



**Regional Transport Strategy 2021
Consultation Draft
December 2006**

**Nestrans
The Transport Partnership for Aberdeen City and Shire**

**In association with
Steer Davies Gleave**

Contents

	Foreword	2
1	Introduction	3
2	Process of Developing the RTS	5
3	Links to Other Plans and Strategies	8
4	Context	10
5	Issues	18
6	Vision and Objectives	23
7	Option Generation and Appraisal	25
8	The Preferred Package	29
9	Delivery and Outcomes	54
10	Monitoring and Review	55
	Glossary	56
	Responding to the draft RTS	57

Foreword

Nestrans has operated as a voluntary regional transport partnership since 2002 and as a statutory partnership since April 2006.

In that time, it has developed and attained the support of the Scottish Executive and key stakeholders in the north east for its strategy, known as the Modern Transport System, and covering the period to 2011. The stakeholders meet regularly in the North East Transport Consultative Forum.

Many elements of the Modern Transport System strategy are already being delivered or have been progressed significantly, with Scottish Executive commitment secured to key projects such as the Western Peripheral Route and dualling of Balmedie to Tippetty; progress on rail schemes including moving forward feasibility studies on Crossrail as well as commitments to a new station at Laurencekirk; and securing unprecedented levels of investment in cycling and public transport.

Key to these achievements has been a willingness of transport bodies, other agencies and transport users to work together towards common aims for the north east's transport needs. We share a desire for improved transport across the north east and the potential economic, environmental and social benefits which can be gained. The Regional Transport Strategy provides an opportunity to consider the needs of the area for the period to 2021 and set out a vision for transport in the north east over the next generation.

A strategy is not just a wish list of pet projects. The Regional Transport Strategy has been through a rigorous process of identifying issues and setting objectives, then testing a range of measures and activities towards addressing these issues and achieving the objectives. It has realism running through it – we all aspire to have better and better links, preferably from our house to our destination and at very little cost. But in reality we all have a responsibility to make travel choices that recognise the impact of those choices on each other and the environment. This strategy indicates what we feel are the essential policies and projects to enable Aberdeen City and Shire to develop over the next 15 years. We think it is aspirational without being unrealistic. But we need to know whether this is a view shared by the public, businesses and transport users. Everyone in the north east will have an opinion on how best to improve transport in the north east. So this is your opportunity to let Nestrans know.

We are interested in your views and would encourage you to comment on the strategy. We want to be in a position to submit a Regional Transport Strategy to Scottish Ministers in the spring that has the support of stakeholders across the north east, pushing for investment in priorities within the area for the benefit of the area.

Councillor Alison McInnes
Chair
Nestrans

1 Introduction

This Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) sets out the challenges facing Aberdeen City and Shire over the next fifteen years and how we will address them. It includes a comprehensive appraisal of the problems and issues affecting transport in the north east, sets clear objectives and proposes a detailed plan of action for improving transport in the region between now and 2021.

Aberdeen City and Shire is a major driver of the Scottish and UK economy and home to around 450,000 people. The City of Aberdeen is complemented by important regional towns and a varied rural area, stretching from the Cairngorms National Park to the North Sea coast.

The accessibility of Aberdeen City and Shire to the rest of Scotland, the UK and the wider world is essential to achieving sustainable economic growth and a high quality of life. Transport connects people to jobs, healthcare, education and other public services. It also helps connect communities and enables people to access retail and leisure facilities, meet with friends and family, promoting social inclusion across the region. The RTS has a key role to play in shaping the future of Aberdeen City and Shire and contributing to the achievement of wider economic and social goals for the region.

In developing the draft regional transport strategy, Nestrans was not starting from a blank piece of paper. As a voluntary transport partnership, we developed the Modern Transport System (MTS) – a 14 strand integrated strategy for improving transport in the region up to 2011 – which was endorsed by the Scottish Executive in 2003. The MTS has been taken as a starting point for the RTS and is integrated into the package of measures it contains.

As a voluntary transport partnership, Nestrans worked in partnership with others to take forward the priorities in the Modern Transport System. This included securing Scottish Executive commitment to build and fund the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), progressing detailed appraisal work for Aberdeen Crossrail, securing Scottish Executive commitment to dualling the A90 between Balmedie and Tipperty and working with the Scottish Executive and Aberdeen City Council to identify solutions to the problems at the Haudagain roundabout in Aberdeen. We have supported Aberdeen Airport in developing new air routes and have developed partnership working with the freight and maritime sectors.

The RTS has been developed in accordance with the requirements of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 and Scottish Executive guidance. It has also been influenced by the local transport strategies produced by the local authorities, Structure and Local Plans, the regional economic development strategy developed by Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum (ACSEF), Community Plans and other major policy documents. It is in line with the national objectives and policies set out in the 2004 White Paper, *Scotland's Transport Future*, and has been influenced by the emerging National Transport Strategy (NTS), which has recently been published by the Scottish Executive, following a period of consultation.

The RTS covers a 15-year period to 2021, which is likely to be a time of major change. The strategy has a role in both leading and responding to economic and social changes over this period, while seeking to limit the impact that transport has on the local and global environment. There are some major issues to be tackled and difficult choices to be made.

Transport is a subject which is fundamental to our daily lives, our economic future and the quality of our environment. We are keen to hear the views of both organisations and individuals on our strategy and our proposed actions and welcome feedback to this consultation. The draft strategy has already benefited from informal consultation with stakeholders, but we are keen for a wider range of responses to help us ensure that the final strategy is the right one to meet the needs of all in Aberdeen City and Shire.

The RTS begins by setting out the context, issues and challenges which have helped determine our objectives. It then goes on to detail the process of generating and appraising options for achieving these objectives and sets out the preferred strategy resulting from this appraisal and prioritisation. This is supported by a detailed implementation plan, which will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.

Nestrans

Nestrans is the Regional Transport Partnership for the north east of Scotland. Our purpose is to develop and deliver a long-term regional transport strategy and take forward strategic transport improvements that support and improve the economy, environment and quality of life across Aberdeen City and Shire.

Constituted as the North East of Scotland Transport Partnership under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005, Nestrans began work on 1 April 2006. It is one of seven statutory Transport Partnerships set up across Scotland.

Nestrans' area covers both the City of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Its Board is made up of four Councillors from each of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, as well as four non-councillor members appointed by the Minister for Transport. Its Chair is Councillor Alison McInnes.

The new Partnership builds on five years of Nestrans operating as a voluntary partnership between Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, Scottish Enterprise Grampian and Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce.

2 Process of Developing the RTS

The process of developing the draft RTS has been based on principles outlined in the Scottish Executive Guidance for Regional Transport Strategies issued in March 2006¹ as well as Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). In line with these guidelines Nestrans has adopted an inclusive approach to development of the strategy with consultation forming a key element throughout. The strategy has been developed in an objective led fashion as described in STAG, following the guidance on Participation and Consultation set out in Chapter 13 of STAG. Nestrans has adopted a schedule of consultation which fits clearly with the stages of the planning exercise with explicit links between the outcomes of consultation and decisions.

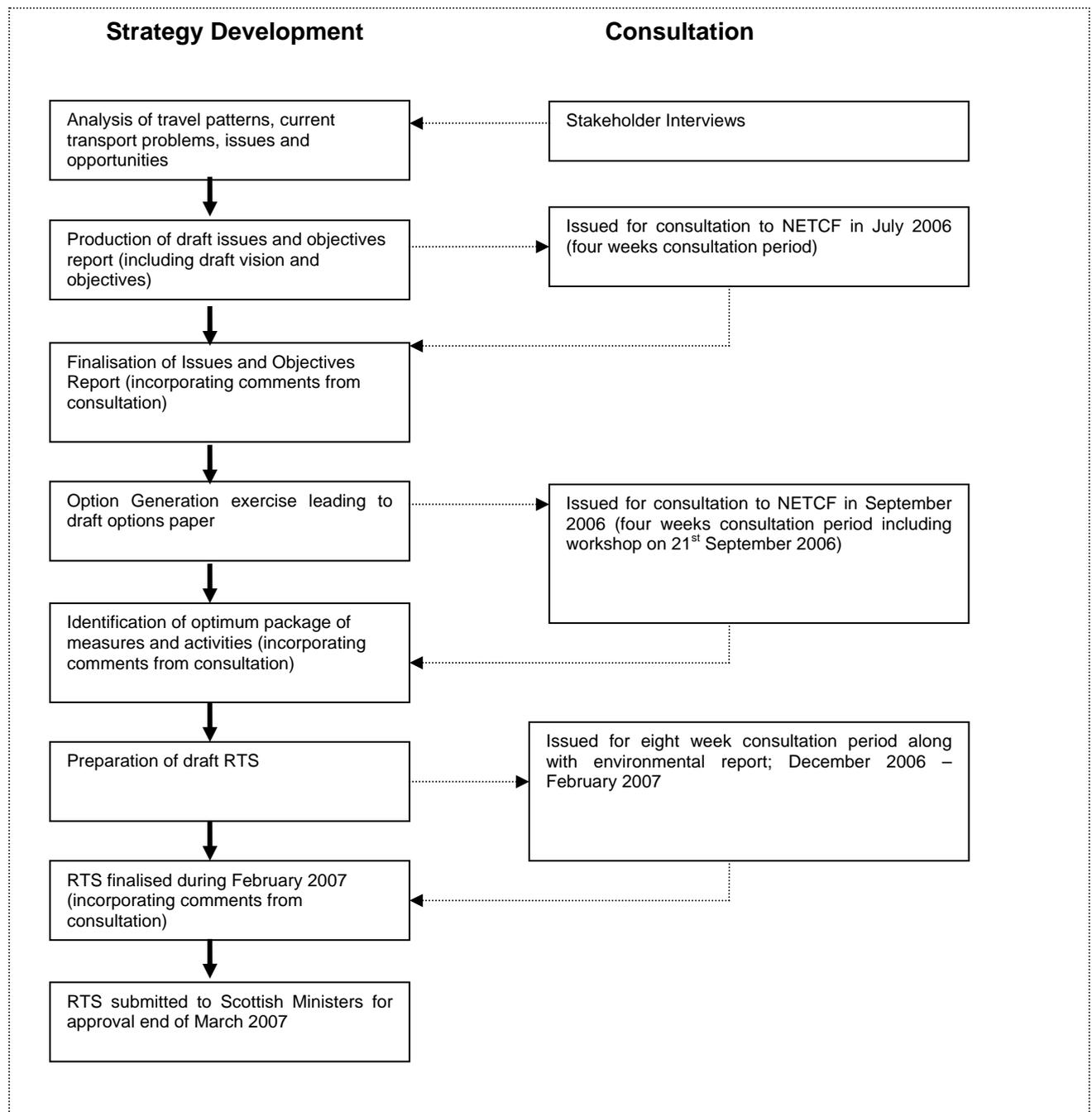
The draft RTS development has been an inclusive, co-ordinated process within the group of organisations responsible for its development. This has been reflected by a process of engagement with the appropriate key stakeholders at each stage of strategy development. Consultation with a range of stakeholders had a key input to the development of the Issues and Objectives Report and the Option Generation Report. Each of these papers was circulated for consultation prior to being finalised to ensure stakeholders' views and comments were taken into account.

Throughout the process of developing the draft RTS and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), there has been dialogue with the North East Transport Consultative Forum (NETCF) and this has formed a key aspect of the consultation methodology. This forum is made up of stakeholders drawn from the public, private and voluntary sectors in the north east, and they have had a key input to the draft RTS development. This involvement will be complemented by this consultation exercise which aims to gather the views of the wider community. The methods utilised were in compliance with those suggested in STAG and the RTS Guidance which emphasises the importance of using a wide range of methods to enable the highest possible inclusion rate for stakeholders across the community. Methods used ranged from formal consultation through distribution of documents to meetings and workshops.

¹ Scotland's Transport Future: Guidance on Regional Transport Strategies, The Scottish Executive, March 2006.

Figure 2.1 outlines the process of developing the RTS, highlighting how key papers and the strategy itself have been fed in to by the results of the consultation programme.

Figure 2.1 Process for Development of the RTS



Analysis of current transport patterns, problems, issues and opportunities involved carrying out a wide range of in-depth face-to-face interviews with key stakeholders in both private and public sectors in the north east. These were conducted throughout April and May 2006, the output from this was development of a draft vision and supporting objectives for the draft RTS. The draft vision and objectives fed into production of an issues and objectives report which was distributed in July 2006 for consultation with stakeholders over a one month period.

The option generation exercise identified a broad range of initial measures and activities that had the potential to satisfy the strategy's objectives. These were placed into one or more alternative packages so that their relative merits in satisfying the strategy's objectives could be determined. Following a process of sifting, appraisal and prioritisation, an optimum package of measures and activities has been identified that on balance best meets the strategy's objectives. This has led on to the development of the draft RTS which is currently being consulted upon during this eight week consultation period.

Once all the views and comments have been received, they will be fully reviewed and incorporated where appropriate into the final RTS.

Alongside the processes outlined in Figure 2.1, a SEA was developed in conjunction with the RTS. Environment constitutes one of the five key objective areas on which STAG is based. Consideration of the environmental effects of transport schemes and policies is therefore fundamental in project design and appraisal. A key challenge of the RTS has been to achieve progress across each objective, environmental effects are wide-reaching and environmental considerations should accordingly involve the whole community. The SEA was carried out in accordance with the Scottish Executive Strategic Environmental Assessment Tool Kit.

Along with this consultation on the draft RTS, the SEA is also out to consultation with statutory consultees through the SEA Gateway and is available from the Nestrans website. Comments and suggestions will be taken on board and amalgamated in to the draft to create a final version of the SEA which will be submitted to the Board along with the RTS for approval in March 2007.

In accordance with the Scottish Executive Guidance, an Equality Impact Assessment will undertaken once the draft strategy consultation has been completed.

3 Links to other Plans and Strategies

The RTS recognises the linkages between transport and the economy, environment, health and social inclusion in the north east. Transport can play a key role in supporting wider regional objectives and as a statutory body, Nestrans has a duty to participate in community planning, which brings together the main public sector bodies to co-ordinate the delivery of public services.

The strategy will be influenced by the recently published National Transport Strategy prepared by the Scottish Executive and will be informed by the two local transport strategies being developed by Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils. In recognition of the wider context in which transport sits, the strategy will also link to the land use plans for the region (Structure and Local Plans), the regional economic development strategy and the regional transport strategies being developed by neighbouring regional transport partnerships. While the planning horizons of these plans and strategies may differ, it is important to ensure that there is an integrated approach to the development of the regional transport strategy.

National Transport Strategy

The Scottish Executive published Scotland's first National Transport Strategy on 5 December 2006. This followed a commitment in the 2004 Transport White Paper and extensive public consultation over the past year, to which Nestrans and partners in the region have responded.

The NTS reaffirms the Scottish Executive's national objectives for transport and sets out how it proposes to achieve these over the period to 2025. It is a high-level document, which focuses on policy approaches and interventions rather than promoting specific projects. It will however set the context and objectives for the Strategic Transport Projects Review which is being taken forward by Transport Scotland and will determine expenditure on transport in the period beyond 2012.

