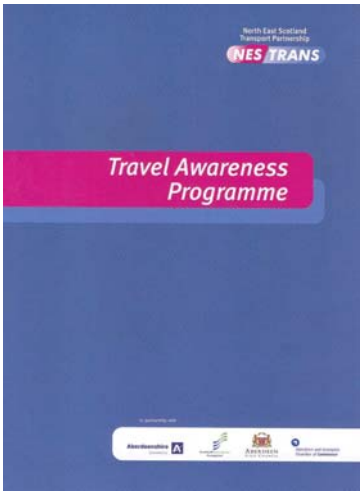
NESTRANS will continue to take forward its travel awareness programme through the promotion of sustainable travel grants, encouraging travel plans, the car sharing website and general publicity on travel awareness issues.

As the Dyce TMO develops further, NESTRANS will also look at other opportunities for developing the Transport Management Organisation concept in the north east.

COST

Specific expenditure on travel plan/travel awareness initiatives amounting to £2.67 million is proposed between 2004 and 2011, private sector contributions are estimated at £120,000. Investment in public transport, cycling and walking will also support and encourage more sustainable travel.

dycetmo
TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION

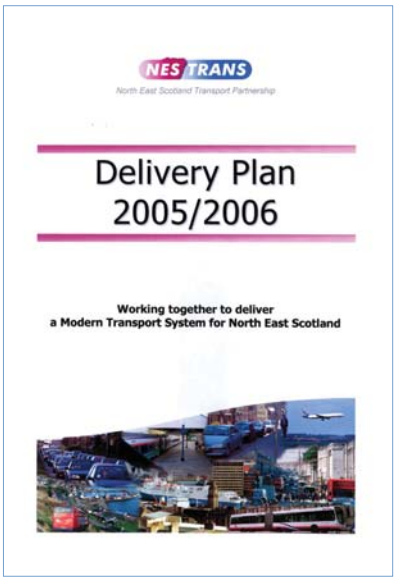


Programme for Next Year

The coming year will be one of transition for NESTRANS. The proposals in the Transport (Scotland) Bill, currently progressing through the Scottish Parliament, pave the way for the establishment of statutory Regional Transport Partnerships across Scotland. From April 2006, the work of NESTRANS will be taken forward by a new partnership, established under this legislation, whose principal task will be the development of a longer-term regional transport strategy. This will build on the existing Modern Transport System, which has a time horizon of 2011.

During 2005-06, NESTRANS will need both to gear itself up for the transition to a statutory Regional Transport Partnership and maintain the momentum on the delivery of existing projects in the MTS strategy. NESTRANS will also be expected to undertake preparatory work on the development of a new Regional Transport Strategy.

The proposed programme of NESTRANS activity for the coming year is set out in *NESTRANS Delivery Plan 2005/2006* approved by the NESTRANS Board in February. The Delivery Plan sets out ten key objectives to guide work over the coming year:



1. Maintain national awareness and prioritisation of transport needs in the north east and the MTS strategy as an appropriate response to these.

2. Expand local involvement and support to the MTS and NESTRANS through the North East Transport Consultative Forum, and individual transport interest groups.

3. Contribute to the Scottish Executive's planning for the introduction of statutory Regional Transport Partnerships, and seek to ensure the smooth transition from NESTRANS to its successor statutory Regional Transport Partnership.

4. Secure commitments to the NESTRANS rail projects, Aberdeen-Inverness enhancements, Aberdeen Crossrail, Rail Freight Gauge Enhancement, and Re-opening of Laurencekirk Station.

5. Support enhancements to aviation and maritime activities, through working with relevant agencies and promoting/supporting facilitating projects.

6. Promote travel awareness, by promoting and supporting travel awareness programmes, the preparation of green travel plans and related initiatives.

7. Demonstrate progress and integration across the MTS, ensuring progress is made across all strands of the MTS and integration between these is demonstrated.

8. Ensure the key proposals in the MTS are appropriately reflected in the new National Transport Strategy, and reviews of Councils' Local Transport Strategies and prepare the ground for a longer term transport vision and Regional Transport Strategy to be taken forward by the new statutory Regional Transport Partnership.

9. Ensure integration with other plans and strategies, particularly the north east's community plans, structure plan and local plan.

10. Contribute to and reflect best practice, contributing the views and experience of the north east, and drawing upon relevant transport experience and initiatives from other areas of the UK, Europe and elsewhere.

The key tasks in the Delivery Plan are set out in an Activity Plan covering two six-month periods between April-September and October-March. This phasing enables a half-yearly review to be undertaken and if necessary the Activity Plan to be rescheduled to take account of new circumstances, requirements or opportunities.

The main tasks listed in the Activity Plan are:

April - September 2005

Main Theme :	Rail Enhancement Delivery and Funding Proposals
Sub Themes :	Contributing to planning for statutory Regional Transport Partnerships
	Proposals to tackle main trunk road bottlenecks
	Investment programme in public transport enhancements

October 2005 - March 2006

Main Theme :	Enabling transition to statutory Regional Transport Partnership
Sub Themes :	Ground work for statutory Regional Transport Strategy
	Inter modal freight strategy/projects
	Maritime development strategy/projects

The NESTRANS budget for the year will be £750,000, as for the previous 2 years. This is largely allocated to project development work on each of the strands of the MTS (excluding the WPR) and also covers the running costs of the partnership. Contributions to the budget are shown below:

Aberdeen City Council:	£162,500
Aberdeenshire Council:	£162,500
Scottish Enterprise Grampian:	£100,000
Scottish Executive (matching local authority contributions):	£325,000
TOTAL	£750,000

We continue to be ambitious for north east transport. From promoting major infrastructure projects, to supporting private sector developments at Aberdeen Harbour and Airport and working with operators to improve public transport throughout the region – we will work in partnership to progress our proposals and explore new opportunities.

A year of activity and transition lies ahead – we look forward to continuing working together to deliver a Modern Transport System for north east Scotland.

Annual Report 2005

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Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce

Scottish Enterprise Grampian