The RTS has been developed based on the national objectives as set out in the 2004 Transport White Paper and the NTS consultation document issued in July 2006. The final strategy will be updated to reflect the content of the final NTS.

Local Transport Strategies

Local authorities are expected by the Scottish Executive to develop Local Transport Strategies (LTS) for their areas, although this is not a statutory requirement. The first round of Local Transport Strategies were produced by both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils in December 2000 and submitted jointly to the Scottish Executive. Together they formed the basis for the Modern Transport System. The Scottish Executive issued guidance on the second round of revised Local Transport Strategies in February 2005, which are intended to cover three-year periods. Aberdeenshire Council published a draft LTS for consultation in June 2006 and intends to publish a final LTS in January 2007. Aberdeen City Council has undertaken preliminary work on its revised LTS, but has not yet published a draft for consultation. The Local Transport Strategies and information gathered through their respective consultation exercises form an important input to the development of the RTS.

Local Transport Strategies fit within the context of the Community Plans developed by the local authorities and their public sector partners. Nestrans has a duty to participate in Community Planning and the RTS is informed both by the individual Local Transport Strategies and the high-level Community Plans to which they contribute.

Land Use Planning

There is a clear linkage between transport strategies and land-use planning. At the national level, the Scottish Executive published a National Planning Framework in 2004 which is intended to provide high-level guidance on strategic planning. Nestrans works closely with senior officers responsible for planning in both local authorities and the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee provides a forum for the two Councils to co-ordinate planning and transport. The Structure Plan for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, *North East Scotland Together*, sets out strategic land-use policy for the period 2001 to 2016, but is scheduled to be reviewed over the next year. The current Structure Plan includes provision for key aspects of the existing MTS, including the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, Aberdeen Crossrail and expansion of park and ride.

Local plans provide more detailed policy and allocation of land-use within Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. The Aberdeenshire Local Plan was adopted in June 2006, covering the period up to 2015, while the new Aberdeen City Local Plan is currently the subject of a Public Local Inquiry.

Economic Development

Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum (ACSEF) brings together key public and private sector bodies in the north east to plan and co-ordinate economic development activity. Transport is identified within the regional economic development strategy as being a key ingredient of delivering sustainable economic growth and Nestrans maintains close links with ACSEF and other economic and business organisations, particularly Scottish Enterprise Grampian, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce and SCDI.

The RTS objectives reflect the regional economic objectives and the key infrastructure projects that Nestrans has promoted and supported since its formation contribute to improving the region's connectivity and competitiveness. The measures and activities contained in the strategy have been shown to meet the economic objectives of the strategy.

ACSEF's *Business 2010* strategy contains six key objectives:

- To become a city and region of enlightenment;
- To attract and develop the best people;
- To be a world class, strategic location;
- To be a unique destination for leisure and business visitors;
- To promote sustainable economic growth; and
- To develop sustainable, competitive and inclusive communities.

The RTS can contribute positively towards all of these objectives and whilst the RTS objectives are more directly related to transport issues, there are significant correlations and the strategies will complement each other and help to achieve the shared vision for the region.

4 Context

Aberdeen City and Shire

The total estimated population of Aberdeen City and Shire, based on 2004 forecasts, is around 436,000 for 2006, comprising 205,000 persons in Aberdeen City and 231,000 in Aberdeenshire.

The region makes a strong contribution to the Scottish economy with the wider Grampian area outperforming Scotland as a whole in terms of GVA per capita over a number of years². In 2002, the region was ranked third in the UK, reflecting the economic structure and the level of GVA generated by the oil and gas sector.

Evidence on earnings shows that the region enjoys higher male average earnings than for Scotland and Great Britain as a whole³. Average earnings in the north east were 3% higher than GB in 2004, despite Scotland being 10% below the GB average. Again this reflects earnings in the oil and gas related sector, which despite accounting for only some 15% of employment is a dominant player in the regional labour market.

Unemployment rates within the region are relatively low. Aberdeen City has an average rate of 1.7% (2005), whereas Aberdeenshire has a rate of just 1.1% (2005). These rates have been consistently lower than the Scottish average since 1996 (in 2005, the national average was 2.8%).

The way land use and the economy have developed has led to housing and employment locations being very dispersed. More than half of the region's population (56%) lives outside the City and spatial employment density in the north east is very low. High income levels, rural living, employment sites away from transport nodes and other factors combine to generate high levels of car ownership and car use with 60% of Aberdeen residents and 71% of Aberdeenshire residents driving to work in 2002/03.

In 2003, Defra⁴ produced a set of experimental statistics of carbon dioxide emissions for local authority areas. The results estimated that in 2003, 879 thousand tonnes of carbon dioxide was emitted from road transport in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, a slightly lower per capita level representing about 8.3% of the total for Scotland.

In terms of safety, casualty numbers in road traffic accidents have been falling⁵ - the number of casualties (all severities) dropped by 33.4% between 1994/98 and 2001/05 in Aberdeen and by 18.6% in Aberdeenshire. This is against a backdrop of increasing traffic within the region, but the authorities aspire to seeing greater reductions in the numbers of casualties from 2005 levels of 43 fatalities, 226 serious and 1,079 slight injuries.

² Gross Value Added – a measure of economic performance. Data for Grampian includes Moray.

³ Scottish Economic Statistics. www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/ses2001/ses-55.asp

⁴ UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

⁵ Key 2005 Road Accident Statistics, Scottish Executive Statistical Bulletin

Transport in Aberdeen City and Shire Today

Transport Network

The north east has an extensive transport network with air, sea, and land links that connect the region both internally and externally to the rest of the UK and beyond. This is illustrated in Fig 4.1.

The main strategic **road** linking the north east to central Scotland and the rest of the UK is the A90, which links the region to Dundee, Perth, Edinburgh, Glasgow (via A9 and M80/A80), and beyond. The other major strategic road serving the region is the A96, which connects the north east to Inverness and the Highlands. In addition the A92, A93, A98, A952, A944 and A947 roads also cater for strategic and regional movements within the north east.

Currently the A90 goes through Aberdeen and acts as a local distributor as well as the main strategic route connecting the north and west of the region. This leads to significant congestion and slow and unreliable journey times across the city. These problems are being addressed by the construction of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, which is scheduled to open in 2011, and will substantially improve cross-City travel enabling better access to key industrial and business locations and to the airport as well as contributing to other objectives.

The north east is served by several bus operators, but the majority of commercial services are operated by either First Aberdeen or Stagecoach Bluebird. First Aberdeen provides a network of services in Aberdeen City, including dedicated Park and Ride services and a service to Aberdeen Airport. Stagecoach Bluebird provides the majority of inter-urban services between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen, including services which call at Aberdeen Airport, Ellon Park and Ride and two routes which extend through to Inverness. Many local services within Aberdeenshire operate under contract with financial support from Aberdeenshire Council. Through a Quality Partnership involving the local authorities and the two major operators, bus priority measures have been introduced and bus shelter facilities have been upgraded to enhance the overall bus network, in conjunction with enhanced vehicles and investment.

At present Aberdeen is served by three bus-based park and ride sites, one located at Bridge of Don next to the AECC (600 spaces) another at Kingswells on the A944 (950 spaces) and a site at Ellon (250 spaces). All three facilities operate between 10 and 15 minute frequency services into and out of Aberdeen City Centre. Rail park and ride facilities are also provided at Stonehaven and Inverurie railway stations.

National Cycle Network Route 1 runs through the north east, which links Stonehaven, Aberdeen, Turriff and Banff, and forms part of the North Sea Cycle Circuit. Former railway lines have also been utilised in the creation of the Formartine and Buchan Way and the Deeside Way cycle routes. In addition to these, a number of on-street cycling facilities have been introduced across the north east.

The north east region **rail** network is relatively limited. While there are links to Inverness (trains every two hours) and to Edinburgh and Glasgow (trains every hour), parts of the network are single track and there are numerous places where speeds are constrained, making for extended journey times and a lack of regular hourly services. Within the north east there are seven stations - at Huntly, Insch, Inverurie, Dyce, Aberdeen, Portlethen and Stonehaven.

Aberdeen and Peterhead are the principal **sea ports** within the north east. Aberdeen harbour handled over 4 million tonnes of cargo in 2005 and inputs an estimated £100 million per year into the local economy. Peterhead Harbour is the UK's leading white-fish port with over £70 million worth of white fish being landed at Peterhead each year. Aberdeen is also the port for passenger and goods ferries to Orkney and Shetland, and passenger interchange with rail and bus services is an important issue for foot passengers. Northlink operates a daily overnight sailing to Lerwick (which calls at Kirkwall four times per week).

Situated seven miles north-west of the city centre, **Aberdeen Airport** handles over 3 million passengers per year and serves around 35 different destinations, compared to 8 million passengers and 12 million passenger at Edinburgh and Glasgow airports respectively. Over the last two to three years, many new routes have been introduced and Aberdeen Airport has experienced the fastest passenger growth of all Scottish airports. The airport serves a wide area and surface connections to the airport are currently provided by taxis, bus services (non-dedicated), rail services via Dyce station, and by private car. Over 90% of all those travelling to/from the airport currently do so by car or taxi. The airport also accommodates the world's busiest heliport, handling over 35,000 helicopter movements every year, the majority serving the off-shore oil and gas industry, which is a key sector of the economy.

Figure 4.1: Existing Situation



Transport Use

Settlements within the north east are relatively dispersed and incomes are generally high. This leads to car ownership and car use being high, pointing to a high level of **dependency on the car** for mobility. This reflects dispersed land use patterns for employment and housing.

Car ownership in the north east is higher than the national average, and the rate of increase is slightly higher than the average for Scotland.

- Aberdeen's level of car ownership is 24% greater than the average of Scotland's large urban areas. 70% of City residents have a driving licence, compared to 58% in Scotland's urban areas
- In Aberdeenshire car ownership is 21% greater than in comparable rural areas (the average of accessible small towns, remote small towns and accessible rural areas⁶). 82% of shire residents have a driving licence, compared to 71% in Scotland's rural areas, although often this is a necessity which causes economic hardship requiring other sacrifices.
- In the City and some Aberdeenshire towns, over 20% of households do not have access to a car.

Car use is high in the north east; half of motorists in the north east of Scotland use their car every day. Within the population aged 17 and over:

- 45% of residents in Aberdeen City use a car every day, compared to 34% in urban Scotland as a whole
- 55% of Aberdeenshire residents use a car every day, compared to 47% in rural areas averaged across Scotland.

These proportions have remained relatively stable between 1999/2000 and 2003/2004.

The proportion of journeys to work by car in the north east has risen steadily from 68% in 1999/2000 to 73% in 2003/2004, in contrast to the average for Scotland which remained static at around 68%.

Parking is a factor in the marginal cost of using a car and parking policy and charges can be important in affecting car use. In the north east, free parking provided by employers is more prevalent than Scotland as a whole, and this plus provision of company cars is a factor in high car use for work journeys.

While use of the car has grown, in contrast, numbers travelling to work by bus have dropped relative to the national average. In 2003/04 among employed adults:

- 12% of city residents travelled to work by bus compared to 19% in urban areas
- 4% of Aberdeenshire residents travelled to work by bus compared to 7% in rural areas
- 15% of city residents walked to work compared to 14% in urban areas
- 11% of Aberdeenshire residents walked to work compared with 15% in rural areas.

⁶ In order to make comparisons between Aberdeenshire and rural areas, the average of accessible small towns, remote small towns and accessible rural areas has been used as a benchmark. The term "rural areas" means this average. For Aberdeen, the average for Scotland's large urban settlements has been used as a comparator and is referred to as "urban areas". Unless otherwise noted, data are sourced from the Scottish Household Survey Transport Across Scotland 2003/2004 data sets.

Levels of **cycling** to work were similar in all areas at 2%, except in Aberdeen city where it was only 1%⁷.

The region suffers from pockets of severe **congestion** such as south and north of Aberdeen at the River Dee and Don crossings. These bottlenecks bring delays, uncertain travel times and lost productive time and add to costs for business and for freight movements. All vehicle use adds to greenhouse gas emissions, and single occupant cars, which tend to be the main cause of peak hour congestion, add more emissions per traveller than other surface mode. Despite this, surface transport **emissions per head** are only 55% of the Scottish average in the city, but 34% above the average in Aberdeenshire, and overall transport emissions are slightly below the Scottish average⁸.

Overall, **bus use** is relatively low in the north east, although investment in improved services and fleet has resulted in growth in recent years. In both the City and Shire, the proportion of residents using buses more than twice a week was below the corresponding urban and rural averages, and especially so in Aberdeenshire. Access to services and service frequencies are factors that affect how often people use buses:

- 43% of city residents live within 6 minutes walk of a bus stop and a service frequency of 13 minutes or better, compared to 39% for urban areas in general;
- Only 40% of Aberdeenshire residents live within 6 minutes walk of a bus stop and a service frequency of one bus every 63 minutes or better, compared with 54% in rural areas on average.

Survey findings on views on **bus services** show more positive views than other areas with regard to running on time, frequency, meeting needs, personal safety/security and information. However, residents of both city and shire were more negative than residents of Scotland's urban and rural areas with regard to interchange (integration) and value for money.

The **rail** network in the north east is very limited in extent and less than 1% use rail for travel to work, although in towns with a good rail service this can rise to 4%, such as Stonehaven. Survey data show that

- 91% of Aberdeen residents had not used a train in the month prior to the survey, compared to 81% in urban areas across Scotland;
- 93% of Aberdeenshire residents had not used a train in the month prior to the survey, compared to 87% in rural areas on average.

The north east depends to a greater degree than many regions on the ability of people to **travel in and out of the region** on business - not just the day and short stay business visitor but also for people working offshore. Research indicates that access to a range of frequent direct air services is important for inward investment and city development. Aberdeen currently has around 40% of the level of services to major UK and European business destinations that Edinburgh has, and currently has only 24 business destinations compared with 44 from Edinburgh. There are three direct rail services to London per day via the East Coast, plus an overnight sleeper service. There is one Cross-Country service per day, providing a direct link to the north of England and Birmingham.

⁷ Due to sample sizes too much should not be read into this difference.

⁸ From Defra e-Digest of environmental statistics 2003

In addition to the energy sector, the north east continues to have a manufacturing base which requires efficient movement of **freight** both outwards for fresh foods including fish, and for finished and processed goods, and inwards for raw materials and semi-finished goods. The region also imports goods for wholesale and retail sales. The forestry industry also relies on a good road network to enable movements of timber. In the period 2000 to 2004⁹

- An annual average of 15.4 million tonnes of freight moved within Grampian region: much of this is high bulk items moving short distances
- Just under 4 million tonnes of freight per year was lifted by HGV in Grampian and moved to the rest of Scotland; 974,000 tonnes was moved to the rest of the UK
- In the same period 3.3 million tonnes of freight moved from the rest of Scotland to Grampian, along with 961,000 tonnes from elsewhere in the UK
- In volume terms, there is a positive balance of trade with the rest of Scotland and the UK, and “exports” amount to 24% of total freight moved
- The value of Scottish road freight accruing to the region is estimated at £263 million, 11.5% of the Scottish total¹⁰; the value of cross border road transport is £262 million, 7.9% of the Scottish total.

Aberdeen and Peterhead are among Scotland’s major **ports**, with other ports operating at Fraserburgh, Macduff and many smaller harbours

- Together Aberdeen and Peterhead account for 11.3% of all Scottish domestic cargo by volume, but only 5% of Scotland’s domestic and foreign maritime traffic by volume¹¹
- In-bound traffic exceeds outbound at both ports by volume
- 76% of Aberdeen’s traffic is domestic, 10% is to the EU, 8% is to other short sea destinations and 3% is to deep sea destinations
- Aberdeen handled 8.4% of Scotland’s container traffic and 12.2% of unaccompanied trailers, but less than 1% of road goods vehicles.

Sea freight is expected to grow with the development of coastal and short sea ferry services, and the region’s ports are likely to see the development of domestic, coastal and short sea services. Deep sea activity might also grow depending on the location and scale of oil-related exploration and development activity. **Rail freight** currently accounts for a relatively small proportion of freight transport in the north east, and at the Scotland level accounts for only 3.5% of total freight by value. Between 2000 and 2004, **air freight** volumes declined at all Scotland’s major airports except Edinburgh. Aberdeen saw decline of 16% to 3,700 Tonnes. Air freight is a complex area because a high proportion of air freight is trucked from Scotland to English airports and is not recorded as air freight within Scotland.

⁹ Data are for the Grampian region including Moray

¹⁰ The value of the freight sector in the Scottish Economy: report by Steer Davies Gleave for the Scottish Executive 2006

¹¹ Source: Department for Transport: Maritime Statistics 2005

Transport in Aberdeen City and Shire in the Future

The Scottish Executive's vision for the future of transport in Scotland is elaborated in the National Transport Strategy and accompanying documents, published in December 2006. The direction of future transport policy in a UK context will also be influenced by the Stern Review on the *Economics of Climate Change* and the *Eddington Transport Study*, both commissioned by HM Treasury and published in late 2006.

Any strategy for the next 15 years has to have a degree of future proofing against upside and downside risks. The need for future transport to be more sustainable and to contribute much lower greenhouse gas emissions has become considerably more apparent during the preparation of the Regional Transport Strategy. Accordingly, the future is likely to be one in which the need for improved connectivity to promote economic development will go hand in hand with the imperative of emissions reduction and within a more sophisticated national regulatory and fiscal regime, incorporating measures to promote carbon reduction. In Aberdeen City and Shire it will be important to ensure that any fiscal or regulatory measures introduced in a Scottish or UK context to reduce carbon emissions or tackle congestion do not disproportionately affect the economy of the region and its future development.

Future demographic changes are likely to put upward pressure on levels of car use. The latest (2004) forecasts undertaken by the Councils for Aberdeen City and Shire to 2016 predict a decline of around 2,500 persons with a possible loss from the City of 6,800 and an increase in the Shire of almost 4,300. However the current strength of economic performance and inward migration may in fact result in population growth or stabilisation rather than decline.

The numbers licensed to drive will increase, as older people continue to drive while young people continue to join the car using population. Further, there are clear trends towards smaller households with more cars per household, and it is expected that there will be some 16,000 more households in the region by 2021. Income growth is expected to continue to grow the numbers of cars per head, although income growth might be at a slower rate than it did over the last 30 years. Overall, therefore, car ownership is expected to grow.

Many commuting trips using the strategic road network already have origins and destinations that are dispersed, driven by the attractiveness of rural living and dispersed centres of employment. This has been reinforced by rising real costs of public transport compared with cars. These trends are likely to continue, however there is a need to ensure that this does not lead to a consequent increase in road traffic. In the next 10-15 years new measures to tax car use and incentivise greater use of other modes may be introduced nationally. Depending on the levels of fiscal costs, such measures could begin to change travel and also choices of where to live and work, which over the long term could change the nature of the region's economy and settlement pattern.

The AWPR will increase connectivity across the region and between key employment centres and the airport, enabling the labour market to be more efficient and increasing overall employment. Land use policy will need to ensure that the increased connectivity provided by the AWPR does not encourage further dispersal of homes and businesses, which would increase car travel. This will need to be complemented by transport measures to improve the availability and attractiveness of alternatives to car travel if traffic growth is to be restrained and then reversed

Developments in vehicle technology may lead to reductions in emissions. However technological change has tended to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary and while there are cleaner fuels and better electric and hybrid cars available now, these have not yet become commonplace. There is however potential for Aberdeen City and Shire to capitalise on its role and reputation as a centre for energy technology by developing or piloting alternative fuels. This should not be confined to private cars as significant emissions savings can be made through buses and trains adopting alternative fuels.

Measures to reduce trends towards using ever larger vehicles and engines and to tighten emission controls would have a more immediate impact, and here locally targeted measures could be useful in addition to possible national changes in taxation. It is also likely that manufacturers would respond to continued high oil prices by producing more efficient vehicles, and that consumers would switch to smaller cars and change travel and possibly lifestyle patterns.

High energy costs and national charging mechanisms would also help to change the way information technology (ICT) is used. This is an area that could see revolutionary changes, especially if businesses and workers seek to increase levels of home working and reduced travel to meetings. However there are limits to extent to which ICT will reduce the need to travel and despite recent advances in ICT, face-to-face contact has become increasingly important and business travel has grown.

It will be necessary to balance measures to reduce carbon emissions against their impact on connectivity and economic growth. People will continue to need to travel for economic, social and other purposes, and it is therefore important to break the link between economic and traffic growth so that carbon emissions can be reduced without damaging economic performance or adversely affecting the region's social cohesion and competitiveness as a place to live, which is critical in a world where economic success depends on attracting and retaining talent.

The introduction of a national system of road user charging looks likely within the next ten years. The impact of any system on transport and the economy of the north east would depend on the detail of implementation. However it is possible that if combined with consequent reductions in Vehicle Excise and fuel duties, that the cost of car use could actually be reduced outwith city centres and congested routes.

As well as better connectivity within the north east, there is a need to sustain and enhance the region's place competitiveness, which requires a step change in the quality, range and capability of the region's links with the rest of the UK, continental Europe and the USA. Realistically, passenger movements to southern UK and beyond depend on air, but aviation is a sector likely to be targeted for new fiscal measures to reduce growth in use and improve efficiency. High speed rail may provide an alternative to domestic flights, but to achieve this any new line would need to provide a high speed connection to the north east and at present, development of high speed rail does not seem a likely prospect in the short to medium term. In the meantime a significant reduction in journey times between Aberdeen and Edinburgh / Glasgow would improve connectivity between Scotland's three main cities and enable rail to compete more effectively with the car. Coastal and short sea shipping services are also expected to grow in importance for freight movements, while the capacity and capability of rail freight is likely to continue to be developed as an alternative to using heavy goods vehicles.

5 Issues

The previous chapter painted a picture of the current context in which the strategy has been developed, and outlined trends and challenges for the future. This analysis has led to the identification of twelve strategic issues which the strategy needs to address. These issues have been refined following early stakeholder consultation and have informed the development of objectives, set out in the next chapter.

Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth

Sustainable economic growth is a key objective within the economic development strategy developed by ACSEF and the structure plan for the area, *North East Scotland Together*. The competitiveness of the north east as a location in which to live, work, visit and do business is crucial to achieving this goal and transport is a key element of this.

The connectivity of Aberdeen City and Shire and its accessibility to the rest of Scotland, the UK and the wider world is essential to both supporting the competitiveness and growth of existing businesses, but also providing the right environment for business formation and development, inward investment and increased leisure and business tourism. Access to a large, skilled labour market is important to companies seeking to invest or develop in the region and transport has a clear role to play in connecting people with employment opportunities.

It is recognised that the north east economy needs to diversify in order to ensure that current economic growth is sustained and strengthened in the future. It is important that the Regional Transport Strategy supports regional economic development goals and initiatives and that there is synergy between investment in transport infrastructure and future land use plans for the region.

Combating Peripherality

The north east's geographical location means that the region is peripheral in a Scottish and UK context, with long surface journey times to the rest of the UK and onwards to continental Europe. However Aberdeen City and Shire is an outward looking region, with the percentage of local companies increasing their market share in international markets rising year on year over the past 10 years.

Perceptions of remoteness and peripherality need to be changed, even if geography cannot. Perceptions can affect the attractiveness of the region for investment, while actual time and financial costs of travel affect the competitiveness of business activity. External connections by road, rail, air and sea are therefore vital to the north east economy and contribute to its attractiveness as a place to live, work, invest or visit. External constraints include bottlenecks in the road network outside the region, the speed and quality of rail connections to central Scotland and beyond, and direct access by air from Europe and North America.

There is a need for constraints on the strategic road network outside the region to be addressed in order to reduce journey times and increase their reliability. Faster rail services to Edinburgh, Glasgow and London are needed to enhance both real and perceived accessibility. High speed rail links are being considered at a UK level, but it is important that the benefits extend to north east Scotland to ensure that the relative peripherality of the region does not increase.

Aviation is a central to combating peripherality and direct air connections from Aberdeen have improved considerably in recent years. Further development of the airport and air routes as proposed in the Aberdeen Airport Masterplan 2030 will be needed to sustain the economic growth of the region, especially in its development as a centre of excellence for the energy sector, in growing the north east's an export-based service sector and in attracting additional tourists. The environmental impacts of aviation need to be mitigated through more efficient aircraft technology and utilisation, but it is important that the relative peripherality of the region is not increased through the introduction of any future taxation measures on aviation. The region has well-established global maritime links and it is important that these continue to develop, particularly for the transport of freight. EU programmes such as the Motorways of the Northern Seas can assist in developing links and identifying future opportunities.

Ensuring Social Inclusion

Transport has a key role to play in ensuring social inclusion and improving quality of life. Pockets of transport poverty exist across the region, limiting access to employment, services and health care, even though Aberdeen City and Shire is overall a high wage economy with low unemployment. In areas of multiple deprivation and poor health, mobility is limited by the affordability of public transport and lack of access to a car, which affects 31% of households in Aberdeen and 16% in Aberdeenshire, although these figures are higher for disadvantaged areas. Bus access is better than average in the City, and an above average proportion of people walk to work there. While access to a car in Aberdeenshire is relatively high, for low income households the cost of a using a car reduces money available for other things. The availability and frequency of public transport are also factors which affect mobility in remote rural areas. There are areas within towns such as Peterhead and Fraserburgh which are among the most deprived in Scotland, where employment opportunities are more limited than in the City and where transport poverty is one of a number of factors which contribute to locking people into a cycle of unemployment and deprivation.

The accessibility of public transport is particularly important for older and disabled people. This involves not just the availability of low-floor buses, but the proximity to a bus stop with a frequent service, the accessibility of information and ease of interchange. Demand responsive and community transport initiatives have an important role to play in filling gaps in the transport network and providing tailored services for people who are unable to access conventional public transport.

Maximising the Benefits of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route

The AWPR 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 and unsuitable rural roads, it will reduce the time cost of travel, which will help to sustain economic growth in the region. It is important that the connectivity and accessibility benefits that the AWPR will bring are fully realised, and that the opportunity is taken to 'lock-in' improvements to congestion and journey times to ensure that these are not eroded through additional traffic growth. The Modern Transport System sought to achieve this by linking public transport and pedestrian improvements to delivery of the AWPR and it is important that these are taken forward and fully implemented through the RTS. There may also be pressure for further dispersal of land use, which would increase the demand for travel. Transport and land use policies will therefore need to be integrated to ensure the transport benefits of the AWPR are maximised, and not diminished through dispersal and consequent additional car travel.

Changing Travel Behaviour

There is evidence at national level that almost half of the population would like to change its travel behaviour if provided with satisfactory alternatives, including safe walking and cycling opportunities. Small changes in travel behaviour can have a big impact on congestion and the environment and measures to encourage greater awareness of use of alternatives to the car have an important role in achieving this. Nestrans has already developed a Travel Planning Strategy and this needs to be taken forward in tandem with other measures in the regional transport strategy, to tackle barriers to reducing car use. In Aberdeen, half of car commuters believe they could use public transport for travel to work, while in Aberdeenshire the proportion is 24%. Both are below the corresponding urban and rural benchmarks, and in Aberdeenshire, significantly below. It is therefore important that realistic alternatives to the car exist, but that these are also promoted to encourage behaviour change.

Rural living involves longer trips, and mainly by car, so if both economic and environmental goals are to be achieved, there is a need to influence people's choices, both of where to live and how to travel. For many trips in rural areas, car use will remain essential, but measures to encourage higher car occupancy can help to make such car trips less environmentally harmful on a per user basis. The likelihood of increasing future energy costs will also have an impact on travel choice.

Increasing Public Transport Usage

Car use in the north east is high and bus use is low compared with urban and rural benchmarks. Public transport use, particularly for journeys to work, needs to increase to achieve national objectives for reducing car use and carbon emissions. Surveys suggest that a consistent factor in low bus use is perceived poor value for money, along with availability of services and interchange problems. In Aberdeen, people recognise they could use alternatives to the car but far fewer rural area residents believe there are viable alternatives. An ageing population and the need to encourage more sustainable travel habits by young people will require improvements and innovation in public transport, including development of demand responsive transport, backed by measures to tackle outdated perceptions and change travel choices.

Reducing Emissions of Greenhouse Gases and Pollutants

Climate change is acknowledged as an international priority that requires action at all levels to reduce carbon emissions. The transport sector is a significant source of carbon emissions and while transport emissions in the north east are close to the average for Scotland, this level is already unsustainably high, so real reductions in emissions are required if transport's impact on climate change is to be reduced. This must be balanced against the need to ensure continued connectivity of the region to sustain employment and economic growth. The key is to uncouple economic growth and traffic growth through reducing the need to travel and encouraging a shift to more sustainable modes of transport. New national targets are expected to be challenging and the north east will play its part in achieving these and effecting a real reduction in transport's impacts on the environment and climate change.

Emissions from vehicles are a major cause of poor air quality which can damage people's health and affect the attractiveness of town and city centres. Part of Aberdeen City centre has been designated an Air Quality Management Area, which requires setting and monitoring targets for improving air quality. While advances in engine technology have reduced harmful emissions, these have been offset by traffic growth and congestion. It is important to improve air quality, both through reducing traffic growth in urban centres and promoting the use of cleaner engines and alternative fuels.

Developing a Strong City Centre

Aberdeen has potential to perform better as a regional centre of the scale and quality befitting the north east's status as a world player in the energy sector, as Scotland's third city in terms of the population and as the capital of one of the UK's most prosperous regions. Research has shown that regional growth largely depends upon growth in a region's urban centre. A stronger city centre with a more diverse base would strengthen, diversify and grow the economy of the region as a whole. The retail and business service base within the city centre has potential to expand, and firms providing business services could serve a wider market, with greater reliance on locally sourced inputs.

Both sectors need to develop strongly to contribute to growing and restructuring the regional economy, in part by securing benefits arising from the co-location of a critical mass of activities. These activities need to be concentrated rather than dispersed, in order to secure productivity advantages which come from co-location. A strong centre with a more concentrated retail, leisure and business base will increase demand for travel to the centre, which makes improvements in public transport more viable, which in turn will attract more trips to be made by public transport rather than by car.

Supporting Vibrant Aberdeenshire Towns

The north east's larger towns presently have a mixed residential, service and employment function. This role could be further enhanced by focussing development (other than that which is more appropriate for Aberdeen) to these towns, helping to strengthen their service role and employment base and reduce travel demand. Aberdeenshire's towns will play an increasingly prominent role in job creation over the next 10-20 years, through initiatives such as the development of an innovative hydrogen power and carbon capture plant in Peterhead. Demand for new housing developments will continue within Aberdeenshire, and concentrating these in the main towns in line with current Structure Plan policy will have transport and environmental benefits. By concentrating local land uses sufficiently to stimulate local services growth, it will be possible to address car use for non-commuting trips by making more services available within the larger rural settlements. There is clearly a need for balance between development of the City as the principal services and retail base, and the larger towns as complementary retail and service centres.

Improving Safety and Security

The north east has had a good record of road casualty reduction, but there are still far too many deaths and serious injuries on our roads. Engineering, education and enforcement all have a role to play in preventing accidents and reducing deaths and serious injuries. Many serious accidents in the north east occur on the trunk and primary road network and inappropriate speed is a major contributory factor in a high proportion of these. More needs to be done at both a national and north east level to tackle this and the contribution to improving road safety should be a major consideration in determining investment in road improvement schemes.

Addressing real and perceived safety issues is important in encouraging people to use public transport, walk or cycle. Personal security needs to be built into the design of waiting and interchange facilities and CCTV on trains and buses can help deter and detect crime, while reassuring passengers.

Street lighting, streetscape design and the provision of pedestrian crossing facilities improve safety for pedestrians, but there is a particular need to provide safe crossing facilities on busy trunk roads which bisect communities. Segregated cycle ways reduce conflicts between cycles and vehicles and increase the safety of users.

Ensuring Efficient Movement of Goods

The north east's economy is underpinned by efficient and reliable freight movements, which are predominately undertaken by road. The costs of movement of freight by road are high due in part to distances to market, and this disadvantages manufacturing industry within the north east. The AWPR will improve local journey times and reliability, but there remain constraints elsewhere in the national road network.

The recent success of the North East Scotland Rail Freight Development Group in securing loading gauge improvements opens up the potential for further transfer of freight from road to rail. However it is likely that intermodal freight terminal capacity will need to increase in future to accommodate increased use of rail freight. Sea and rail based freight movements are growing, and as energy costs rise, the economics of coastal and continental roll-on roll-off services become more attractive. The north east has well developed ports capable of exploiting such opportunities, which will be helped by faster and more cost effective interchange between sea and other modes.

Embracing New Technologies

The next 15-20 years will see innovative transport initiatives, which may include a national road user charging scheme, the roll out of alternative fuel technologies and greater use of information technology to reduce the need to travel. The north east has the opportunity to be a leader of change in the development of new fuel and related technologies and in promoting their use for private as well as public transport. This fits with the region's economic aspirations to develop as a centre of excellence in energy technologies and would send positive signals about the north east's ambitions to address both economic competitiveness and environmental issues. New technology also has the potential to help transport adapt to changing demographics, particularly to meet the needs of an ageing population, and increased consumer expectations.

6 Vision and Objectives

The process for developing this RTS is driven by agreeing a vision and establishing a series of objectives.

Our **vision for transport** is indicated below:

“A transport system for the north east of Scotland which enables a more economically competitive, sustainable, and socially inclusive society.”

The objectives stem from the detailed analysis of problems and issues, and are influenced by the objectives developed for the Modern Transport System and local transport strategies. They also fit with the Government’s national objectives for transport set out in the 2004 White Paper and recently re-affirmed in the National Transport Strategy.

The RTS objectives comprise four **Strategic Objectives** and twelve **Operational Objectives**, and benefited from stakeholder consultation in summer 2006. The objectives are listed below:

Strategic Objective 1: Economy

To enhance and exploit the north east’s competitive economic advantages, and reduce the impacts of peripherality.

- To make the movement of goods and people within the north east and to/from the area more efficient and reliable.
- To improve the range and quality of transport to/from the north east to key business destinations.
- To improve connectivity within the north east, particularly between residential and employment areas.

Strategic Objective 2: Accessibility and Social Inclusion

To enhance choice, accessibility and safety of transport, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society and those living in areas where transport options are limited.

- To enhance travel opportunities and achieve sustained cost and quality advantages for public transport relative to the car.
- To reduce the number and severity of traffic related accidents and improve personal safety and security for all users of transport.
- To achieve increased use of active travel and improve air quality as part of wider strategies to improve the health of north east residents.

Strategic Objective 3: Environment

To conserve and enhance the north east's natural and built environment and heritage and reduce the effects of transport on climate and air quality.

- To reduce the proportion of journeys made by cars and especially by single occupant cars.
- To achieve targets for reductions in the environmental impacts of transport, proposed in the recently published National Transport Strategy.
- To reduce growth in vehicle kilometres travelled.

Strategic Objective 4: Spatial Planning

To support a strong, vibrant and dynamic city centre and town centres across the north east.

- To improve connectivity to and within Aberdeen, especially by public transport, walking and cycling.
- To improve connectivity to and within towns in Aberdeenshire, especially by public transport, walking and cycling.
- To enhance public transport opportunities and reduce barriers to use across the north east, especially rural areas.

The objectives set out clearly what the strategy needs to achieve. These in turn guide the development of options and different scenarios, to ensure that the final strategy meets the objectives. As will be detailed in the next section, all options were tested against the objectives to ensure that all elements of the strategy contribute positively towards achieving the vision and one or more of the objectives.

7 Option Generation and Appraisal

In keeping with the Scottish Executive's desire for each RTS to be visionary, a wide range of potential strategic policy interventions was generated. The strategic objectives were used as the starting point for the option generation, with schemes and packages developed which complement the existing schemes within the MTS and were likely to address the issues identified and achieve the agreed objectives. No realistic options were dismissed at this stage in order to ensure that a wide range of options was considered for inclusion in the strategy. During the process, consideration was given to how measures would interact as elements of a strategic package as opposed to isolated schemes.

Packages have been developed, building on the Reference Case of committed schemes already contained in the approved Modern Transport System. These packages contain measures and interventions in broad strategic categories covering external links, network capability, travel choice and fiscal & financial interventions. Specific measures and activities within these categories were then related to the identified objectives and elements were developed and the Strategy focused into three Sub Strategies covering External Connections, Internal Connections and a Strategic Policy Framework.

Packages of Complementary Measures and Activities

For the purposes of modelling and progressing towards a preferred package, measures and activities were assigned to one or more distinct packages, so that their relative merits could be assessed against the objectives and indicators. For the initial appraisal, six different packages were created, all of which build on the Reference Case. Three of the initial packages leaned towards particular objectives to ensure different impacts would be captured during appraisal. The six packages were:

1. **Low Cost** – Measures and activities that will require relatively low levels of revenue and capital funding. This would approximate to a continuing level of expenditure for transport broadly equivalent to present levels of funding.
2. **Medium Cost (Economy)** – This package would require an increased level of expenditure on transport over the life of the strategy, to relatively medium levels of revenue and capital funding. Options are included that would focus on achieving the economic objectives, yielding benefits with an emphasis towards relieving congestion, boosting the north east's economy and infrastructure-based solutions.
3. **Medium Cost (Accessibility and Social Inclusion)** - This package also requires relatively medium levels of revenue and capital funding of a scale broadly equivalent to the other Medium Cost packages. Schemes are included which would best achieve the social inclusion objectives, yielding benefits with an emphasis towards public transport measures, making travel more affordable and favouring socially excluded sectors of population or areas.
4. **Medium Cost (Environment)** - A third package, also requiring relatively medium levels of revenue and capital funding similar to other Medium Cost packages. Focus is on schemes that would best achieve the environmental objectives, yielding benefits including measures to encourage modal shift and active travel.
5. **Medium Cost (Spatial Planning)** – a further package requiring relatively medium levels of funding similar to other Medium Cost packages. Emphasis is on schemes which best achieve objectives which yield benefits for connectivity within and between settlements in the north east.
6. **High Cost** – this package combines many of the schemes within the medium cost scenarios and contains some measures and activities requiring a relatively high level of revenue and capital funding. Realistically these schemes would require a very high funding allocation combined with new revenue streams, but they were included to ascertain their relative merits and acceptability.

In parallel with testing these scenarios, a consultation exercise was undertaken with key stakeholders to determine whether all appropriate measures and activities had been identified and set within the most apposite package. Once it was evident that all realistic options had been identified and set in appropriate packages, this was fed into the process of sifting and appraisal. The sifting was based on parallel work undertaken to assess the success of the strategy, which provided a set of performance tests, including testing to ensure that it achieved success against core performance measures.

This analysis was used to develop the packages, alongside an assessment of

- deliverability – could the measure be delivered;
- integration – how well did a measure fit with other measures; and
- whether any measures might be mutually exclusive.

The external connections measures are considered to primarily relate to the economic prosperity of the north east, particularly in reducing the impacts of peripherality. The internal connections measures and elements within the strategic policy framework were assembled into packages for detailed appraisal. The appraisal was undertaken using a system dynamics model developed by Steer Davies Gleave and adapted for use in the north east. This model provides direct appraisal outputs against key indicators, namely:

- employment (jobs filled), as an economy indicator;
- car miles, as an environment indicator;
- mode shares, as an environment and social inclusion indicator; and
- changes in accessibility to central health service locations, as a social inclusion indicator.

The model runs indicated that packages which offered environmental benefits had serious economic consequences and vice versa. A further series of runs were modelled, with measures added, removed or modified in order to achieve the most acceptable combination of outcomes against the indicators. In practice the packages went through over 40 versions until the optimal final package was determined, which offered benefits against all of the indicators and objectives.

The preferred package compared with the reference case, achieves all of the following:

- An increase in predicted numbers of jobs filled, which would denote an improvement in the performance of the economy, largely due to better access to jobs and employment land;
- A minimal change in car miles, denoting an environmental gain and supporting the Scottish Executive's aspiration of road traffic reduction: technological and other benefits in terms of emissions reductions over the period of the strategy will be additional to these benefits;
- Increased mode share by public transport, which is necessary in order to reduce car travel and to increase opportunities for travel by socially excluded groups; and
- Improved accessibility to key locations, which is a major contributor towards social inclusion.

Performance Indicators

As shown in Figure 7.1, a set of performance indicators has been used during the modelling process to identify the relative merits of different packages of measures. The results for the optimum package of measures and activities relative to the Reference Case is set out below. It can be seen that the optimum package performs well against all the indicators.

Figure 7.1: Key Indicators results

	Optimum Package compared to Reference Case
Jobs Filled	+1.2%
Car Miles	-0.2%
Mode Split (non-car)	+18.2%
Accessibility: ARI	+5%
Aberdeen University	+7%

Prioritisation

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that Regional Transport Strategies include provision about the order of priority in which different elements of the provision, development and improvement of transport should be undertaken.

Throughout the development of this strategy all the different options considered have been subject to a process of prioritisation in order to identify an optimum package of implementable measures and activities that best meet the strategy's objectives.

The Scottish Executive has issued guidance, which supports a STAG-based prioritisation framework, to aid this prioritisation process. This guidance has been used to help identify an optimum package of measures and activities that best meet the following criteria (recognising that there is a high degree of overlap between the following):

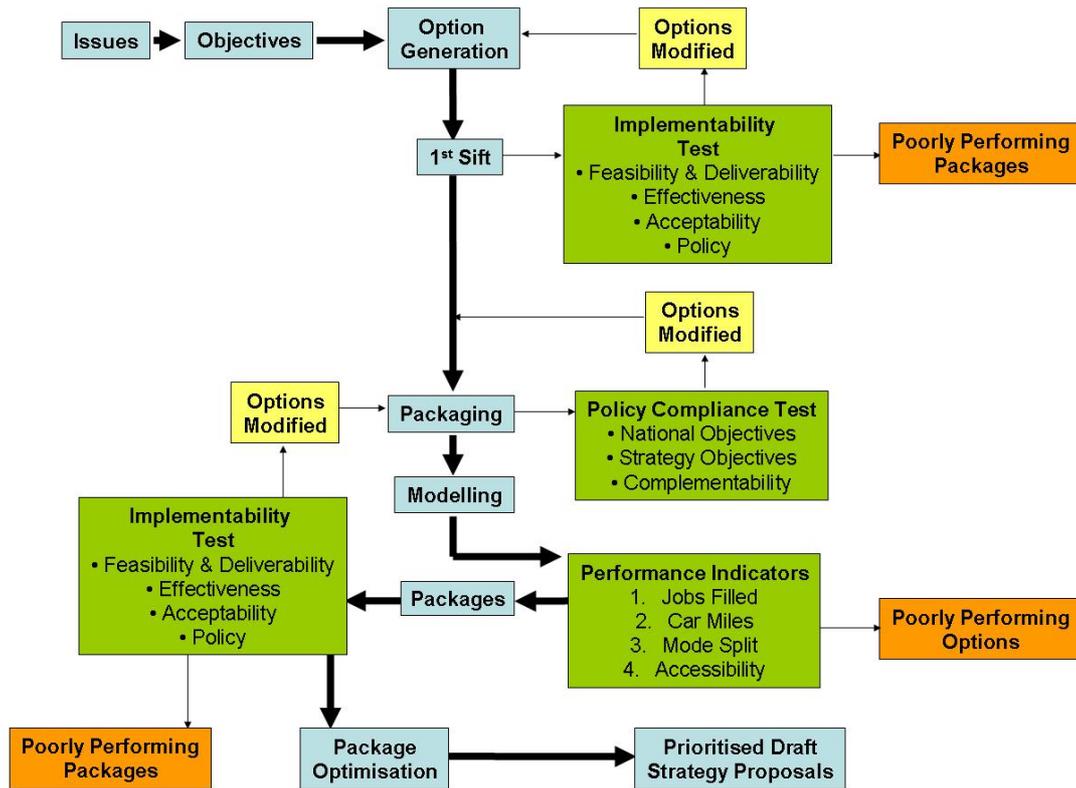
- The Government's five key policy objectives of Economy, Environment, Integration, Social Inclusion and Safety;
- The strategy's objectives as identified in Section 6;
- Feasibility and deliverability;
- Effectiveness in performing positively against the identified indicators;
- Acceptability, as assured through consultation with Board members and stakeholders; and
- Policy, including fit with related policy areas such as land use (Structure Plan) and Economic Development (ACSEF).

The process of sifting and testing options leading to identifying the optimum package of measures and activities has incorporated a prioritisation in terms of relative implementability and which measures are required early in the delivery process to ensure optimum acceptability and performance against the objectives.

Consultation was a fundamental tool in ensuring the most effective and deliverable package of measures and activities was identified. Input from key stakeholders has been incorporated throughout the prioritisation process.

The option appraisal process has identified an optimum package of measures and activities that provides positive benefits against all of the strategy’s objectives. Delivering all the measures and activities in the optimum package will yield the maximum benefits. It should be noted that a significant number of schemes have been sifted out or included only as long term aspirations, because they did not contribute positively against all of the objectives or offered poor value for money.

Figure 7.2: Option Appraisal Process



8 The Preferred Strategy Package

Introduction

The Regional Transport Strategy sets out an integrated plan of action between now and 2021 to meet future transport needs and bring sustainable improvements to transport across the region. It seeks to meet the region's economic development aspirations as set out in the Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum's (ACSEF) Economic Development Strategy and integrate with the development plan framework set out in the North East Structure Plan and Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire's Local Plans.

The preferred strategy package sets out a strategic framework of integrated measures and interventions. It represents an optimum package, developed through modelling and testing to ensure a balanced approach offering economic, environmental and accessibility improvements. The detailing and implementation of the strategy will be undertaken by a wide range of other agencies, public and private including Transport Scotland, Nestrans itself, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, private sector transport operators, and also the wider community, through our individual actions and travel choices. The package will be developed in more detail through Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils' Local Transport Strategies and where appropriate by Nestrans itself through implementation plans.

Building on the Modern Transport System

As a voluntary transport partnership, Nestrans developed the Modern Transport System or MTS - an integrated package of measures aimed at delivering significant benefits to the transport system in the north east over the period to 2011. The MTS was developed and appraised using the Scottish Executive's STAG guidance and was formally endorsed by the Scottish Executive in 2003. Since then it has formed the basis for Nestrans' activities and expenditure.

In developing the Regional Transport Strategy to 2021, Nestrans has taken the MTS as a key building block and integrated its policies and proposals within the new strategy. In particular, we have sought to identify opportunities created by the construction of Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route to implement complementary transport measures which 'lock in' and maximise its benefits.

In looking to 2021, existing projects from the MTS strategy which have secured a certain degree of commitment or are significantly well-developed have been taken as a given. This means that our strategy assumes that they will be implemented and enables us to look beyond existing transport problems to identify those we need to tackle in the next decade. These existing projects have formed a **Reference Case** against which proposed new projects have been assessed. The scale of the projects which have already secured commitment and are in the process of being delivered is testament to the achievements of Nestrans and its partners over the past five years. The major projects included within the Reference Case are set out in the following table. This is essentially the same list of projects included in the Reference Case previously and currently modelled for the AWPR to ensure compatibility in technical assumptions.

Figure 8.1: Reference Case Projects (including committed projects contained in the MTS)

<i>Project</i>	<i>Lead Agency</i>	<i>Estimated Delivery Date</i>
Committed Projects – Delivery Underway		
Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route	Transport Scotland	2011
A90 Balmedie-Tipperty dualling	Transport Scotland	2011
Rail Freight Gauge Enhancement	Transport Scotland	2007
New rail freight facilities at Raiths Farm and Craiginches – to replace Guild Street facility	Private sector/ rail industry	2007
Guild Street transport interchange – rail and bus station redevelopment	Private sector	2007/08
Towns Interchanges at Inverurie and Peterhead	Aberdeenshire Council	2007
Local road and traffic management improvements	Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils	2006/07 onwards
Committed Projects – Delivery Not Yet Commenced		
Park and Ride Sites at A96 and A90 (south)	Aberdeen City Council	2008/09
Park and Ride Site on the A947 and A93 Banchory	Aberdeenshire Council	2008/09
Union Street Pedestrianisation	Aberdeen City Council	2010
Projects at an Advanced Stage of Development		
Aberdeen Crossrail Phase 1 – 30 minute frequency Inverurie-Aberdeen-Stonehaven and new station at Kintore	Nestrans	2009
Laurencekirk Station Re-opening	Nestrans/ Aberdeenshire Council	2007/08

Overview

The RTS sets out a package of measures that will be taken to address the transport issues identified, build on opportunities and achieve the agreed objectives; and sets out interventions and measures which make the strategy operational and deliverable. The package has been rigorously tested and shown to demonstrate positive results against key indicators reflecting the strategic objectives:-

- It offers an opportunity to grow jobs and enhance economic performance;
- It achieves a reduction in total car miles travelled;
- It achieves significant modal shift away from car dependence;
- It improves accessibility, making key locations such as hospitals more easy to access by those who suffer most from transport poverty; and
- It offers good value for money in offering significant benefits which justify the costs involved.

The Strategy is expressed through three Sub Strategies, reflecting different ways of achieving the above-mentioned indicators:

1. **Improving external links** between the north east and elsewhere, so tackling the reality and perceptions of location, distance, travel time and peripherality and enhancing the performance of the north east as a location.
2. **Internal connections**, to enhance the performance of the north east in economic, social and environmental terms.
3. **Strategic policy framework**, which indicates areas where measures such as Travel Awareness or fiscal controls can influence travel choice.

Taken together, the combination of external and internal measures and the policy framework will achieve the RTS objectives. External measures will enhance the economic potential and performance of the north east. Internal measures including fiscal and awareness initiatives will reduce the environmental impact of transport in the north east by encouraging a significant modal shift from the car towards more sustainable modes of transport and enable a “locking in” of the benefits offered by the AWPR. The package also increases accessibility and helps tackle social exclusion to ensure that all members of society in the north east have easy access to services.

The Regional Transport Strategy in Context

Nestrans and the local authorities already invest significantly in transport, including managing the asset and ensuring maintenance, lighting and winter maintenance functions are fulfilled. In future years, it is assumed that this will continue at least at the current level, and this strategy makes the case for **additional** expenditure for specific schemes.

Nestrans' previous strategy, the Modern Transport System, will be substantially delivered in the period to 2011. Many of the schemes already enjoy a level of commitment, are being taken forward through study or design work or are already supported through other policy documents – these are taken as the Reference Case and have not been subject to retesting or modelling. The options, or those schemes, measures and activities above the base budget and reference case, which have been tested as alternative scenarios have led to the formulation of a Preferred Package.

Nestrans also has aspirations beyond this package, but recognises that prioritisation is essential to establish which schemes are considered to be necessary to delivering the identified objectives. **The Regional Transport Strategy should be regarded as comprising the base budget, the Reference Case schemes, and the Preferred Package which builds on the existing commitments.** Nestrans also recognises the merits of other schemes which cannot presently be justified as they do not meet funding criteria. These are referred to as “aspirations”, with an acknowledgement that there is a need to keep these under review, and may be suitable for longer-term development subject to funding becoming available or changing situations shifting the longer term suitability of schemes.

Costs

Expenditure on transport in Scotland has increased significantly in recent years. The Scottish Executive's investment programme to 2012 is delivering major enhancements to Scotland's transport infrastructure, including projects such as the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, but there still remains much more to do. The Strategic Transport Projects Review, being undertaken by Transport Scotland, will determine the next generation of transport projects and Regional Transport Strategies have an important role to play in contributing to this process.

In addition to investment in new infrastructure, the Scottish Executive and Transport Scotland budgets include funding to deliver the ScotRail franchise, bus service operator grants, maintenance of the trunk road network, freight facilities grants, concessionary travel and lifeline ferry and air services.

The local authorities' budgets for transport services and projects total almost £80million for 2006/07. Nestrans itself has a capital allocation of over £3million in both 2006-07 and 2007-08 for projects to support the identified priorities, some of which will be delivered on behalf of the Partnership by the Councils.

In the north east, committed schemes and those at an advanced stage of development, which have been included in the Reference Case combine to a figure of £450-560million on major schemes in the region over the next five years. The Preferred Package, as detailed over the following pages would cost in the region of a further £500million to deliver. This investment would ensure a step change in transport infrastructure and services in the north east during the life of this strategy and achieve the objectives set. It would also help to lever additional private sector investment by transport operators and others.

Achieving Objectives

As well as performing well against the key indicators, each element of the Strategy has been tested to ensure fit with the Strategic Objectives agreed following stakeholder consultation in the summer and set out in section 6 of this draft RTS.

Figure 8.2 demonstrates the strong links between the objectives and the elements of the Preferred Package. Each of the elements contained in the Internal Connections and Strategic Policy Framework Sub Strategies has a positive contribution to two or more of the strategic objectives. The External Connections are primarily aimed at securing economic benefits for the region and for Scotland as a whole and are therefore not included in the following table, which shows the fit between the internal measures and activities and the strategic objectives.

Figure 8.2: Relationship between Strategic Objectives and elements of the Internal Connections and Strategic Policy Framework

Strategic Objective	NC1 Roads improvements	NC2 Rail	NC3 Bus improvements	NC4 Transport interchange	NC5 Airport surface connections	NC6 Pedestrians and cyclists	NC7 Freight	TC1 Travel awareness	TC2 Demand responsive transport	TC3 Community transport initiatives	FF1 Incentives & Partnerships	FF2 Enforcement	FF3 Parking
Strategic Objective 1: Economy To enhance and exploit the north east's competitive economic advantages, and reduce the impacts of peripherality.	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategic Objective 2: Accessibility and Social Inclusion To enhance choice, accessibility and safety of transport, particularly for disadvantaged and vulnerable members of society and those living in areas where transport options are limited.	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓		✓		✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	
Strategic Objective 3: Environment To conserve and enhance the north east's natural and built environment and heritage and reduce the effects of transport on climate and air quality.		✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓		✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Strategic Objective 4: Spatial Planning To support a strong, vibrant and dynamic city centre and town centres across the north east.	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓	✓	✓	✓ ✓	✓	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓

Elements of the Package

The Strategy has been developed by selecting measures and activities which perform best against the objectives. These have been pulled together in the three Sub Strategies, as indicated in Figure 8.3 below. The measures have been summarised within seventeen elements, as shown below, under four broad strategic categories.

Figure 8.3: Elements of the Strategy

Sub Strategy 1: The External Connections Strategy		
External Links <i>Improving UK, European and global connections through public and private sector partners</i>	EL1	Strategic roads
	EL2	Rail links and services
	EL3	Connections by sea
	EL4	Connections by air
Sub Strategy 2: The Internal Connections Strategy		
Network Capability <i>Linking up people, businesses, public and private sector services and healthcare within the north east</i>	NC1	Road Improvements
	NC2	Rail
	NC3	Bus Improvements
	NC4	Transport Interchange
	NC5	Airport Surface Connections
	NC6	Pedestrians and Cyclists
	NC7	Freight
Sub Strategy 3: The Strategic Policy Framework		
Travel Choice <i>Changing travel behaviour through information and targeting</i>	TC1	Promoting Travel Plans and Travel Awareness
	TC2	Providing More Demand Responsive Transport Services
	TC3	Supporting Community Transport Initiatives
Financial & Fiscal <i>Using financial and other “sticks and carrots” to change travel choices</i>	FF1	Changing Choices through Incentives and Partnerships
	FF2	Enforcement
	FF3	Parking

The External Connections Strategy

The north east is geographically remote within the UK and from much of continental Europe. Despite this, the region has a very strong economy and successfully operates as an international centre of the energy industry as well as sustaining a manufacturing sector and primary and processing industries. To sustain this strength in a rapidly changing global economy, both the realities and perceptions of peripherality must be changed through faster, cheaper, more frequent and more direct links for people and freight. It is important that the north east's external links by road, rail, sea and air are both maintained and enhanced.

Nestrans will continue to lobby for improvements to external links. Commercial decisions determine most service levels to and from the region and the ports and airport are within the private sector. Investment in the rail network tends to be governed by national priorities, while services are determined by the franchises, with limited scope for train operating companies deviating from those. However, there is a role for Nestrans in pushing for better connections through influencing all of these agencies and organisations to benefit connections to and from the north east, including those with responsibility for strategic roads including estuarial crossings.

There are four elements within the external connections strategy, corresponding to the four key modes for people and freight.

Strategic Roads (EL1)

Delays on the UK national road network affect the competitiveness of businesses across Scotland, but can impact particularly on companies within the north east. North east companies are already disadvantaged by limits on drivers' hours and the costs associated with the extra distances involved, and increasingly face potential bottlenecks between the north east and the national motorway network. These increase uncertainties about journey times in an increasingly "just in time" environment, which adds to costs.

Nestrans will support the development of the strategic road network beyond its borders, where bottlenecks can be especially harmful to journey time reliability. Nestrans will press for measures to address constraints between the north east and central Scotland which can directly affect north east businesses, for example around Dundee and at the River Forth crossing points. However, Nestrans cautions against over-concentration of resources in a few major schemes which could dilute the availability of funding for priorities within the north east. Nestrans suggests that priority for investment should be determined reflecting all-day demand relative to capacity, impacting on strategic movements and business, rather than where peak-hour demands cause short-term problems for commuters.

Rail Links and Services (EL2)

Rail journey times between the north east and central Scotland are long relative to the distances involved, and there are also issues of train capacity, fare levels and peak-hour overcrowding. Faster and better rail links will reduce the impacts of peripherality and reduce perceptions of remoteness, especially for travel to London (including Sleeper services), Central Scotland and the north east of England. Better and faster rail services will enable modal shift from cars, which will have environmental benefits, and people on trains can also be more productive, which is beneficial to the regional and national economy.

Nestrans will work with the rail industry, Transport Scotland and others to promote and support measures to cut journey times, including addressing pinch points in Angus and Fife and Edinburgh Waverley and Glasgow Queen Street stations. Nestrans will also support measures to reduce overcrowding and improve the reliability of services to central Scotland and beyond.

High speed rail connections between Scotland and London would bring about a step-change in journey times and accessibility, which would rival the speed of air travel. Development of high speed rail is supported, but the benefits need to extend to the north east to ensure that the relative peripherality of the region is not increased as a result of improved connectivity for central Scotland and northern England.

Connections by Sea (EL3)

Aberdeen City and Shire's connectivity has historically been focused around its maritime links. In particular, the ports of Aberdeen and Peterhead are important for goods movement, ferries, cruise ships and supporting the fishing and offshore oil and gas industries. The use of coastal and short sea shipping as an alternative to road and rail freight is expected to grow. Scotland's north east's ports are well placed to handle such services to major UK and continental ports. The public sector can play a supportive role in this.

Nestrans and the region's ports have recently established a North East Ports Forum which can act as focus for helping to bring about new commercial operations and routes and ensure effective participation in national and EU initiatives to promote maritime transport.

The lifeline ferry services to Orkney and Shetland terminate at Aberdeen harbour, which offers a rail and bus interchange for ferry passengers travelling onwards to central Scotland and beyond. Nestrans will work with the maritime industry including shipping lines and port providers to enhance the role of the north east as a gateway and to ensure that services between the north east and Orkney and Shetland fully meet the needs of passenger and freight users. The use of particular harbours is a commercial decision for service providers, but Nestrans will support the development of better surface access to all major ports in the north east.

Nestrans and its partners will also seek to promote passenger and freight movements by short sea shipping routes through the EU's Programme for the Promotion of Short Sea Shipping, and similarly will seek to promote coastal shipping services to major UK ports. This will help manage the growth of heavy goods vehicle traffic and allow freight movements to bypass land bottlenecks. The EU programme contains a set of 14 actions subdivided into measures and describes legislative, technical and operational initiatives which are aimed at developing Short Sea Shipping at EU, national, regional and industry levels. Nestrans will encourage the development of existing and new freight / passenger ferry connections and routes between the north east and Europe and will continue to promote and support projects to enhance the role of the north east's ports particularly to Scandinavia and the recent EU accession countries in the Baltic.

Nestrans will work with partners to promote Northern Maritime Corridor II projects and other Motorways of the Sea projects as appropriate.

Connections by Air (EL4)

Aberdeen Airport is one of the busiest regional airports in the UK and one of the fastest growing. An expansion of business and hub airport destinations and an increase in the frequency on existing routes is the minimum necessary to enhance the place competitiveness of the north east. To sustain the City and Shire's role as a centre of excellence in the energy sector, services are needed to major cities, continental hubs and other energy hubs such as Houston.

Aberdeen Airport - Air Routes and Frequency of Services

Nestrans will continue to work through the Airport Business Development Forum to support the important role that Aberdeen Airport plays in the north east. This work will focus at the following:

- increasing the frequency of services to international hubs – London Heathrow, Amsterdam Schiphol, and Paris Charles de Gaulle;
- establishing new routes to European business destinations;
- supporting the development of direct services, in particular to energy sector destinations in the USA and potentially to the Middle East, Asia and Africa; and
- encouraging opportunities to increase the availability of leisure travel, including inward tourism.

Aviation is known to be a growing source of carbon emissions, but since for many trips from the north east there are few alternatives, Nestrans will seek to ensure that growth in the use of Aberdeen Airport helps to reduce the need for multiple flights and enables more efficient aeroplanes and effective payloads.

Aberdeen Airport - Runway Extension

A key infrastructure improvement that is required to facilitate the development of transatlantic and other long haul routes is the extension of the existing runway at Aberdeen Airport. BAA has submitted an application to Aberdeen City Council to extend the existing runway by 300 metres, which would enable airlines to use larger, more fuel-efficient aircraft, and allow aircraft to operate non-stop direct services from Aberdeen Airport without payload restrictions or costly and inconvenient en-route stops. A further extension, currently proposed for the longer term, would bring destinations in North America and the Middle East within non-stop range of Aberdeen Airport.

Aberdeen Airport – Support for Key Aviation Routes.

Nestrans will seek to ensure the continuation of services to major hubs, including Heathrow and Gatwick (London) by protecting slots and interlining opportunities. Nestrans will explore the most appropriate means for ensuring routes which are critical to the economic and social well-being of the north east are retained - if need be through the use of Public Service Obligations.

The Internal Connections Strategy

The north east has an extensive transport network, however in order to satisfy the strategy's objectives and in turn deliver the strategy's vision, it is necessary to further enhance the existing network's capability. The relaxation of constraints offered by the implementation of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route provide a one-off opportunity to provide for transport choices in the region over the next decade. However, these benefits must be "locked in", to ensure that traffic does not increase to fill the additional capacity created. This will be achieved by introducing an integrated package of measures.

Road Improvements (NC1)

The Modern Transport System made the case for an Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) to facilitate movements across and around Aberdeen, reduce traffic levels and emissions on urban and rural routes and contribute to the economy and sustainable communities across the North East. This route, and other committed schemes including the dualling of Balmedie-Tipperty on the A90 north, are included within the Reference Case and are scheduled for completion in 2011.

Further enhancements to the region's road network will be needed to ensure that capacity pinch points and sections of unsafe or poorly maintained carriageway are properly addressed.

Improvements to the road network enhance journeys for all road users, including cyclists, motorcyclists, public transport users, lorries and delivery vehicles and car drivers. Reduced noise levels improve ambience for residents and better surfaces can enhance safety, including for pedestrians, so road improvements are important, not just for their economic contribution, but also for the benefits they provide to users and non-users.

Strategic Roads (Capacity Improvements)

The strategic road network provides the principal transport links within the north east and connects the region to the rest of Scotland and Europe through the Trans-European Network. The trunk roads through the north east, the A90 and the A96, are the responsibility of Transport Scotland. Other major routes in the Nestrans area are managed and maintained by Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils, with the A93, A944 and A947 providing key routes from Aberdeenshire into Aberdeen, acting as corridors for bus services and connecting towns and villages within the region. While there is continuous dual carriageway south of Aberdeen, the A90 and A96 trunk roads to the north and west of the City are largely single carriageway, with implications for journey times, reliability and safety.

Capacity constraints at junctions can impose significant delays to traffic, contributing to slow and unpredictable journey times. This carries economic costs, but also health and social costs, particularly due to poor air quality arising from standing traffic or traffic diverting onto inappropriate alternative routes.

Nestrans is currently working with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Transport Scotland to identify measures to relieve congestion at the A90/A96 Haudagain Roundabout and on Access to Aberdeen from the South. We are also working with Transport Scotland and HITRANS on a multi-modal appraisal of the A96 Aberdeen-Inverness corridor.

In taking forward the regional transport strategy, priorities for action are:

- Capacity and journey time improvements on the A90 between Ellon and Peterhead;
- Capacity and journey time improvements on the A96 west of Inverurie
- Upgrading the A90/A96 Haudagain junction;
- Improving traffic flow on the access to Aberdeen from the south, including the A90 at the Bridge of Dee and the A956 corridor;
- Addressing capacity constraints at trunk and local road junctions serving towns in Aberdeenshire.

Particular consideration will be given to a corridor approach, which will identify priority corridors or routes for action, linked to economic development opportunities. For instance the A90 Peterhead-Bridge of Don corridor to support innovative energy industry proposals being considered by ACSEF.

Local roads improvements are not included in the Regional Transport Strategy although they may contribute towards strategic objectives, these will be brought forward and delivered by the local authorities through their Local Transport Strategies, such as Aberdeen City Council's proposals for a Third Crossing of the River Don.

Strategic Roads (Safety Priorities)

Improving road safety is a key objective of this strategy and in addition to addressing capacity constraints, there are locations and corridors where improvements are required to improve road safety. This involves addressing concerns at particular locations and corridor improvements to provide increased safe overtaking opportunities to cater for different types of traffic and reduce driver frustration. Nestrans will work in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Transport Scotland in order to improve the safety of the existing road network by supporting measures such as increased lighting, more pedestrian facilities – particularly to enable safe crossing of trunk roads, and infrastructure upgrades at key locations and corridors.

Infrastructure priorities for action are:

- A90 south of Aberdeen - more grade-separated junctions at key locations, such as Laurencekirk, improved alignments and reduced central-reserve crossings;
- A90 north of Aberdeen - junction, alignment and overtaking opportunities;
- A96 west of Inverurie - junction, alignment and overtaking opportunities;
- A947 - further improvements through route actions;
- A944 - further improvements through route actions;
- A93 - further improvements through route actions.

Car Share Lanes

Higher occupancy of vehicles and especially of private cars will enable road space to be more efficiently used and reduce emissions per person. Nestrans will consult with key stakeholders to identify at least one corridor suitable for trialling a high occupancy vehicle lane that would give priority to multiple occupancy vehicles; suitable enforcement measures will form part of this scheme and if successful could be expanded to other corridors.

Prioritised Maintenance

Maintenance of the transport network is a key issue for transport authorities, and significant sums are invested in maintaining assets, lighting and providing winter maintenance. Nestrans supports local authorities' calls for a higher maintenance regime but considers this to be a matter between authorities and the Scottish Executive.

Nestrans will however, support prioritised maintenance (over and above existing statutory obligations) which could contribute to the aims of this strategy, including for example to enhance safety or where high levels of footway maintenance may encourage walking, on cycle routes, on routes requiring additional maintenance to facilitate safe cycling or motorcycling, or to ensure higher standard of public transport across the north east.

Rail (NC2)

The north east is currently limited by having only one passenger rail line (from Inverness in the west to Aberdeen and through towards Dundee in the south) and just seven stations. Rail can, however, play a significant part in the development of the region and improving transport links within and to/from the area. External rail links are covered in section EL2 and improvements on the lines to Inverness and Dundee will complement proposals to enhance rail opportunities within the north east.

The railway between Aberdeen and Inverness is single track which constrains the frequency of services and affects journey times and reliability. Proposals to enhance frequencies between Aberdeen and Inverness will enable regular, reliable services from towns such as Inverurie and Insch as well as offering the opportunity to develop the initial phase of Aberdeen Crossrail and a new station at Kintore. Nestrans supports the reopening of Laurencekirk station, which has been taken forward by Aberdeenshire Council and will offer significant economic and accessibility benefits to the town and the Mearns area.

Developing the existing passenger rail network in the north east will encourage more sustainable long distance trips in the region in preference to undertaking journeys by car. It will also increase the accessibility by rail to employment, education and essential services.

Aberdeen Crossrail

Aberdeen Crossrail will deliver more frequent rail services between Inverurie, Aberdeen and Stonehaven – providing a better service for commuters and enabling cross-city travel by rail. More frequent services will also enable new stations to be opened in both Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, linking housing and employment destinations and creating new opportunities for people to travel by train.

Proposals for Aberdeen Crossrail are at an advanced stage of development and have been taken forward by Nestrans, in partnership with Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils, Transport Scotland and the rail industry. The first phase of Aberdeen Crossrail is intended to deliver a half-hourly service between Inverurie-Aberdeen-Stonehaven, which 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 to the north and south of the city centre and at Newtonhill. This would require additional rolling stock and significant infrastructure improvements. Detailed technical and financial feasibility work is underway, which will be completed in early 2007, enabling a case to be made to Ministers to commit to funding its implementation.

Bus Improvements (NC3)

A key strand of this strategy will be to improve bus services throughout the north east, to encourage modal shift and thereby reduce carbon emissions and other pollutants and utilise roadspace more effectively. Bus services provide the most effective and efficient form of motorised transport and are essential in catering for socially-necessary transport for people without access to a car, which is over a third of households in some parts of the north east. Nestrans will work with bus operators to increase bus patronage and enhance the performance and quality of bus services across the region. Better access for all to buses will address social exclusion issues and ensure better accessibility to priority areas, such as health services.

Bus Quality Improvements

The quality of bus services in terms of frequency, reliability and vehicle capacity and comfort are crucial elements in providing a high quality public transport network that meets the needs of people and business in the north east. High-quality information, ease of interchange, simple and integrated ticketing and excellent customer service also play an important role in making bus travel more attractive and increasing bus use.

In recent years Nestrans, the local authorities and bus operators have worked in partnership through the Local Authorities/Bus Operators Forum (LABOF) to deliver improvements on a quality corridor basis. This involves complementing operator investment in new vehicles with infrastructure improvements such as new waiting shelters, raised kerbs to ease boarding and real-time information. In addition Aberdeen City Council has introduced bus priority measures on key routes in the form of bus lanes, bus gates (giving buses priority at key locations) and upgraded traffic signals which can give priority to late-running buses. Aberdeenshire Council is currently implementing a major programme of interchanges across its area, which range from a new bus station in Peterhead to electronic travel information kiosks. Aberdeenshire Council is also developing proposals for bus priority measures on the approach to Westhill, with funding from Nestrans.

It is proposed to continue the approach followed to date of investment in bus quality corridors. This will focus on the key radial routes from Aberdeenshire into Aberdeen and the key cross-City and cross-country routes, serving major locations such as the Foresterhill hospital complex, educational institutions, business parks and industrial estates. Access to the airport is also important and covered separately in this strategy. This approach will require continued partnership working between Nestrans, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Councils and bus operators, principally through the Local Authority Bus Operators Forum.

The north east already has a relatively modern bus fleet, with a high proportion of vehicles that are fully DDA compliant but Nestrans will encourage further quality enhancements and, as detailed later, will support the piloting of alternative fuels as befits Europe's energy region. This will be complemented by continued investment in kerb-side bus infrastructure. We will also work with operators and local authorities to identify improvements to existing routes and potential new services.

The bus will remain the main form of public transport in the north east. For bus patronage potential to be fully realised, it is essential that the image that the bus currently presents and the performance it delivers is enhanced.

This strategy aims to enhance the image of bus travel by improving the reliability of existing services and reducing their journey times relative to car. It will also be important to develop the existing bus network and introduce new services on routes where public transport is not an option at the moment. This will be achieved by promoting the following:

Bus Priorities/Selective Vehicle Detection (SVD)

Bus priority can take the form of bus lanes, but increasingly other measures can also be effective in ensuring bus journey times and reliability. For example, junction improvements, pre-signalisation or selective vehicle detection (where lights can be changed as a bus approaches) as well as intelligent transport solutions can be widely used.

Nestrans will support measures which offer improved journey times and reliability for public transport, where this can be achieved without causing undue penalty to other road users. In the short to medium term, Nestrans will work in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, and bus operators (and in partnership through the Local Authorities Bus Operators Forum) to review the effectiveness and develop the existing bus priorities in the north east and will promote the introduction of new bus priorities such as SVD on key radial routes and at key locations within Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. Examples for consideration would include:

- A90 (northern approach) at Murcar roundabout;
- Approach to Haudagain from Anderson Drive;
- A947 – between Parkhill and Aberdeen;
- A944 – exit from Westhill and approaches to Kingswells roundabout;
- A96 – approach to Dyce Drive
- A93 – approach to key junctions;
- A956/A90 (southern approach) – Wellington Road and Stonehaven Road; and
- other key locations within Aberdeenshire – where congestion causes delays to bus services.

Many of these proposals are linked to ongoing study work and also would complement the new junctions associated with the AWPR in addition to contributing to locking in the benefits. Nestrans will also explore the opportunities for introducing bus priorities to support new services providing passage on corridors throughout the north east where there is currently inadequate public transport provision.

Mass Transit (Guided Bus)

At present, conventional bus and rail are the main methods of mass transport in the north east. However, Nestrans will explore the feasibility for the introduction of a system that utilises sections of guided bus track in order to avoid congestion hotspots on key corridors in the north east. The guided bus track could potentially use new build lanes to allow buses to bypass congestion hotspots. It may also be possible to reallocate sections of the existing carriageway, which would have benefits in locking in additional network capacity created by the introduction of the AWPR.

The following opportunities will be explored through investigation and discussion with operators, as resources become available – at this stage, the first three proposals set out below are considered to be part of the Preferred Package (predominantly in the medium to longer term, although allowance is made for early investigation work and introduction of pilot schemes), with other aspects recognised as aspirations, beyond the scope of the current RTS:

- Guided bus – investigate opportunities, identify routes/locations where appropriate and implement measures to ensure bus running times
- Advanced signals – consider opportunities for signalling junctions to ensure bus priority by pre-signals.
- Super Bus – Promote and support system of “tram-like” buses on appropriate radial routes within Aberdeen and to/from the major towns in Aberdeenshire.

The following options are not included within the Preferred Package, but remain aspirations to be kept under review and could be implemented in the longer term if national policy changes the economic criteria for considering major projects:

- Tram system for Aberdeen – From examples in other parts of the UK, this option is likely to be prohibitively expensive without providing sufficient return for investment
- Reopening of railway lines to Peterhead and Banchory – While remaining aspirations, it was considered more cost effective to focus on bus-based solutions for these corridors. The former rail alignments will continue to be preserved as transport corridors.

Park and Ride

Bus-based Park & Ride sites exist at Ellon, Bridge of Don and Kingswells. These facilities have enjoyed varying degrees of success but are an important and growing resource offering travel choice. They contribute to reducing traffic in and on approaches to the City, and free up parking demand in the City Centre. Future proposals are for the completion of a ring of Park & Ride services around Aberdeen, linked to the AWPR, enabling easy access to the City. This will have benefits in terms of reducing congestion, improving urban air quality and providing wider transport choices. Edge of city sites would be complemented by an inter-urban Park and Ride on the A93 at Banchory and through expanded parking at north east rail stations.

- A96 Chapelbrae (Inverurie Road)
- A90 south
- A947 Parkhill
- A90 north – expansion and possible relocation of existing Bridge of Don site
- A93 Banchory
- Rail-based Park & Ride
- Ticketing and other initiatives to promote Park & Ride usage

In the longer term, Nestrans will review supply/demand balance and, subject to the outcome of review, will consider the need for additional marketing or support for Park & Ride services and potential for further development of facilities if required.

Real Time Bus Management and Information

The real time bus management and information system in the City and Shire currently comprises over 100 shelter mounted displays plus larger display units in public buildings including cinemas, offices and Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and passenger information points at 24 key locations across Aberdeenshire. Nestrans will carry out a review of the current system in conjunction with Local Authorities and Operators and support the development of a system that can be rolled out across the north east.

Nestrans will promote a new, region-wide real-time information system in conjunction with operators across the north east in order to provide reliable real time information to bus patrons and to enhance operator's fleet management capabilities in the north east.

Transport Interchange (NC4)

Effective and seamless interchange between different services and modes has been proven to encourage use of public transport.

Interchanges

Nestrans will support the introduction of high quality transport interchanges throughout the north east, both physically by the development of suitable facilities and by ensuring the problems caused by utilising more than one means of transport are minimised. It is important that interchange facilities meet the needs of older and disabled people in particular. Priorities will be in the key urban centres around the region including Aberdeen, key service centres within Aberdeenshire and transport hubs such as the airport, railway stations and ports.

Aberdeen City Centre Interchange

The rail and bus stations at Guild Street in Aberdeen's city centre act as regional gateways and interchanges. The redevelopment of both rail and bus stations is expected to begin soon as part of the Guild Street transport interchange, retail and leisure development. This will offer an enhanced travelling experience for bus and rail passengers, additional car parking close to the ferry terminal and railway station and enable easy interchange between these modes. Nestrans will work with the developer to ensure that the opportunities for creating a high quality transport interchange are fully realised and that connections to Union Street are improved.

Nestrans will work with Aberdeen City Council through its Local Transport Strategy to seek to enhance interchanges at other locations in the City Centre, particularly where passengers may regularly change from one bus to another. Funding of "interchange" bus shelters, additional information and facilities at identified points will form part of the package of measures.

City Centre Shuttle

In the short to medium term, Nestrans will work in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver a low-emission city centre shuttle bus service to enhance the connectivity within the City Centre, encourage public transport generally and complement other City Centre policies. This may involve a free or nominal fare service, connecting the bus and rail stations with major retail areas and the ferry terminal.

Depending on sponsorship or other funding issues, it is expected that the buses operating on this route would use zero-emission fuels, possibly piloting use of a fuel such as hydrogen. If successful, Nestrans will consider promoting this same approach in other towns throughout the north east.

In the longer term, building on the success of a City Centre shuttle service, consideration will be given to the viability of introducing a micro tram or similar light tramway system. Providing fast, frequent connections between key City Centre locations, this would add significantly to the attractiveness of the City Centre as a retail and commercial destination. A light tramway would be provided at much lower cost compared to heavy trams and could utilise new technologies and cleaner fuels and avoid disruption during construction phases.

Aberdeenshire Towns

Interchanges in Aberdeenshire towns play an important role, in particular through enabling people to connect from local to longer-distance services and contributing to the vitality of the town centre. Aberdeenshire Council is currently implementing its Towns Interchanges project, which comprises a range of improvements including:

- Peterhead - a purpose-built bus interchange, with high-quality passenger waiting facilities, cycle lockers and parking for disabled drivers.
- Inverurie - an integrated rail/bus/taxi interchange at Inverurie Station; there will also be cycle lockers and increased car parking to encourage the use of Park & Ride, as well as improved traffic, pedestrian and cycling connections within the town.
- Banchory - the delivery of an inter-urban Park & Ride facility on the eastern edge of the town; the facility would provide high quality passenger waiting facilities, parking for 250 cars, cycle lockers, layover space for tourist coaches and cycling links to and from the town centre.

Nestrans will work with Aberdeenshire Council to promote and develop further interchange improvements in support of its Local Transport Strategy.

Ticketing

The development of integrated ticketing is seen as a key contribution to making public transport use easier. Nestrans will work with local authorities, operators and others (utilising the existing Local Authorities Bus Operators Forum) to ensure the introduction of a system of through tickets for public transport use, enabling easier interchange and improving the integration between different public transport operators and modes. We will promote and support new initiatives to enhance transport interchange through integrated ticketing including the development of an integrated smartcard for travel on any public transport within the north east.

Airport Surface Connections (NC5)

As the airport develops, it becomes increasingly important to improve the surface connection between Aberdeen Airport and the key economic centres across the City and Shire. The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and associated new link road will significantly improve access to the airport from across the north east. The Airport Surface Access Strategy has been implemented over recent years, improving the choices available for passengers, with a review of the strategy likely to commence soon. The following measures are seen as important elements in the RTS:

Express Bus Service

Nestrans will work towards enhancing the existing bus services that serve the airport along the A96 and A947 corridors. In the short term Nestrans will also look to facilitate a branded, high frequency, high quality, dedicated express bus service that operates between Aberdeen city centre/other key locations (including the Exhibition Centre for major events) and the airport. Effective bus priority measures will be an essential component for the delivery of such a service.

Dyce Railway Station/Airport Terminal Shuttle Bus

Nestrans will also build upon the opportunities provided by the existing rail link to Dyce and its close proximity to the airport by supporting the creation of a high quality, low floor, shuttle bus service between Dyce Railway Station and Aberdeen Airport. This service might also provide connections with a limited number of other important destinations in this area, including major business and industrial areas, future Park & Ride sites and hotels..

Airport Fixed Link

In the longer term, Nestrans will promote the development of a dedicated fixed link between Aberdeen City Centre and the airport. This will increase reliability and reduce journey times and could be provided by as an additional element of the Crossrail project by providing a new spur between Stoneywood and the terminal building, or take the form of a guided bus system between the City Centre and the airport, building on the super bus concept. Nestrans also recognises the role of the airport in serving a wide catchment, and will ensure that surface access options are available from key towns and settlements, Park & Ride sites and via interchange to enable better access generally.

Although Aberdeen airport has a wide (and increasing) range of destinations, it is recognised that some trips will require to be made through other airports. There are proposals for rail links to Edinburgh and Glasgow airports which may help enhance the choice of travel options for north east residents.

Pedestrians and Cyclists (NC6)

Increasing the proportion of journeys undertaken on foot and by bicycle will make a significant contribution to achieving the strategy's accessibility, health and environmental objectives. Pedestrian and cyclist facilities are increasingly incorporated into the design of all transport improvements and new developments and funding is available for improvements. In Aberdeen City Centre, proposals to enhance the City environment include pedestrianisation of Union Street whilst there may be opportunities to build on the excellent work done through the Aberdeenshire Towns Partnership to improve the retail offer of towns by environmental improvements, including pedestrian priority. Nestrans will support Local Transport Strategies in bringing forward proposals for improvements to pedestrian and cyclist facilities, and facilities for Powered Two Wheelers such as motorcycles - this Strategy supports the principle of making these modes safer and easier by improving the quality of facilities on offer. In addition, the following proposals support the encouragement of getting more people walking and cycling within the north east:

Pedestrian Network

Most journeys begin or end with a walk – and for many short journeys it is a quick, simple and healthy way of getting around. Nestrans will continue to promote and support enhancements to the existing pedestrian environment throughout the north east, including investment in pedestrian priorities, pedestrian crossing points, central reserves and pavement build outs to enhance the safety and experience of walking.

Low Speed Zones

Nestrans will work in partnership with Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, and Grampian Police to promote speed reduction schemes across north east, particularly at locations where conflicts arise between vulnerable road users and general traffic. Schools have already had 20mph zones implemented and we will work with partners to ensure the effectiveness of such zones, promote the implementation of Homezones or other initiatives which give slower modes a higher degree of belonging and improve safety. Nestrans will support Local Transport Strategies in considering the opportunities afforded by traffic management and traffic calming to improve safety, this RTS supports the principle of slowing traffic, particularly where this will offer potential for more trips to be made by sustainable modes.

Cycling Network

Nestrans will promote and support major enhancements to the existing cycle network in partnership with local authorities, user groups and Sustrans, with consideration given to creating off road routes where appropriate and minimising potential conflicts with other traffic. Priorities for developing safe, convenient and enjoyable cycling routes will include in and between Aberdeenshire's towns and villages, in and around Aberdeen's city centre, as well as adjacent to the main arterial approaches to and the City.

Powered Two Wheelers

Nestrans recognises the benefits of motorcycling as a relatively environmentally-friendly mode of transport offering great freedom of movement to those whose choices may otherwise be limited. This strategy supports safe and responsible motorcycling and will support facilities for powered two wheeler users, particularly secure parking in town and city centres.

Freight (NC7)

The efficient and effective movement of goods is a key aim of this strategy. In addition to the benefits for freight movement which will be achieved through road improvements such as the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, we will seek to reduce journey times for goods movement, improve journey time reliability and promote the shift towards environmentally-friendly modes of goods transport (notably sea and rail) wherever possible. Ensuring reliability in freight movement and also maximising the opportunities for moving goods from road to more sustainable modes are key components of the strategy.

Nestrans will work with the haulage industry and business on the development of a detailed north east freight action plan, to identify issues and priorities for action. The following measures are included as examples of freight actions which are proposed.

Rail Freight

Nestrans supports the development of railfreight as a sustainable and environmentally-friendly mode of transport, supporting economic development in the region. Work is presently ongoing (following work undertaken by the North East of Scotland Rail Freight Development Group) to remove gauge constraints on the line from Mossend in Central Scotland to Aberdeen and Elgin, enabling maritime-sized container traffic to access the area.

To maximise the potential of this investment will require adequate capacity and quality of terminals within the region.

At present, four different Freight Operating Companies (FOCs) use two separate terminals in the north east, at Guild Street and Craiginches, both within Aberdeen and there is an intermodal (sea/rail) facility at Waterloo Quay in Aberdeen Harbour. Smaller freight yards also exist at Inverurie and Huntly. The Guild Street yard is to be redeveloped, with replacement facilities provided at Raiths Farm in Dyce and an upgrade at Craiginches. Nestrans believe the region would be best served by modern intermodal terminals and will work in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that sufficient terminal capacity, of the right quality and in the best locations is available to encourage use of rail freight, including if necessary, promoting the development of new open access freight terminals.

In the longer-term, Nestrans will support further development of rail freight, including further gauge enhancements and additional terminal capacity where appropriate.

HGV Priority

The efficient movement of goods and ease of deliveries are key to the operations of many businesses in the north east. Due to the nature of the movement of goods, the majority move by road, and even where the trunk part of a journey is by sea or rail, road movement is normally required to or from terminal facilities. Nestrans will therefore seek to improve the efficient movement of goods traffic by giving consideration to where journey times can be reduced or reliability enhanced, particularly where the benefits afforded by the AWPR can be locked in. To this end, we will give consideration to the appropriateness of affording priority to lorry traffic, where possible without removing part of existing highways or in conjunction with additional road capacity. In the short term, we will consult with key stakeholders to identify and implement a trial route, where strategic HGV traffic could benefit from more reliable journey times through the introduction of priorities to benefit goods vehicles.

In particular, Nestrans will work with the ports and roads authorities to identify localised traffic engineering improvements in the vicinity of the harbours, particularly Aberdeen and Peterhead, which could improve access, linking into measures to promote maritime links.

The Strategic Policy Framework

The policy framework sets the boundaries and context for all other strategic measures. It is intended to set the key cross cutting themes of the RTS and to define the overall strategic thrust of the RTS. The framework is intended – over the life of the RTS - to change how people travel, how often they travel and how safely they travel. At present, many people make too much use of their cars and do not consider alternatives, even though access to these is generally good. People also often tend to make more journeys than they need to rather than planning the most effective way to minimise their travel needs. The key aims of this strategy strand are to improve safety, to reduce transport emissions and to make travel more efficient for people, so that they have more time and more money to enjoy the attractions the north east has to offer.

Priority areas such as addressing the need for access to health services will also be considered. Further more detailed work with NHS Grampian will be initiated to enable a common understanding of the links between transport and health, and address the issues of access to hospitals and health services, encouraging active travel to improve health and consideration of the impact of emissions on public health.

The following are the measures within this element of the RTS:

Promoting Travel Plans and Travel Awareness (TC1)

How we travel has a big impact on the world around us and Nestrans is committed to promoting Travel Plans and travel awareness. Nestrans is actively encouraging walking, cycling, public transport and car sharing and this strategy recognises the important role this can play in encouraging modal shift, reducing the environmental impact of transport in the region and promoting active and healthy lifestyles.

Nestrans has developed a Travel Planning Strategy which identifies three key areas for action; Travel Plans, Direct Interventions and Travel Awareness which Nestrans will work to develop.

In developing Travel Plans, Nestrans will promote the dissemination of best practice and continue to support the development of both public and private sector Travel Plans by offering free advice and assistance. In developing direct interventions, Nestrans will continue to support the Dyce Transportation Management Organisation (TMO) and work to identify further opportunities to develop TMOs or similar organisations. Nestrans will also support and encourage Travel Plans and travel awareness by continuing the Sustainable Travel Grant Scheme, which provides match funding to organisations to implement sustainable travel measures, and continue to actively support and promote car sharing through the Nestrans car share scheme.

In developing travel awareness, Nestrans will work with other RTPs, local authorities, the Scottish Executive and other stakeholders to support efforts to promote travel awareness, encourage participation in national and international events, and when appropriate publish literature promoting travel awareness. I-kiosks, Variable Message Signing and other forms of improved communications will be supported across the north east.

Education

In addition to general awareness, there is a need to educate and offer advice on various aspects of transport. Examples would include safety where engineering and enforcement measures need to be supported by education schemes such as the successful “Safe Drive, Stay Alive” and existing schemes at both local and national level aimed at drivers, pedestrians, school children and others should be built upon.

Providing More Demand Responsive Transport Services (TC2)

Demand Responsive Transport services provide an important role by filling in gaps in the conventional public transport network and can provide important links to conventional bus networks or Park & Ride facilities. Existing services such as A2B and Dial-a-Bus are popular and offer travel opportunities to people who would otherwise have limited options.

Nestrans are currently funding the purchase of three additional vehicles to enable extension of the existing schemes in both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen. Nestrans will work in partnership with key stakeholders to expand the coverage and frequency of the existing Dial-a-Bus and other demand responsive initiatives in the north east.

Nestrans also recognises that taxis play an important part in the north east transport network and we will ensure that their role is fully integrated with all the transport initiatives that are promoted in the region. We will seek to ensure that the licensing system enables taxi services to be provided in an efficient and effective way to maximise the benefits of the service, with minimum impact on congestion, resources etc.

Supporting Community Transport Initiatives (TC3)

Community transport initiatives provide important services in areas where conventional public transport services are not commercially viable. Utilising a range of vehicles from cars to mini buses and special vehicles, these again offer opportunities for travel for people who would otherwise suffer transport poverty. This enhanced mobility can be a significant lifestyle factor for many people.

There are several community transport projects currently operating in the north east and Nestrans fully recognises the important role these play in improving access to essential services, particularly for those living in remote rural areas. Nestrans will work in partnership with key stakeholders to promote the extension of Community Transport Initiatives, including voluntary and car-based schemes serving both urban and rural communities.

Changing Choices through Incentives and Partnerships (FF1)

There are three sub-elements to this part of the framework.

Bus Incentives – To Reduce the Cost of Bus Fares

In selecting a travel mode, a choice will be made reflecting perceptions of cost, comfort and convenience. To encourage less dependence on cars, and enable a shift to public transport, it will be necessary to influence these factors and the perception of them. Surveys show that north east residents view the current levels of bus fares as a barrier to encouraging more bus use.

Nestrans will work in partnership with key stakeholders to identify any opportunities for incentivising bus use through lessening the impact of fare levels. For example, in addition to the national scheme to enable 16 to 18 year olds discounted travel, there may be a case to extend the scheme locally, or job seeker subsidies may be possible. By working with operators, the principle of passing on to passengers the benefits (in the form of enhanced bus operation including reducing operating costs) gained by priorities or other measures should be identified and used to encourage a virtuous spiral of investment leading to more passengers, in turn leading to lower fares.

Bus Partnerships - To Improve and Extend Bus Services

Bus Partnerships can be used to secure high quality bus services through the establishment of new partnership agreements with bus operators and Punctuality Improvement Partnerships. The existing Quality Partnership for Public Transport, overseen by the Local Authorities Bus Operators Forum, has resulted in improved quality in bus services in the region over the past decade, with bus operators investing in new vehicles to complement local authority investment in shelters, priorities, information and other facilities.

Nestrans will continue to support this partnership with bus operators to ensure the optimum mix of efficient services – co-ordinating commercial and subsidised bus services with school, health and voluntary transport groups (and others including car share schemes) to ensure effective connections to hospitals, work/study, and community facilities.

Local authorities currently subsidise bus services which are not commercially viable, and will continue to support socially-necessary services. There will also be scope for Nestrans and partners (including Councils and bids through such as the Bus Route Development Grant scheme) to help introduce new bus services by providing funding to establish new services where there is currently not considered to be a strong business case for operating a commercial service. This is expected to play an important role in encouraging the development of the existing bus network, which currently tends to operate on historic radial routes and does not adequately provide an alternative to travelling by car on certain corridors.

Alternative Fuels - Incentives

Petrol and diesel fuels dominate the road transport sector and while both these fuels and vehicle engines have become cleaner and more efficient, concern continues to grow over the costs, supply, and environmental damage associated with them. Research and development into the application of alternative fuels is continuing to gather pace and the north east seeks to be a leading player in the development of new energy sources. Although alternative fuels such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) have been available to motorists for a number of years the volume of fuel sold is still extremely low compared to petrol and diesel sales. Other alternative fuels include: compressed natural gas, hydrogen, liquefied natural gas, electric, alcohol, and bio diesel.

Nestrans will continue to monitor the development of alternative fuels and will develop measures to promote the supply and usage of alternative fuels in the north east: subject to Scottish Executive agreement, this may include a range of financial incentives to fuel suppliers and if possible also to users.

Nestrans will also support organisations within the north east seeking to establish Aberdeen City and Shire as an alternative energy capital: one important way of supporting this is through the provision of better global connections, which forms part of the RTS.

Using Enforcement (FF2)

Legislation already exists whose enforcement would improve safety and reduce transports impacts on the environment. There are three key areas where better enforcement will be especially effective in achieving environmental benefits by ensuring that a higher level of compliance with regulations exists. Enforcement of parking regulations are considered under FF3 Parking.

Enforcement of Vehicle Exhaust Emissions

Only a small proportion of vehicles have non-compliant exhaust emissions but these can have a disproportionate effect on air quality, often in areas where people tend to congregate, such as town and city centres. Local authorities have a statutory duty to deal with air quality where European standards are predicted to be exceeded, but Nestrans will work in partnership with the Vehicle and Operators Services Agency, Councils and Grampian Police to promote the effective and visible enforcement of emissions in city and town centres and elsewhere in the north east to ensure UK and European air quality standards are achieved.

Enforcement of Speed

An overall reduction in vehicle speeds will improve safety for both road users and pedestrians, and will also significantly affect emission levels. Associated lower fuel consumption will also have a small but useful effect on reducing resource depletion and improve disposable income within the north east. Nestrans will look to promote and support the establishment of a Casualty Reduction Partnership for the north east, supporting the North East Safety Camera Partnership's (NESCAMP) activities in reducing speeds and traffic-related incidents in the north east. Nestrans also supports the implementation of average speed camera trials (for complete sections of routes with high casualty records) with a view to rolling out successful initiatives across the north east. There is also an important role for education in supporting the efforts on safety, including for example the successful "Safe Drive, Stay Alive" scheme used to educate young drivers.

Parking (FF3)

Parking is a key element of managing demand and is an important plank of this strategy. Parking policy will be an important element in considering modal choice and Nestrans will work with local authorities and others to reflect national guidance and support the other measures contained in this strategy.

Parking Strategy for the North East

Nestrans will work in partnership with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council to prepare a region-wide parking strategy that will provide consistency in parking policy across the north east while using parking measures to help to achieve greater use of alternatives to the car. The Parking Strategy will complement the Regional Transport Strategy by considering aspects of parking control which will influence modal choice, such as quality, location and safety of car parks, supply/demand in specific areas and issues relating to costs and enforcement.

Enforcement of Parking

Nestrans will work in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council and Grampian Police to identify prioritised areas for parking enforcement throughout the north east to ensure public transport movements and road safety are not compromised by illegal parking acts. A high priority will be enforcement of parking restrictions which have been introduced to support road safety and strategic traffic movements, such as bus lanes, cycle routes and where inconsiderate parking can cause obstructions.

Small Vehicle and HOV Parking Incentives

Nestrans recognises that the car will continue to be the mode of choice or necessity for many journeys, and will therefore seek to change choices about car use and purchase, so that more use is made of smaller and more fuel efficient vehicles, and that effective, cleaner fuel technologies are rapidly adopted in the region.

Nestrans will initially investigate the potential benefits of establishing a parking club in the north east that offers discounted parking to members with low emission vehicles or car share club agreements. The scheme would help optimise the use of existing on street and off street parking capacity (for example members may be able to park in most convenient locations or to park all-day in areas currently time limited) and contribute towards lowering the levels of emissions in the north east. Nestrans would propose to manage this scheme through the existing www.nestranscarshare.com website.

In the first instance this initiative would take the form of a pilot to test its suitability, with a view to rolling out this initiative across most of the north east during the next 3 – 5 years, as an integral part of the region wide parking strategy.

From Strategy to Implementation

The Regional Transport Strategy provides a strategic framework within which a more sustainable transport future can be delivered. That delivery is partly in the hands of Nestrans as the Regional Transport Partnership for the region but also other transport agencies – Transport Scotland, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, and private sector transport operators. Nestrans through its RTS Implementation Plan will set out the ways in which it will seek to encourage and would expect other agencies to help deliver the priority actions in accordance with the framework set by the Regional Transport Strategy.

The key infrastructure schemes and projects are indicated on Figure 8.3 below.

Figure 8.3: Proposals



9 Delivery and Outcomes

Whilst the preferred strategy package has incorporated prioritisation in establishing the optimum package of measures, it is recognised that some of the elements should be introduced sooner rather than later due to their relative effectiveness and implementability.

Within the Preferred Package, the schemes which form the Reference Case and are expected to be delivered within the period to 2011 are clearly seen as the top priorities. Other elements which complement the Reference Case, such as “locking in” the benefits of the AWPR and measures which give most benefit from least cost are likely to be delivered earliest and be of highest priority. Further work will be undertaken on the specification of these priorities and will be included in the Implementation Plan which will be prepared along with the final version of the Regional Transport Strategy.

Implementation Plan

In the final strategy, details of the individual components of the strategy will be set out in an accompanying Implementation Plan. Costing estimates, phasing and lead funding partners will be identified along with short, medium, and long term deliverables; it will also consider the need for capital and/or revenue funding to be identified for each component. The roles and responsibilities for delivering each individual component will also be identified and considered in the Implementation Plan.

Roles and Responsibilities

Whilst Nestrans is tasked with producing and overseeing the implementation of a Regional Transport Strategy, many of the functions which will determine the success or otherwise of that Strategy are vested in other bodies, notably the two local authorities, Transport Scotland and private sector transport operators.

In implementing this strategy, Nestrans will seek to work jointly with partners on key measures and interventions, which are regarded as important in ensuring that the strategic needs of balancing economic, environmental and social objectives are met. As the Regional Transport Partnership for the area, Nestrans and its partners will need to consider the most effective and efficient way of delivering transport across the north east. Some functions currently vested in local authorities may be more effectively delivered at a regional level to help deliver the Regional Transport Strategy and ensure consistency or maximise benefit from joint procurement. These are considerations which will require to be discussed with partners during the finalisation of the Regional Transport Strategy and following its submission.

10 Monitoring and Review

Scottish Executive guidance specifies that Regional Transport Strategies should be formally reviewed and rolled forward every 4 years linked to the local government electoral cycle, with the next review in 2011. In the interim regular monitoring will be undertaken on the performance of the Regional Transport Strategy. This will take two forms, process evaluation – monitoring the effectiveness of delivery of particular measures, and outcome evaluation – monitoring the achievement of the objectives of the Regional Transport Strategy.

Process Evaluation

Process evaluations are required as interventions are implemented in order to check that delivery itself is being implemented economically and efficiently. Process evaluation is undertaken when impacts should have been achieved but generally before all of the outcomes from the intervention may have become apparent.

Because process evaluation is primarily concerned with the delivery of inputs, a process evaluation will be undertaken for each of the larger projects and policy interventions.

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation is required to assess the extent to which the strategy and its principal elements are contributing towards the achievement of the strategic objectives. Because the objectives are very high level, lower level tests – outputs and outcomes will be developed in order to make the evaluation process transparent and also to help identify how well the links between inputs and outcomes are working.

Reporting Evaluation Results

Process evaluation results will be reported on a rolling basis in order to inform the implementation programme as well as to input to the outcome evaluation programme. Outcome evaluations will be undertaken at determined times most probably annually. Both forms of evaluation will input to an annual monitoring report on the Regional Transport Strategy which will form part of the Nestrans Annual Report required by the Scottish Executive.

Glossary of Terms

Nestrans	The North East of Scotland Transport Partnership
RTS	Regional Transport Strategy
NTS	National Transport Strategy, published in December 2006.
LTS	Local Transport Strategies - both Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council are reviewing their LTSs.
ACSEF	Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Forum, a partnership of economic development agencies and associated partners in the north east.
AWPR	Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route - one of the schemes proposed in the MTS, being delivered by Transport Scotland.
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
GVA	Gross Value Added - a measure of relative economic performance, normally expressed as an average per person in an area.
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LABOF	Local Authorities/Bus Operators' Forum – the body in the north east which oversees the Quality Partnership for public transport.
MTS	Modern Transport System, the existing Regional Transport Strategy for the north east, covering the period up to 2011.
NESCAMP	North East Safety Camera Partnership
NEST	North East Scotland Together, the Structure Plan covering Aberdeen City and Shire.
NETCF	North East Transport Consultative Forum – a stakeholders group used by Nestrans in formulating early consultation on the RTS.
SCDI	The Scottish Council for Development & Industry
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
STAG	Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance
TMO	Transport Management Organisation - Nestrans has helped to establish a TMO in Dyce, encouraging companies to work together towards sustainable transport solutions.
Urban and Rural Benchmarks	The Scottish Household Survey publishes data by local authority area and for summarised areas. Aberdeen is benchmarked against “large urban areas” and Aberdeenshire against a combination of “small towns, remote small towns and accessible rural areas”.
Greenhouse Gases	Emissions which can contribute to global damage, including climate change, predominantly Carbon Dioxide (CO ₂).
Pollutants	Emissions which can contribute to local air quality concerns. Most significant in the north east are particulates (PM ₁₀) and Oxides of Nitrogen (NO _x), especially Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂).

Your views on Nestrans' draft Regional Transport Strategy....

We are keen to hear the views of organisations and individuals on our strategy and proposals for action and welcome feedback to this consultation. Your views are very important in ensuring that the final strategy is the right one to meet the needs of all in Aberdeen City and Shire.

In responding to this consultation, please consider the following questions:

1. Have we tackled the right issues? What do you think are the most important challenges?
2. Have we got the right balance of objectives? Are some objectives more important than others?
3. Do you agree with our proposed measures and projects? Are there any additional measures/projects that should be included?
4. Which measures/projects do you consider to be the most important priorities for implementation?
5. Do you have any other comments or suggested changes to our draft strategy?

You can respond to this consultation by going to www.nestrans.org.uk/rts and completing our online form. Alternatively email your response to info@nestrans.org.uk or send it to the address below.

The closing date for all responses is **Wednesday 7 February 2007**.

We may make part or all of your response publicly available in the interests of sharing responses and showing how we plan to respond to feedback. However we will not disclose the address details of private individuals.

Nestrans
Archibald Simpson House
27-29 King Street
Aberdeen
AB24 5AA

Tel: 01224 625 524
Fax: 01224 626 596
info@nestrans.org.uk
www.nestrans.org.uk